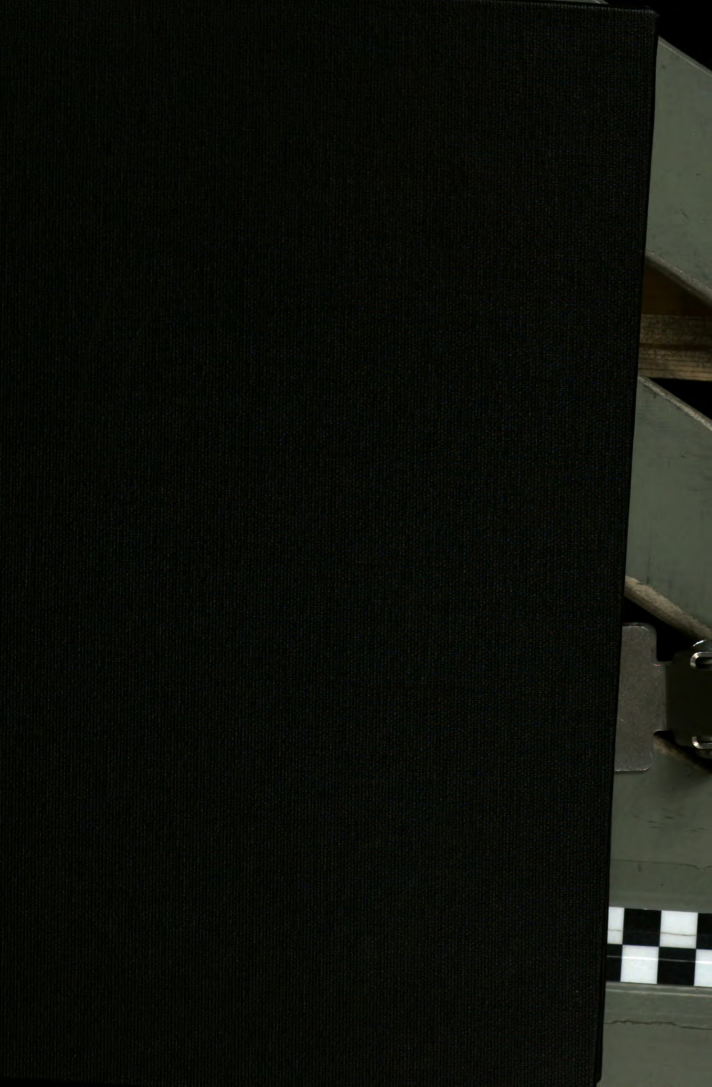




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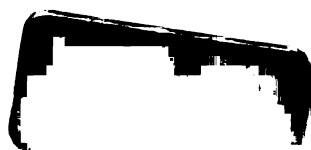
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POWER STRUCTURE IN SHUITOU:
PUNISHMENT AND REWARD IN THREE PERIODS
OF A CHINESE VILLAGE IN THE YANGZI DELTA

By

Hsueh-cheng Yen

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Anthropology

1997

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1997

ABSTRACT

POWER STRUCTURE IN SHUITOU: PUNISHMENT AND REWARD IN THREE PERIODS OF A CHINESE VILLAGE IN THE YANGZI DELTA

By

Hsueh-cheng Yen

This is a study of the power structure in Shuitou, a village in the Yangzi delta region of Zhejiang province, China. Three periods of its recent history are examined: the pre-1949 period; the collective period between 1950 and 1983; and the post-1984 period. In each period, I examine the power relationship between "elites" and "commoners."

In the pre-1949 period, the Yangzi delta had a high tenancy rate. Scholars often assume landlords, because they control the means of production, have the ability to control tenants. In Shuitou, however, land ownership was dispersed, landlords had little contact with tenants, and landlords could not evict tenants. In fact, the landlords were often were threatened by tenants' demands for rent reduction. Similarly, some argue that, in the 1950 to 1983 period, cadres could control production team members because of control of the means of production. In Shuitou, however, because of the rigid system of distribution set by the state, production team cadres not only could not selectively favor certain peasants, but they were often deposed from their positions by the disaffected peasants. Finally, in the post-collective 1990s, economic stratification in Shuitou did not give the wealthy entrepreneurial factory owners a commanding position over factory workers because

villagers could easily find jobs in the forty button factories in Shuitou. Thus, in each of the three periods in Shuitou's history, the "elites" did not and could not control the village "commoners."

Power in this study is defined as the ability to punish and reward. Based on this definition, my study considers two forms of power structures: power-dispersed and power-concentrated. In the former, structural constraints prevent "elites" from punishing and rewarding "commoners." In the latter, "elites" punish and reward "commoners" at will. The inability of "elites" to control "commoners" in Shuitou is explained in terms of its power-dispersed structure.

Although Shuitou exhibited a power-dispersed structure through all three periods, this does not preclude the likelihood that other Chinese communities in comparable periods have had power-concentrated structures. By analyzing communities in terms of the two forms of power structure, this study provides a typology of community and a framework for comparison in Chinese society.

To my father and mother:

Yuan-shu Yen
Yen-ran Yen Yang

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One difference between people in academics and amateur scholars is that academicians, besides writing for their own pleasures, have to follow certain "cultural rules" of the academy. A Ph.D. dissertation is the first step for a young scholar entering an academic career, and I thank members of my Graduate Committee for providing me with precious training and leading me into this culture. Dr. Bernard Gallin, Chair of my Graduate Committee, and Dr. Rita Gallin, Professor of Sociology, have been my closest academic advisors during my time at Michigan State. Extraordinarily good scholars, teachers, and friends, they have showed great tolerance and understanding toward a student whose eagerness to complete his degree often led to impatience. They not only spent hours reading the numerous drafts of this dissertation, but also pointed out its logical discrepancies and problems in the arrangement of materials. Their high standard is deeply appreciated by this student. Dr. Joseph Spielberg's encouraging to try something new and not limit myself to the Chinese material greatly expanded my understanding of other cultures. He also offered invaluable critiques and advice on the theoretical side of this dissertation. Two of my other Committee members, Dr. Harry Raulet and Dr. Robert McKinley also spent long hours offering advice on the dissertation and supported me in the writing process. To all of them I offer my sincere thanks.

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A NOTE ON ROMANIZATION

All Chinese words and terms are romanized and italicized when they first appear in the text. Except in direct quotation which I use the romanization of the authors, all the Chinese words are romanized using the *Pinyin* system. The Chinese words and terms used are listed in the GLOSSARY OF CHINESE WORDS AND NAMES.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of Shuitou, a village in the central Yangzi delta area. Located approximately 50 km southwest of Shanghai, 100 km northwest of Hanzhou, and 50 km south of Suzhou, the village is in Yaoshui township (*xiang*), Jiashan county (*xien*) and Zhejiang Province. In 1995, Shuitou had a population of 1,028 residing in three adjacent hamlets: North Hamlet, South Hamlet, and West Hamlet. Each of these hamlets is multi-surnamed, with some surnames much more heavily represented than others. Neither the larger surname groups nor their smaller counterparts, however, have formed lineage or other large, formal kinship organizations. Agriculture, once the villagers' primary mode of subsistence, has been surpassed in importance by rural industrialization. Button manufacturing has become the major source of the villagers' income. By 1995, there were nearly 40 button factories operating in Shuitou, and farming was a sideline activity for most village families.

This study of Shuitou is also an investigation of power. Although sinologists often use the concept of power, they tend to do so heuristically. As a result, they rarely offer a clear definition of power. In the absence of a clear definition, power becomes a descriptive, rather than an analytical, tool. My study takes as its starting point the definition of power, clearly indicating what does and does not constitute power in this study. Power is defined here as the ability to punish and reward. Although punishment and reward can take

many forms, I am concerned with economic power. Individuals or organizations with economic power monopolize resources on which others depend and can punish and reward by either providing or denying resources. In this study, I examine Shuitou's political economy, exploring the conditions under which resources are or are not monopolized and the use of economic power in the three periods of Shuitou's recent history: the "small peasant economy" of the pre-1949 period; the "collective economy" between 1950 and 1983; and the "market economy" after 1984.

Defining Power

Max Weber defines power as the ability to impose one's will on others in spite of resistance. While Weber's definition of power tells us the consequence of power -- the ability to impose one's will -- it does not indicate the pre-condition under which one can or cannot do so. The pre-condition of imposing power, however, is central to this study. China is a stratified society, and scholars separate people of a local community into elites and commoners based on differences in wealth and prestige.¹ Most scholars assume that elites can impose their will on the commoners. One problem with this assumption is that it does not distinguish the extent of elites' power in different communities. I became aware of this problem when comparing Shuitou with other communities in three periods of China's recent history. In the pre-1949 period, for example, the tenancy rate was high and landlords were wealthy in both the Pearl River delta and the Yangzi delta (where

¹ In this study, "elite" and "commoner" are general terms describing the people who have a higher and a lower position in a stratified society. In each of the three periods discussed in this study, I use landlords and peasants to denote elites and commoners in the first period of small peasant economy; production team cadres and team members in the second period of the collective economy; and factory owners and factory workers in the third period of market economy. In describing power relations between elites and commoners in each of the three periods, I do not assume that the elites must have power over commoners.

Shuitou is located). In the Pearl River delta area, the heads of wealthy lineages could dominate commoners through control of land and lineage organizations, but this was not true in the Yangzi delta.² Wealthy lineages in the Pearl River delta organized their kinsmen and tenants in lineage feuds or in opposition to government. In the Yangzi delta, on the other hand, wealthy landlords not only could not organize local people to protect themselves from bandits but were also constantly threatened by tenants to lower rents. While most scholars emphasize the elite's power, I show in this study how social structure in Shuitou prevented its elites from dominating the commoners in each of the three periods in its recent history.

Although the elites in Shuitou did not dominate the commoners in any of the three periods of recent history, the reasons were different in each of the periods. The question this study addresses is whether we can abstract principles to explain the lack of domination and opposing principles to explain the elite's ability to dominate commoners in other areas. I begin with a definition of power with respect to the criterion by which elites can or cannot dominate commoners. This definition of power is based on Chinese Legalist school of thought.³

The Legalist school emerged during the era of the Warring States (403-222 BC). This was a period of transition from the feudal system to the centralized state that culminated in the first unified dynasty in Chinese history, the Qin (221-206 BC). Characterized by intense conflicts between the feudal states and usurpation of kings' power by their ministers, the era of the Warring States was a chaotic period in Chinese history. The mission of the Legalists was to provide an effective way for kings to hold on to their positions and build strong

² Although there were no lineages in Shuitou, there were wealthy lineages in nearby market towns whose members owned land in Shuitou.

³ The Legalist school culminated in *Fan, Fei Tzi*, a collection of writings by Han Fei (ca. 280-233 BC).

their ministers, the era of the Warring States was a chaotic period in Chinese history. The mission of the Legalists was to provide an effective way for kings to hold on to their positions and build strong states. Situated in an environment of kill or be killed, the Legalists provided kings with pragmatic methods that ignore unnecessary ideological paraphernalia. To help a king attain a strong state, the Legalists developed a very utilitarian definition of power: the ability to punish and reward. This definition gave precise criteria of who was or was not under the domination of a king and pointed out how a king could extend his power over others.

For the Legalists, merely holding the title of a king did not guarantee power. Using the notion of punishment and reward, the Legalists advised a king on how to effectively seek and apply power. They considered the ability to choose between punishment and reward a craft that defined a wise king: if his subjects were wealthy but afraid of death, he used death to threaten them rather than money to tempt them; if his subjects were poor and desperate, he tempted them with wealth rather than threaten them with death. In addition to discussing the basis of a king's power, the Legalists outlined how a king's power could slip away. One who delegated the authority to punish and reward to ministers lost his monopoly on power, thereby endangering himself and the very existence of the state. Based on this theory, the Legalists proposed an end to hereditary feudal states and the institution of a centralized bureaucracy with local officials appointed and dismissed by the king himself.

The pragmatic and utilitarian nature of the Legalist approach can be exemplified by its attack on two Confucian sages. Refusing to be lured by the reward of high positions offered by a king who conquered their country, the two Confucian sages hid in the mountains and died of starvation. Confucians exalted their high moral standard and their

tenacity. In the view of the Legalists, however, these two people, who were neither tempted by rewards nor afraid of death, denied the power of the king. To glorify their moral deeds, as was done by the Confucians, was the equivalent of sabotaging the king's power. They should be condemned rather than celebrated (see Han Fei Tzi, Book II Section 14).

The merit of the Legalist approach is that it does not assume the existence of power. A king's ability to dominate his subjects is achieved rather than given, and a king has to be on guard of usurpation of his power. The ability to punish and reward is the criterion on which a king examines his relationship with his subjects. It is with this definition of power that I examine the relationship between elites and commoners in Shuitou.

An elite member of a community is not necessarily a dominant person and a commoner is not necessarily dominated. For the purpose of this study, I define a dominant person as one who has the ability to punish and reward. A dominated person is thus a person who is afraid of punishment and is tempted by reward. If a person is neither afraid of punishment nor tempted by reward, he/she is not dominated. It follows that the person who offers these ineffective punishments and rewards is not dominant. Under this definition, power can be analyzed on a personal level and on a structural level. At the personal level, we can study the process of inter-personal politicking whereby an individual tries to dominate other people by making them susceptible to his/her punishment and reward and how other people escape domination by making the punishment and reward irrelevant. At the structural level, we can examine a community's social structure to see whether it does or does not support a person's ability to punish and reward others by leaving them no place to evade such actions. While inter-personal politicking may exist in all social acts, only the individual who succeeds in making others susceptible to his/her punishment and reward is defined as

dominant. In examining whether an elite is a dominant in Shuitou, I concentrate on the structural bases of power.

Although power may exist in many forms, economic power is most important in rural China. Economic power is defined as the ability to punish and reward through economic means. In order to exercise economic power, one must be able to monopolize means of production. Monopolization means both exclusivity and dependency. Domination through economic power is rooted in a social structure in which the dominated depend exclusively upon the dominant to supply the means of production. Monopolization also means that there is little competition in the supply of the means of production. If people can shop around and find a supply elsewhere, those who control the means of production will not be able to bring people into submission. As is shown in Chapter Three and Chapter Five, landlords in the pre-1949 period and factory owners in the post-1984 period could not dominate Shuitou villagers because they lacked the ability to monopolize means of production. Nevertheless, we must not simply equate monopolization of resources with power. If the monopolized resources cannot be used as a means to punish and reward, there is no power relationship. As is shown in Chapter Four, although all means of production were monopolized by production teams during the collective period between 1949 and 1983, Shuitou's cadres were not able to exercise economic power because the Chinese government had strict rules about the rationing of resources and restricted the cadres' ability to punish and reward.

According to this definition, economic power is not measured by wealth. There are wealthy people, who we refer to as wealthy elites, in every community. Whether or not they can transform their wealth into power, however, depends on whether they can monopolize means of production and use the monopolized resources to punish and reward at will. We must also take care in talking about the domination of one

class over another. If a class of people cannot act as a united front, they can be manipulated by those who depend on their resources. In complete domination, there is only one dominant individual or organization, not a dominant class.

In view of these pre-conditions, we will find that not all elites in rural China can dominate commoners through economic means. Whether elites in a community can dominate commoners has to be demonstrated empirically rather than assumed. I refer to a community in which the social structure prevents elites from dominating commoners through economic means as having a power-dispersed structure. If elites can dominate commoners through economic means, the community has a power-concentrated structure. In a power-concentrated structure, the elites in a community can often control other forms of power, such as physical power and psychological power, and strong leadership prevails. In a power-dispersed structure, we may find many incidences of inter-personal politicking, but it is unlikely that one individual will gain ascendancy over others. Although a community with a power-dispersed structure is not necessarily in a state of disorder, the weak leader in a power-dispersed structure will probably be unable to effectively punish lawbreakers.

Local Elites And Power: A Literature Review

In this review on the use of the concept of power used by sinologists, I argue that often scholars use power as a descriptive and heuristic device. While no clear definition of power is provided, there are several paradigms used in sinological studies as indicators of power. I contend that these paradigms are problematic and need qualifications based on the elites' ability to punish and reward.

Power As A Heuristic Concept

A brief summary of sinological scholarship on the theme of power is difficult to provide. Almost no scholar gives an explicit definition of power. Books that touch upon the theme of power rarely include the concept in their indexes. We find, rather, entries that embed power in different social relations, for example, "power of village leaders" (Madsen 1984: 278) or "peasant power under Mao" (Kelliher 1992: 260). To the best of my knowledge, no one has extracted power from diverse social relations and given it a self-contained definition. Thus, sinologists use power as a heuristic device whereby we are forced to "experience" power in the scholars' descriptions of social relations.

One of the major drawbacks of this approach is that scholars presume the existence of power before they actually investigate a situation. When one is determined to discover power, it is very likely to be found. In other words, a heuristic approach to power always implies a power-concentrated structure. It negates the possibility of a power-dispersed structure in which no one is exercising domination over another. The heuristic approach thus reifies power, shaping studies of power such that they become a matter of assigning power to one group of people at the expense of another. It is not unlike a game in which power is the ball and scholars are the commentators reporting who has the ball. The two competing teams may be the centralized state and local elites (Kuhn 1970); state and peasant (Kelliher 1992); local cadres and peasants (Oi 1989); men and women (Judd 1992); or dominant lineages and weak lineages (Freedman 1958). No one seems to entertain the possibility that domination does not exist.

Most scholars first assume the existence of power then try to discover who has power in the social contexts of each study. Since the social contexts are not the same, different studies present diverse images of power. This approach creates difficulties for a general theory

of power and for a comparison between different social contexts. The three periods of China's recent history discussed in this study have three very different sets of socio-economic environments. The descriptions of power given by anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and political scientists in each of these three social contexts are different. It is impossible to give a generalized statement of how sinologists use power to describe the three periods. Nevertheless, we can discern four paradigms of power employed by sinologists: the elite activism paradigm; the resource paradigm; the clientelist paradigm; and the lineage paradigm. These four paradigms are not mutually exclusive; scholars often use more than one of them.

Elite Activism Paradigm

Kuhn's (1970) influential study on the militarization of Chinese society in the second half of the nineteenth century served as a paradigm for many studies on the relationship between state and society. The White Lotus Rebellion of 1796-1804 revealed the weakness of the Qing dynasty government. Unable to suppress the rebels effectively with regular armies, the state depended on local militia defense, thereby precipitating elite activism. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Qing court discovered its troops were useless in repelling the onslaught of the Taiping Rebels. The government thus relied on armies mobilized by local communities to save it from destruction. Armies created by local gentry-officials and recruited from local peasantry finally overcame the Taiping rebels. According to Kuhn, the Taiping Rebellion tipped the balance of power away from bureaucratically organized, centrally controlled imperial forces and toward personalistic, locally recruited irregular forces. Kuhn developed a picture of power devolution in other spheres of administration based on this realignment of military power.

This devolution influenced the pattern of local government into the twentieth century.

Kuhn's dichotomy between centralized government and autonomous local society and his examination of the power shift from the former to the latter provided a paradigm for subsequent scholarship on local elites and domination in late imperial China and the Republic period. On the one hand, we find discussions on the incursion of state power into local communities, this is, how the state in the early twentieth century tried to penetrate local society by establishing a sub-bureaucratic framework and how local elites interacted with this centralizing force (Schoppa 1982; Rankin 1986; Duara 1988). On the other hand, we also see the same studies point out the competition between local elites and the centralized state and the growing power of elites in local communities. Even though local elites lost the game after 1949 to the Chinese Communists, their activism between the mid-nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century is accepted by many as an indication of elite domination in local affairs (see, for example, Kuhn 1970 and McCord 1988 on the organization of local militia; Averill 1990 and Culp 1994 on the modern school; Rankin 1986 and Schoppa 1982 on the chamber of commerce; Schoppa 1990 on the irrigation society; and Kuhn 1975 on local self government).

Given the many emergent "modern" voluntary associations in this period, elite activism and the institutions created by it became synonymous with elite domination (see Esherick and Rankin 1990). A weak central state and a strong local society led by local elites from 1850 to 1949 became accepted as "the" paradigm. Because of the a priori assumption of a strong local society led by powerful elites, the literary works cited above seldom discuss the commoners or investigate how the elites actually dominated local populations. Similar to the

heuristic approach to power, this scholarship never questions the very existence of power and domination in a community.

The problem becomes more focused if we consider the widespread peasant rebellions in this period. Kuhn's diagnosis of the power shift from the centralized state to local society began with an examination of peasant rebellions. Nevertheless, neither he nor other scholars working within the elite activism paradigm pursued this insight. Certainly peasant rebellion did occur during this period of Chinese history. Indeed, social unrest was one of its most important characteristics, and there is a scholarship addressing this issue (Bernhardt 1992; Bianco 1986; Chesneaux 1973; Hsieh 1978; Naquin 1981; Perry 1980; C. K. Yang 1975; Tong 1991). The reason scholars following Kuhn's elite activism paradigm seldom discuss peasant rebellion may be that peasant rebellions are contrary to the contention of elite domination. If elites had absolute power and dominated local society, how could peasants have rebelled? If we accept that rebellions were prevalent in the late Qing and the Republic periods, how can we at the same time claim that elites dominated the peasantry? Indeed, Bernhardt (1992) shows the vast spread of peasant rent and tax resistances from 1840 to 1950 in the lower Yangzi region. But Schoppa's (1982) detailed study of early twentieth century elites in Zhejiang province (the northern part of the province lies in the Yangzi river delta) never touches on the problem. Similarly, Rankin's study of elite activism in Zhejiang from 1865-1911 only mentions social unrest in a few paragraphs (1986: 226). It may be that scholars working within the elite activism paradigm avoid the question of social unrest because it is logically incompatible with the notion of domination.

The elite activism paradigm can be situated in a larger theoretical framework concerned with the emergence of modern society and the relationship between state and society. The emergence of capitalism and

democracy in western Europe was related to the appearance of a "civil society" in which citizens were able to freely discuss their own affairs and organize themselves to resist the power of the absolute state. For some sinologists, the growth of elite institutions in China from 1850 to 1950 indicates the emergence of a "public sphere" of free association and a "civil society" of people's power in China (Rankin 1986, 1993; Rowe 1984, 1989, 1993). Discussions of elite activism then focus on whether or not the elite had the ability to resist the power of the state (Huang 1993; Wakeman 1993; Rowe 1993).

Many China scholars divide the Chinese social landscape into state and society (Kuhn 1970; Rankin 1986, 1993; Rowe 1984, 1989, 1993; Duara 1988). Anyone who is not a state bureaucrat is lumped into the category of society. The question is: Who has more power, the state or the society? The state/society dichotomy ignores division and conflict within the society and encourages scholars to ignore peasant rebellions. They take a power-concentrated structure for granted and consider everyone within the society to be united under the leadership of elites in fighting against the power of an absolute state.

The state/society dichotomy is also a major theme in discussions of power in subsequent periods. For the PRC, scholars have considered the power of cadres in relation to the state and commoners under the collective system (see Walder 1986, 1991; Oi 1989; Siu 1989; Womack 1991; Madsen 1986; Shue 1985). They have also debated whether or not the Communist state has lost its power to the market economy after de-collectivization (Yan 1995; Oi 1995; Perry 1994; Kelliher 1992). Just as scholars of the pre-1949 period assume a power-concentrated structure of elites dominating commoners, scholars of the PRC often assume the same structure with the state dominating common citizens. Both groups of scholars share the same problem; they homogenize everything into state and society categories. They also share the tendency to assign

domination status to either state or society. State and society become two monolithic concepts subsuming all power relations, while local differences and conflicts within each category are ignored.

Resource Paradigm

The elite activism paradigm represents the intellectual milieu in which the dominance of elite in local society from 1850 to 1950 (and often thereafter) was frequently examined. Scholars depended upon several paradigmatic mechanisms to indicate elite domination in local communities. One of those often used as an indicator is the elite's control of resources. Control of resources and elite domination are often treated as co-variants and mutually supportive of each other. Unfortunately, discussions using the resource paradigm often do not include mention of the commoners who supposedly depend upon these resources. Overlooked is the issue of whether or not commoners really depend elites' resources and are willing to submit to the domination of those controlling the resources. In other words, their dependency is accepted a priori, and those controlling resources automatically become dominant.

Two types of elite play major roles in the resource paradigm: gentry and landlord. Although gentry can also be landlords, the two represent different analytical constructs. Gentry were scholars who had passed the imperial civil service examination. Because the imperial government selected officials from the gentry and the gentry largely monopolized China's intellectual and political life from the eleventh century until the abolishment of the civil service examination in 1905, their importance has been commonly recognized.

Scholarship on the gentry follows two directions. The first is that of social mobility (see Ho Ping-ti 1962; Marsh 1961; and Eberhard 1962 on the social mobility of gentry; Esherick and Rankin 1990b; Rowe 1990;

and R. Watson 1990 for social mobility of non-gentry elites). The debate about the gentry's social mobility is often related to the question of whether wealth, especially land, can be maintained in a gentry family over several generations for the family to retain its high status. Since this debate relates gentry status to land ownership, I discuss it when discussing landlords. The second is that of elite mediation between the state and the peasantry (Fei 1946; Ch'u 1962; Kuhn 1970). Scholars adopting this second direction suggest that because the traditional Chinese bureaucracy did not penetrate below the county level, the gentry functioned as middlemen between state and peasantry. State bureaucrats were selected from the gentry class and, as a result, local gentry had a network relationships within the bureaucracy. Peasants, who were not versed in the functioning of state bureaucracy, relied on the gentry to negotiate on their behalf. Thus, the gentry's networks became a resource upon which peasants depended. The idea that networks are resources is common. For example, studies of affinal ties (B. Gallin 1960; Dennerline 1986); *guan-xi*, or social relations (King 1991; M. M. Yang 1994); and patron-client relations or clientelism (Oi 1989; Walder 1986; Huang 1990; Chan, Madsen and Unger 1984) are often based on this principle. In these studies, the extent of one's network often becomes an indicator of elite status and power.

The second type of elite that plays a role in the resource paradigm is the landlord. In a nation such as China, in which the largest percentage of the population are peasants, land is always an important means of production. Discussions on the power of landlords are both simple and complex: simple because both Marxist and non-Marxist scholars acknowledge that, by controlling the means of production, landlords were the most important power holders in rural China and complex because their treatments of this source of power range widely and ramify in different directions. In discussions on the relationship between

landlords and tenants, for example, while the Chinese Communists consider landlords, by their very nature, oppressive, some scholars argue that patron-client relationships between them reduced oppression. Landlords and peasants were bonded by customary practices embedded in a moral economy (Fried 1982; Myers, 1980; Thaxton 1975).

Scholars often assign elite status to those who own land and commoner status to those who rent land. Some have discussed the relationship between elites and commoners in terms of social mobility. In this approach, one factor contributing to social mobility in traditional Chinese society is the practice of paritable inheritance (Ho Ping-ti 1962). Because a father's property is equally divided among all his sons, the wealth of an elite family (invariably including land) was usually dispersed after several generations. Without substantial amounts of land, an elite family would be reduced to commoner status. Others argue that the effect of paritable inheritance might be deterred by the formation of lineage corporate property (R. Watson 1990; Esherick and Rankin 1990b; Rowe 1990). When corporate land could not be divided by lineage members, the power of a lineage would not dissipate, even though its component families had divided their individual properties equally among their sons. In all these discussions, however, scholars assume that wealth, which always included land, was important in maintaining elite status and that landlords dominated peasants.

In the view of Marxists, control of land enabled landlords to extract surplus value from tenants. The Chinese Communists equate landlords' economic exploitation with domination. Scholars have discussed the Communist state's suspicion of former landlords and its assignment of class labels (Parish and White 1978; Chan, Madsen and Unger 1984; Madsen 1984). In the land reform of 1950 to 1951, landlords were designated class enemies and suffered the most in subsequent political campaigns. These actions suggest that the Communist government

saw landlords as competitors for power. It is clear that for the Chinese Communists, economic exploitation through rent extraction is never simply an economic issue. Economic exploitation is also a political issue of power and domination. This view is shared by many scholars who have analyzed the collective system in the Communist state. When the state controls all resources, it has absolute domination over its population. (Walder 1986; Oi 1989; Siu, 1989; Yan 1995).

The problem with the resource paradigm is that empirical facts do not always support its thesis. For example, the Yangzi delta was a region of high tenancy, and by some estimates, 50 to 60 percent of the land of the region was controlled by landlords in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (see Bernhardt 1992: 14-17). Not only did the delta region have one of the highest tenancy rates in China, but it also produced more gentry than any other region (see Naquin and Rawski 1987). This suggests that the Yangzi delta gentry had the most extended bureaucratic networks in China. With one of the highest tenancy rates and most well developed systems of networks, the resource paradigm would predict that elites in the delta should have been able to dominate local society more effectively than the elites of any other area in China.

But this was not so. Two facts point to the weak control delta elites had over the rural population. The first is the role of elites in the suppression of rebellions. During the Taiping Rebellion of mid-19th century as already noted, Chinese local elites, answering calls from the Qing emperor, organized local armies to fight the rebels. The most important forces of these gentry-led armies were from the provinces of Hunan and Anhui in the central Yangzi valley, and they not only fought the Taiping in their own provinces but also traveled to other regions to attack the rebels. In contrast, although the Yangzi delta had been severely rampaged by the Taiping around the early 1860s, the elite there were unable to organize any sizable armed force against the rebels.

Their inability to mobilize the local population suggests that, in comparison to elites in Hunan and Anhui, those in the Yangzi delta were weak.

The second fact deals with the pervasive tenant resistance against rents and taxes in the Yangzi delta from 1840 to 1950 (Wiens 1980; Bernhardt 1992). Even though the landlords' exploitation of tenants was intense, they were unable to translate economic exploitation into domination and prevent peasants from rebelling. The inability of the gentry-landlords in the Yangzi delta to coerce their tenants into permanent submission and to organize themselves to defend their own lives, leaves open to question the robustness of the resource paradigm in explaining power and domination.

Nevertheless, scholars seem reluctant to abandon this approach. When the evidence suggests the weakness of gentry-landlords in dominating local population, scholars find a new way to describe the power of gentry-landlords: "hegemony" (Bell 1990; also see Duara's 1988 concept of "Cultural Nexus of Power"). While it is important to show that gentry-landlords' cultural values and practices set the standard for commoners to follow and that gentry-landlords were opinion leaders in local communities, it is quite different to argue that gentry-landlords' influence can be equated with domination. If common people, when they discovered that gentry-landlords had infringed on their interest, were not reluctant to lash out in discontent, then the hegemony of gentry-landlords must have been relatively unimportant in terms of domination. Thus, we see that although the Yangzi delta was the wealthiest region in China and its elites produced the highest level of cultural complexity, in their relation to peasant-tenants, they were wealthy elites rather than power elites.

There is no question that social networks and land are important resources. But while the resource paradigm is very useful, it has

limitations. Too often scholars accept the importance of networks and land a priori without discussing how and why they are valuable resources. For networks and land to be so very important, we must first prove that commoners depend upon them. If they are not needed, they should not be viewed as resources. If we establish networks and land as scarce resources, we then have to show they are monopolized by someone. If resources are not monopolized and people can obtain them from a number of sources, an individual gentry-landlord who owns these resources will not have the upper hand in dealing with commoners. Finally, we would have to demonstrate that elites who monopolize scarce resources could and did use them as a means to punish and reward. Without this ability, an elite cannot gain power over commoners.

Clientelist Paradigm

After the Communist took over mainland China in 1949, landlords and gentry disappeared from the social scene of China. The new paradigm to explain elite domination under the socialist collective system is the clientelist theory. The clientelist paradigm is a variant of the resource paradigm. With a few exceptions (e.g., Womack 1991; Blecher 1987-1988), most scholars (Walder 1986; Oi 1989; Yan 1995; Nee 1989, 1991; Wank 1995; Siu 1989) see the redistributive economy of the collective system as creating a clientelist relationship between party cadres (the redistributors) and commoners (recipients of the redistributed resources). In ascribing power to a collective's cadres, this clientelist theory is based on the two facts of the collective system: monopolization of resources and commoners' dependence on the monopolized resources. The clientelist theory argues that cadres who managed the monopolized resources could use them to punish and reward commoners who depended on the resources. According to proponents of the clientelist theory, cadres controlled the doors to promotion, party

membership, opportunities to join the People's Liberation Army, housing allotment, quality of rations and jobs assignment. But were these controls over resources extensive enough to control the majority of the commoners? To what extent were the cadres able to use these resources solely at their own discretion?

One important book following the clientelist paradigm is "Communist Neo-Traditionalist" by Andrew Walder (1986), which discusses the relationships in Chinese factories during the collective period. In his review of Walder's book, Womack (1991) challenges Walder's clientelist theory of cadre power by arguing that cadres had to seek cooperation from workers because they could not challenge workers' membership in the collective's work units. Cadre-managers could not throw people out as landlords evict tenants. In his critique of Walder's book, Blecher (1987-1988) also points out that there were many indications that cadre-managers were not able to discipline workers. Walder himself has pointed out that during the 1970s, the work discipline was so low that factory managers watched hopelessly when workers left their duties during their shifts and bicycled away. (Walder 1991: 205-210) The inability to discipline workers indicated that the cadre-managers lacked the ability to punish and reward. If a worker's job was secure and he/she could not be fired nor have salary or any other benefits reduced, why would the worker obey the orders of a cadre-manager. While the clientelist theory argues that the cadres could dominate commoners with the monopolized resources, in actuality, there might be a reversed dependency in which the cadres need the workers' support rather the other way around.

The clientelist paradigm is based on the idea that people who control or manage the monopolized resources can dominate others who depend on them. This line of analysis is problematic in that the monopolization has been automatically equated with domination. To assert that the manager of the monopolized resources have power, we must be

able to show that the managers could use the resources as means to punish and reward. This too is often assumed rather than demonstrated.

Lineage Paradigm

Another common idea used to describe elite power is "lineage" (e.g., Kuhn 1970:77-82; Schoppa 1982: 48-52). The use of the lineage paradigm is commonly based on Maurice Freedman's important work in Southeast China (1958, 1966). Freedman proposed a typology of Chinese lineages, categorizing them along a continuum based on levels of complexity. At the two ends of the continuum are the A and Z type lineages. The relationship between the two is one of dependency and domination.

According to Freedman, a type A lineage was small in numbers and contained few, if any, landlords. Its members often rented land as tenants from the strong type Z lineage and its members. To protect itself from the assault and insult of other lineages and to mediate its contacts with the state, a type A lineage placed itself under the dominance of a strong type Z lineage, paying for this protection in service or "taxes."

A type Z lineage, in contrast, had a large population and was also internally diversified, including a large number of peasants and landlords, merchants, elite, and scholar-gentry who had good connections to the outside world. Thus, a type Z lineage could dominate a type A lineage by virtue of the resources, both networks and land, it controlled (Freedman 1958: 131-133). The strength of a dominant lineage was symbolized by its large corporate property. This corporate property, usually was in the form of land, not only created tenant dependency, but it also generated funds for lineage members to pursue the gentry path. If its members could pass the imperial civil examination, the lineage as a whole could acquire high social status. Thus, lineage property often

The strength of Freedman's lineage paradigm in explaining the political economy of type Z and type A lineages⁴ lies in his demonstration of the domination process and delineation of the context within which such domination took place. While Freedman's work was based on a study of literature, the validity of his paradigm has been empirically demonstrated by subsequent scholars working in the New Territories of Hong Kong of the Pearl River delta. I draw on their works in the following discussion to show some of the conditions supporting the process that contributed to domination.

1. Land is a scarce resource in the New Territories, and a large percentage of it is controlled by dominant lineages. Usually the land owned by a corporate lineage accounts for about 50 to 65 percent of the land in a community (see Baker 1968; J. Watson 1975; R. Watson 1985). In the community studied by Potter (1968), for example, 93 percent of the land was owned by the lineage and its branches in the 1960s. Thus, lineage corporate property in the form of land was monopolized and a large proportion of the peasantry was forced to depend on it.

⁴ Freedman's lineage theory is also about Chinese kinship as a cultural construct. But his kinship theory is based on his analysis of lineage organization as a political economy construct. For example, based on the strong lineage organization of Southeast China, he over-emphasizes patrilineal values, and de-emphasizes affinal ties. The distinction between the culture construct of kinship and the political economy construct of lineage organization is crucial. As this study shows, the effectiveness of Freedman's lineage theory as a political economy construct must be qualified. In the Yangzi river delta, for example, the social context does not meet the requirement and strong lineage organization does not exist in the region. If Freedman's lineage theory as a political economy construct does not apply, one might question the validity of Freedman's analysis of Chinese kinship as a value system. For example, James Watson, based on the over-emphasis of patrilineal values in Southeast China, produced an interesting interpretation of secondary burial. According to Watson, bones represents a male, or patrilineal essence, while flesh symbolizes a female, or matrilineal essence. In the secondary burial, after flesh has decayed, bones are picked and re-buried. This, according to Watson, represents a preservation of the patrilineal essence and rejection of the matrilineal essence. How then can we interpret this practice in a place, such as the Yangzi river delta, where strong lineages do not exist, but secondary burial does exist? Although Freedman limited himself in his literature study of Chinese lineages in Southeast China, he argues that his model should be applicable to all Chinese communities. If we find the application of the political economy construct is limited, what about his cultural construct of Chinese kinship?

lineage corporate property in the form of land was monopolized and a large proportion of the peasantry was forced to depend on it.

2. Members of type Z lineages benefit from the large corporate property directly and indirectly. They benefit directly from the profits earned from land rent and other corporate enterprises, which are distributed after ritual expenses are deducted. Indirectly, their most important benefit is the right to rent land from the corporate estate. Because available land is scarce, the opportunity for tenancy is an important asset, and a lineage member takes precedence over non-members in the competition for tenancy rights (R. Watson 1985:63-69). Additionally, a lineage member may pay a lower rent than a non-member (R. Watson 1985:68; Potter 1968:113). While a large percentage of land in the New Territories was controlled by a few type Z lineages, the rampant feuding between them barred members of one type Z lineage from renting land from another Z lineage. Because the possibility of renting other lineages' land was slim, even at a high price, members of the type Z lineage had no recourse but to depend on their own lineage. Thus inter-lineage feuding further reinforced the exclusivity of the monopolization of a type Z lineage over its own members.

3. Tenancy contracts between a type Z lineage and its members were often short-term leases. Under such lease arrangements, a contract set a specific period during which tenancy was valid. The manager of lineage property was free to change tenants at the end of this contract period (R. Watson 1985:58). Short-term leases probably functioned to prevent lineage members from claiming ownership of ancestral property after cultivating it for an extended period of time. But the ability to revoke tenancy gave a type Z lineage the ability to punish and reward its members by withholding or conferring rights to its monopolized means of production. Thus corporate property became a source of economic power.

4. The wealth of a type Z lineage was an asset that attracted a large number of agnates to live together. In an age in which success in battle often depended upon numbers, a type Z lineage with a large population could effectively protect its own territory, guard against encroachment from outsiders, and oppress weaker lineages in its territory. Those lineages with smaller populations were easily bested and forced to give up their land (J. Watson, 1977). They were reduced to satellite lineages of a dominant lineage and became its tenants. Each dominant lineage had its own territory, which was populated by its own members and those of its smaller satellite lineages. For example, the dominant lineage studied by Rubie Watson (1990) controlled a fifteen-square-mile territory, which encompassed fourteen satellite villages inhabited by dependent tenants. The dominant lineage studied by James Watson (1977) also controlled fifteen square miles of land, including about 10 satellite lineages. The dominant lineage included 20 times more people than did a dependent satellite lineage.

There were two kinds of armed forces in a lineage. First, there was the militia in which all able-bodied men in a dominant lineage were mobilized to defend the lineage in inter-lineage feuds. Second, in times of peace, there was the regular armed force of a dominant lineage, the village guard. As a permanent security force, the village guard had to have a regular revenue. This was partly generated by forcing satellite lineages to pay various protection fees to the dominant lineage. A village guard exemplified the power of the dominant lineage. Satellite lineages were not allowed to form their own village guards because they might develop into a rival institution. Through its military force, the dominant lineage always kept their satellite lineages under tight control. According to James Watson, "there is no evidence that a 'tenant's revolt' ever occurred in the San Tin area even though such disturbances were common in South China during the late nineteenth

century" (1977:174). This is an important indication of the domination of the Z type lineages in the New Territories.

5. Satellite lineage members rented land from a dominant type Z lineage through a type of arrangement called perpetual lease or the "one field, two owners" system. Under this arrangement, a piece of land is divided into topsoil and subsoil. The owner of topsoil pays rent to the owner of the subsoil and retains the right to farm the land without fear of eviction by the subsoil owner as long as he has paid his rent. He could also sublease or sell his topsoil right to others (R. Watson 1985:57-58). We have noted the precarious nature of the short-term lease a type Z lineage used with its own lineage members and how it encouraged dependency. The perpetual leases used with satellite lineage members would seem to weaken the economic power of the dominant lineage over satellite lineage tenants because they precluded the termination of tenancy as long as the rent was paid. If this is the case, why were the satellite lineages involved in perpetual rather than short-term leases? According to James Watson (1977:170), the answer can be found in the way rents were collected under the different lease systems. While under the short-term lease system, individuals paid rent, under the perpetual lease system, a satellite lineage paid rent to the dominant lineage as a group. Thus the satellite lineage, as a whole, became tenant to the dominant lineage. Although individual tenants in a satellite lineage could sell their topsoil rights to their own lineage members, they could not sell them to individuals outside of the lineage. Thus, under the perpetual lease system, a satellite lineage was perpetually bound to the land of the dominant lineage, becoming a kind of serf of the dominant type Z lineage. The village guard of the type Z lineage was the physical force that kept the satellite lineage in line.

Obviously, Freedman's lineage paradigm cannot be used to describe power relations without extensive qualification. We cannot designate a

lineage as type Z simply because it controls large corporate property. This has, however, often been done by scholars (e.g., Kuhn 1970:77-82; Schoppa 1982: 48-52). To argue that corporate property is the source of domination, we must demonstrate that it constitutes economic power: that the corporate property can be used to punish and reward a lineage's own members and those in weaker lineages. Without these qualifications, the presence of large corporate property only means that a lineage is wealthy, not that it can translate that wealth into power.

Discussion

When power is used heuristically, the existence of power is assumed a priori; someone or some group must be in the dominant position and others must be dominated. When scholars assume a priori the existence of power, they then hunt for the origins and indications of power relations. For sinologists, the power of elites is often indicated by institutions established through elite activism, elite networking, landlordism, large lineage corporate property, and the monopolization of resources under the collective system. These institutions become the criteria upon which the assertion of elite domination is based. I do not object to the idea that these institutions may be the basis of elite power, but I maintain that there is a pre-condition that such arguments must meet if they are to constitute a robust explanatory framework. Based on the definition of power I have offered, I contend that domination exists only when elites can punish and reward commoners by monopolizing the means of production. The relationship between the dominant and the dominated can be either amicable or hostile. The cultural values and practices of the dominant can be either envied and imitated or despised and rejected. But only when a dominant person or group has the ability to punish and reward will the dominated not dare to fight back when "his toe has been stepped on" by the dominant. The

advantage of my definition is that it does not presume the existence of power in every social relationship. If the means of production are not monopolized and no one is able to punish and reward others effectively, then power does not exist. If one cannot punish and reward others (which means having two parties in a power-dispersed structure), all the elite institutions, networks, landholdings, lineage property, and the monopolization of resources by collective units cannot bring commoners into submission. Based on this definition of power and those of power-concentrated and power-dispersed structures, I examine power relations under the three economic systems in Shuitou's recent history.

The Organization of This Study

This study is organized into seven chapters. In Chapter Two, I present a general ethnographic picture of Shuitou in the mid-1990s. In Chapters Three, Four, and Five, I examine the relationship between elites and commoners in three periods of Shuitou's history: pre-1949, between 1950 and 1983; and post 1984. Each of the three periods is characterized by a particular type of economic system: the small peasant economy in the pre-1949 period; the collective economy in the period between 1950 and 1983; and a market economy in the post-1984 period. These three economic systems were commonly found in all parts of China in these three periods. At local level, however, the economic systems might manifest themselves differently from one community to another. The local manifestation of an economic system is described here as economic formation. Chapters Three, Four, and Five examine the economic formation of Shuitou in the three periods and to discover whether elites could punish and reward commoners by economic means. In the small peasant economy, I examine the relationship between landlords and peasants. In the collective economy, I examine the relationship between production team cadres and members of production teams. In the market economy, I

examine the relationship between button factory owners, button salespersons, and button factory workers because the button industry employs nearly half of Shuitou's working population).

After studying the relationship between elites and commoners in the three periods, I examine village kinship. Chinese society is often referred as kin organized. Were elites in these three periods of Shuitou's history able to organize their agnates into a corporate lineage? The corporate lineage is not only an expression of kin relations, but a jural, political, and economic organization with clear hierarchical relations between agnates. A highly organized lineage with the ability to attract a large number of agnates and to control and regulate the behavior of its members epitomizes the power of elites over commoners. Did corporate lineages exist in Shuitou in the three periods? If lineages did not exist, what were patrilineal relations like in Shuitou? Can we see any clear differences between Shuitou and places that are dominated by corporate lineages? Lineage and patrilineal kinship is examined in Chapter Six.

Chapter Seven summarizes and concludes this study. Bases on the power structure in the three periods in Shuitou's history, I compare the periods with some of the paradigms that dominate the interpretation of these three periods of Chinese history.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SETTING OF SHUITOU VILLAGE

One of the most important factors affecting anthropological field work is the relationship between the field worker and local people. Anthropologists are often seen as intruders, and a critical issue they confront is how to lessen local people's suspicion and build trust to help ensure a successful study. It was for this reason that I went to Shuitou for my work. Shuitou is the natal home of my father's sister's husband, and his brothers and mother still live there. My father likes country life and planned to find a rural area for his retirement. Shuitou is what he had in mind: a beautiful village inhabited by relatives you can count on and close to a major city (Shanghai). Since 1990, my family has been visiting Shuitou, and in 1992, my father and his sisters, along with several friends, decided to build houses there. With a house in the village, I become a resident. Of course, I am not totally accepted as a villager. My family is not recorded in the official household registration, and we do not enjoy the social benefits ordinary villagers do. But, at least, I have the right to stay there for as long as I like. I can have conversations with villagers as neighbors. I began my fieldwork after requesting permission from village leaders to conduct research in the village. They granted my request because I had built good rapport with them, and they knew I would not do anything to harm the village. After all, my family has invested a lot in Shuitou. As a Chinese saying goes: "A monk can run away, but his temple cannot." If I did anything stupid, they knew where to find me.

Often an anthropological field work is conditioned by what one finds in the site chosen. In a sense, I did not choose Shuitou, but Shuitou chose me. In this chapter, I describe the general setting of the village.

Geography

Shuitou is located in the Yaoshui township of Jiashan county, Jiaxing district, Zhejiang province. The village borders Wujiang county of Jiangsu province to the north and is about 6 km from Qingpu county, Shanghai municipality, to the northeast. Shuitou is located in the center of the Yangzi delta. The Yangzi delta covers the present-day Jiaxing district and Huzhou district in Zhejiang Province, Suzhou district in Jiangsu province, and Shanghai municipality. Bordered by the Yangzi River to the north and Hanzhou Bay to the south, the region is generally under 5 meters above sea level and slopes toward Lake Tai. Lake Tai basin generally lies less than 3 meters above sea level. The lowest area is southeast of Lake Tai, as low as 1.7 meters in Wujiang county. The Lake Tai basin is characterized by crisscrossing waterways. Fields surrounded by waterways often require embankments. The land embanked is called *yu* or "polder." Waves splash on polder fields and their embankments constantly need repair. After heavy rain fall, water clogging within the polder field is always a problem. Away from the center of Lake Tai basin, the ground rises to 3 to 5 meters, making better drainage and better soil (Huang 1990 21-22). Figure 2.1 shows the Yangzi delta and the location of Shuitou.

Land in Jiashan county slopes from south to north. The northern part of Jiashan, which covers about 60 percent of the land in the county, is about 3.2 to 3.6 meters above sea level. The remaining 40 percent in the south is about 4 meters above sea level. The southern "highland" area is

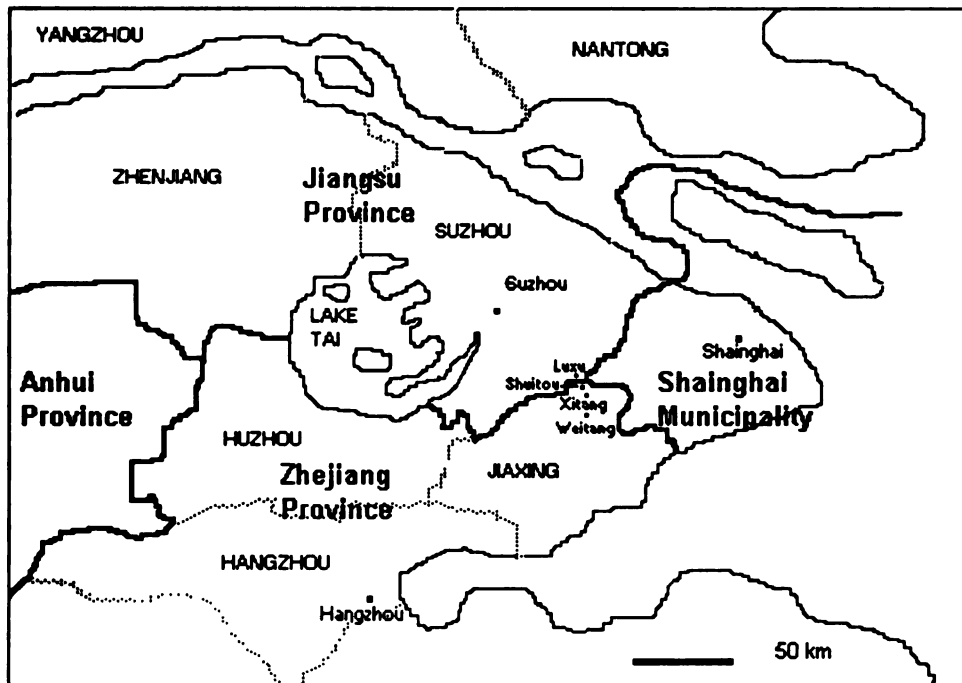


Figure 2.1. The Yangtze delta and the location of Shuitou

dotted with small isolated mounds about 4.5 meters above sea level, while the northern "lowland" area is completely flat. The low elevation of the county is shown in its many lakes and waterways, which cover 14.9 percent of the total area (Jiashan County Gazetteer 1995, 102; 284). Most major waterways in the county run from north-south. With the exception of one waterway dug in the late 1950s and early 1960s, most east-west waterways are small.

Easy irrigation made Jiashan a major rice producing region. Fields in both the north lowland area and the south highland area in Jiashan are encircled by embankments. There are three major cropping patterns in cultivating these polder fields: (1) barley (from November to May), early rice (from May to July), and late rice (from August to October); (2) soy bean/rape seed (from November to May) and late rice (from July to November); and (3) barley (from November to May), watermelon (from May

to July), and late rice (from August to October). According to the Jiashan County Gazetteer (1995: 229-230), the first pattern was predominant in 1990, including about 68.35 percent of all land under cultivation. The second crop pattern included about 22.78 percent of land under cultivation. The remaining 8.87 percent was cultivated under the third pattern.

The average annual temperature in Jiashan county is 15.5 degrees centigrade. The coldest month is January with average temperatures of 3.4 degrees centigrade. From the end of December to early March, there are about 8.7 snow days. The hottest month is July with average temperatures of 27.7 degrees centigrade. The average highest temperature in a year is about 35 degrees centigrade. Although the weather in the county is not extreme, the air is always humid. The average annual precipitation is about 1,104.2 mm, but the average annual evaporation is 1,326.8 mm, 222.6 mm higher than the annual precipitation (Jiashan County Gazetteer 1995, 103-106). The high humidity often makes the weather feel hotter or colder than the absolute temperature would indicate.

The largest town in Jiashan county is Weitang, which also functions as the county seat. Weitang is located between the lowland area of the north and the highland area of the south and is the regional center of the southern highland area. The second largest town of the county is Xitang, which is the center of the northern lowland area. A road and a major waterway running north-south connect the two towns. Most other towns in the county are connected to either Weitang or Xitang but not to both.

Shuitou is located in the northern tip of Jiashan county. Prior to 1994, Shuitou could not be reached by car. Using the southern route to Shanghai, a 30-minute walk or a 15-minute boat ride, brings the traveler to Yaoshui township, about 2 km southeast of Shuitou. From Yaoshui, a

person can hire a motor-tricycle to Xitang, about 5 km south of Yaoshui. From Xitang there are regular bus routes that travel southward to Weitang. From Weitang, one can take either the Shanghai-Hangzhou railroad or the state highway to Shanghai. It takes about three hours to reach Shanghai on this route. The northern route cuts the traveling time in half. A 20-minute boat ride brings one to Luxu, a market town about 5 km northwest of Shuitou in Jiangsu province. From Luxu, one can reach Shanghai by the state highway.

Shuitou is an "administrative village" (*xingzheng cu*) composed of three "natural villages" (*ziran cu*) or hamlets: the North, the West, and the South. The West hamlet is in middle between the South and the North hamlets. All the three hamlets are situated west of Luhe, the village's main waterway. Connecting Yaohe (the major shipping route of Yaoshui township) in the south, Luhe runs north, passes by the South hamlet and reaches the southern edge of the West hamlet. Then it turns east for about 60 meters then turns north again and passes by the North hamlet, then reaches Lake Huang. Across Lake Huang to the northwest is Luxu in Jiangsu province. Several smaller waterways run perpendicular to Luhe and create several pockets that encircle settlements in South and West hamlets. The North hamlet, on the other hand, is mainly built on the two sides of Yahe which connects to Luhe.

The West and the South hamlets are separated by Luhe and Nanhe. The North and the West hamlet is separated by a rice field which the main village road cuts across through it from east to west. A second village road runs perpendicular to the main village road linking the West hamlet and the North hamlet. These two roads are broadened in 1994 and passable for cars. Except a few houses located on the sides of the two main roads, however, no car can stop in front of village houses. In Shuitou, individual houses are connected by narrow trails, about 50 cm in width.

The village government laid cement-board on these narrow dirt road to prevent walking through mud in the rainy season.

All the public buildings, except the new elementary school which still under construction in 1995, are located in the West hamlet. The old village elementary school and the office building of the village government are on the west bank of Luhe. There are two button blank factories and a paper box factory located in the pocket created by Nanhe and Beihe. This pocket is the "industrial zone" of Shuitou. The second village road, which ends at the factories' front doors, is mainly built to benefit this "industrial zone." Figure 2.2 shows the geographical location of the village houses and public buildings in Shuitou.

Population

Shuitou is an old community. The names of the South and the North hamlets were recorded in the 1547 edition of the Jiashan County Gazetteer. The name of the West hamlet first appears in the 1893 edition of the Jiashan County Gazetteer, but a wooden plaque engraved in 1792 indicates the West hamlet is at least 100 years older. Thus, the South and the North hamlet were settled at least 400 years ago, and the West hamlet was settled at least 200 years ago. Unfortunately, the four editions of Jiashan County Gazetteer compiled during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) do not offer any information on the original composition of village population.

Shuitou had 318 households and a population of 1,028 (522 male and 506 female) by the end of 1994.¹ Average population per household is about 3.23. West Hamlet is the smallest with a population of 180 (86

¹ The demographic data is based on the 1994 official village household records.

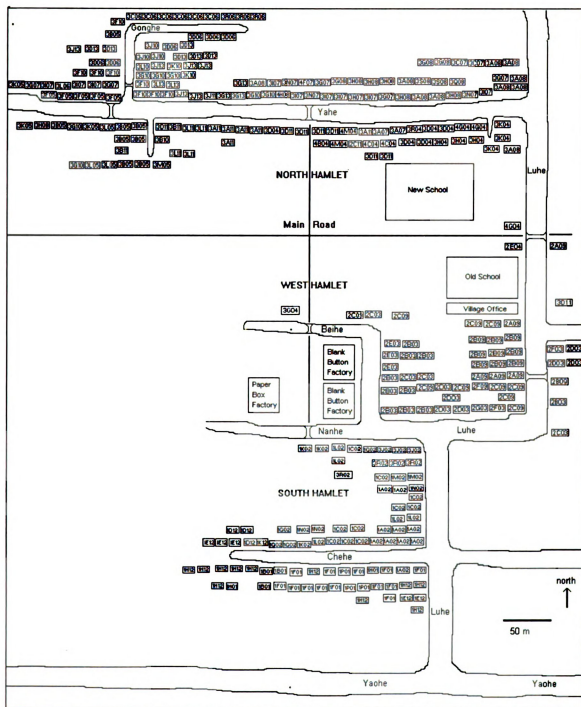


Figure 2.2. Map of Shuitou village.

Note: Each household is given two sets of codes. The first code (a number and a letter) denotes descent group (shown in the left column of Table 2.2). The second code (two numerical numbers) denotes production team.

male and 94 female). South Hamlet is the second largest, with a population of 282 (144 male and 138 female). North Hamlet is the largest, with a population of 566 (292 male and 274 female). In the village household records, however, villagers are not organized by hamlets but production teams.²

Production team is an administrative unit but founded on geographical proximity. There are 13 production teams in Shuitou in the mid-1990s. The South hamlet has 3 production teams; the West hamlet has 2 production teams; and the North hamlet has 8 production teams. Table 2.1 shows the number of people in each production team and hamlet arranged according to the gender and birth year of team members.

Each of the three hamlets is multi-surnamed. There is a total of 21 surnames in the village. Both the South and the West hamlets have 5 surnames, the North hamlet has 16 surnames. Some surnames occur in two or in all three hamlets. The largest surname in the West hamlet is Dong, with 131 people (72.78 percent of total population of the West hamlet). The largest surname in the South hamlet is the, with 184 people (65.25 percent of total population of the North hamlet). There is no surname that occupies more than 30 percent of population in the North hamlet. The largest surname in the North hamlet is Long, with 135 people (23.85 percent of total population of the North hamlet). The second largest is Cheng, with 112 people (19.79 percent of total hamlet population). The third largest is Gong, with 94 people (16.61 percent of total hamlet population).

While some surnames may occupy a large portion of hamlet population, this does not mean that people of the same surname must be descendants of a common ancestor. In compiling villagers' genealogies, I find there

² This term is a legacy of the collective period when the production team was the basic economic unit. After decollectivization in 1984, the production team lost its main function as an economic unit of ownership and accounting and was renamed a cooperative. But since villagers still refer to cooperatives as production teams, I will also refer them as such.

are 44 descent groups in the village. Members of a descent group can either demonstrate genealogical relationship with other members or at least be certain they all descended from a same ancestor. All the large surname groups mentioned above can be divided into at least 3 descent groups. However, since most villagers can only demonstrate descent relationship within three or four generations above, we cannot rule out the possibility that people of the same surname but of different descent groups are indeed descendants of a common ancestor.

The shallow genealogical knowledge presents a problem of discussing the origins of villagers. Most villagers cannot tell where and when their ancestors first settled in Shuitou. However, exceptions do occur. There are seven families who migrated to Shuitou during the 1930s and 1940s. Two families migrated from Luxu. One family came from Yangzhong in Jiangsu province north of the Yangzi river. The remaining four families came from villages in the vicinity. But these families have only been in Shuitou for about two generations and their numbers are small, only 40 people by the end of 1994. Table 2.2 shows the distribution of surnames and descent groups in each of the 13 production teams and the three hamlets.

Besides the villagers, Shuitou also has about 220 migrant workers by the end of 1994. These migrant workers are employed by 41 village button factories (employ about 180 people in total) and four cement-board workshops (employ about 40 people). Almost all the button factory workers are young women around 20 years of age. They come from inland provinces as far as Sichuan and Guizhou and travel to the coastal region seeking employment. Some are introduced to button factory owners by middlemen, some are brought to the village by friends who already worked in Shuitou. All of them are hired on individual basis. The workers for the cement-board workshop are men in their twenties and thirties. Workers for a cement-board workshop are hired as a group. They are

Table 2.2. Distribution of surnames and descent groups according to production team and hamlet.

Hamlet				South			West		North							
Production Team				1	12	2	3	9	4	11	5	10	6	13	7	8
Code	Descent Group	House Number	Number of People													
	Total	318	1028	83	61	14	90	90	71	60	72	80	60	61	84	78
1A	Tien	10	30			30										
1B	Chien-1	3	9	9												
1C	Chien-2	10	39			39										
1D	Yeh-1	3	7		7											
1E	Gong-1	5	16		16											
1F	Gong-2	13	50	50												
1G	Gong-3	5	20			20										
1H	Gong-4	13	38	5	33											
1K	Gong-5	6	16		5	11										
1L	Gong-6	5	14			14										
1M	Gong-7	1	4			4										
1N	Gong-8	3	9			9										
1P	Gong-9	2	9	9												
2A	Chao	6	23					23								
2B	Dong-1	20	60				31	29								
2C	Dong-2	14	46				16	27		3						
2D	Dong-3	7	25				25									
2E	Xio	4	9				8		1							
2F	Wu	5	12				5	7								
2G	Gong-10	3	9				5	4								
3A	Ma	19	56							14					8	34
3B	Yu	13	39							5	33	1				
3C	Cheng-1	10	30										23		7	
3D	Cheng-2	23	82						16	22			27	17		
3F	Jin-1	14	50								19	31				
3G	Long-1	18	66									27		13	14	12
3H	Long-2	12	32						8						3	21
3I	Long-3	12	37												37	
3J	Gong-11	17	54			8				9		12		25		
3K	Gong-12	7	21						7		9	5				
3L	Gong-13	7	19							5	4	4		6		
3M	Mei	2	7								7					
3N	Wei	3	10												10	
3O	Chin	1	6						6							
3Q	Dong-4	1	1													1
3R	Kwei-1	7	27			13			4				10			
3S	Yeh-3	2	6													6
4B	Jin-2	1	2						2							
4C	Hong	2	8						8							
4E	Wang	1	2							2						
4F	Li	2	5												5	
4G	Kwei-2	3	10						10							
4H	Zhang	1	4													4
4M	Yeh-3	2	9						9							

Note: Each descent group is given a code. The code is represented by a number and a letter. The number represents where the majority of members of the descent group resided: 1 means that the majority of the members of that descent group lived in the South hamlet; 2, the West hamlet; 3, the North hamlet; and 4 represents 7 descent groups that came to Shuitou in the 1930s and 1940s.

usually relatives or close friend from a same village. Migrant workers first appear in Shuitou in around 1990. Most of them work for one or two years and then would leave. There has yet been any case where migrant workers have settled in the village for good.

Prior to 1949, there was less than 500 people in Shuitou. In 40 years of time, population has doubled. Between 1945 and 1975, there was a high birth rate period. After around 1980, the Chinese government started a birth control program and the birth rate decreased dramatically. Two methods are used to reduce birth rate. First, the government instituted a minimum marriage age. The minimum marriage for men is 25 years of age, and it is 23 years of age for women. In Shuitou, young couples often are engaged 3 to 4 years earlier than the state instituted marriage age. A couple, however, can only register their marriage and legally reproduce after the minimum age is reached. In 1980, the state also instituted a one-child policy. Chinese parents depend on their sons for their old age. In a patrilineal society where daughters marry out, this one-child policy met strong resistance if the only child was a girl. In 1984, the government allowed a woman can give birth to a second child if the first child is a girl, or if the first child is handicapped, or the first child died. In Shuitou, the second child can only be born seven years after the birth of the first child, except if the first child is died. If a villager couple does not follow this rule, they will be fined. The amount of fine depends on the couple's income. If a second child is born against the above rule, the couple will be fined with 15 percent of their combined annual income for 5 years. If a third child is born against the rule, 30 percent of their combined annual income will be fined. However, I have not heard a person actually been fined. In my investigation, no one has violated the birth control policy. This does not mean villagers do not object the population policy. The woman who directs birth control has a boy. For

those villagers who did not give birth to a boy, the birth control director is often been accused of being selfish and not sympathetic to other people's problem.

Villagers adamantly deny that they practice any female infanticide. The 1893 edition of Jiashan County Gazetteer also recorded that people in the county did not practice infanticide. However, after 1980, the birth rate of baby boy outnumbered that of baby girl. The ratio between boy and girl born between 1975 and 1984 was 1: 0.83. The ratio became 1: 0.74 between 1985 and 1994. Villagers offered two explanations. First of all, a baby girl may be give out for adoption. Once the baby girl is been adopted by someone else, one can claim of not giving birth. Second, a pregnant woman can do ultrasonic test to detect the gender of the fetus. If it is a girl, abortion may take place. Figure 2.3 shows the population structure in Shuitou. The increase birth rate between 1985 and 1994 from the previous period was probably because the new policy which allows for a second child be born after 7 years if the first child was a girl.

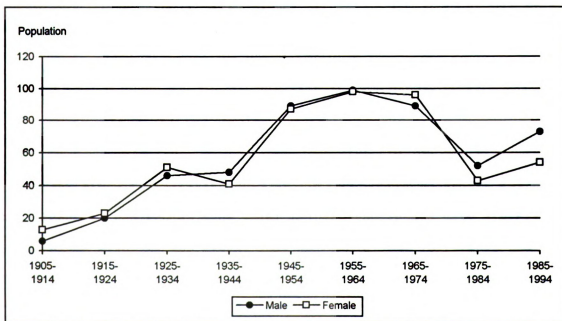


Figure 2.3. Gender and Age in Shuitou

Living Conditions

Housing

All the houses in Shuitou are invariably facing south. This is mainly to receive summer wind blows from south. Villagers can open their doors to cool down temperature. On the other hand, the cold winter wind blows from north will not enter the house even if the front door is left opened. All the houses in Shuitou are built with brick and roofed with tiles. Almost all the houses in Shuitou were re-built in the 1970s and 1980s when the baby boomers reached marriage age. Most of them are two-stories with a balcony for hanging clothes. Each floor often has three rooms. The second floor is invariably used as living quarter. If there is not enough space (because more rooms are needed for housing migrant workers, or if parents are living with their married sons), villagers also have bed rooms on the first floor. Generally, the first floor is used for daily functions. The front room in the first floor is used for working, such as the shop floor for a button processing factory; for storing farm tools or grain; for entertaining guests. If there is a bed room in the first floor, the east wing to the front room is the chosen over the west wing. For the villagers, the east as having a higher "ritual value" than the west. The senior generation is always live on the east side of the house and the junior on the west. The west wing of the first floor is generally used as kitchen, which sometimes has a door that leads to pig pen at back yard. All village houses have a concrete yard in the front of the house. This is mainly used for drying and processing harvested grain. If the space is not enough in the main house, villagers often build small one story building(s) around the concrete yard for storing farm tools and for cooking.

The houses in Shuitou are all built by two privately operated construction teams in the village. Each of the teams are headed by a master plaster. The construction method and layout of the village houses are very much alike. When one enters the front door, the room is often deeper than its width. This is mainly caused by the material used for house construction. Villagers use pre-fabricated cement-board as the floors of their two story houses. The cement-board is about 4 meter long and 50 cm in width. The width of a room is constrained by the length of cement-board, about 3.5 meter at maximum. If a villager wants to build a wider room, a reinforced concrete beam has to be built across the ceiling. The costs for the concrete beam is high and the village construction teams do not have the technique to do it. The cement-boards are manufactured by cement-board workshops in the village.

The village government installed running water for every household. The water is pumped from a deep well and stored in the village water tower. From the water tower, water flows down through pipeline by gravity. Every household is also connected with electricity. However, the volume of water pipe and the capacity of electric transformer are limited. Some households have refrigerators and washing machines. But the high consumption of electricity often leave them unused. Most houses have gas ranges. Villagers bought tanks of propane gas from market towns. The gas range is used mostly for frying. For steaming and boiling, villagers use the traditional stove which use straw as fuel. A traditional stove is about 1 meter high constructed by bricks and leaning against a wall. A chimney is build onto the wall. On the side of the stove has a small opening for adding fuels. There are generally two large stove tops for holding woks and a smaller one for holding a pot to boil water. Some houses have flushing toilets. But since a flushing toilet needs a septic tank and village houses are packed rather closely, there is not always space for digging a septic tank. Most villagers

still use the traditional wooden buckets for their night soil. Night soil is dumped into a large ceramic container and later used as fertilizer. Some houses have electric fan, and two wealthy villagers have installed air conditions in their bed rooms. Except some posters and pictures of family members, village houses are not decorated. A bed room is usually consisted of a bed, with mosquito net hanging above it, a chest for storing clothes, and sometimes a desk. Most households have a television set. For the poorer villager, it is the 13 inch black-and-white. For the more affluent villagers, it is often a 20 inch color TV. The television set is generally set in the bed room of family head.

Transportation

Village houses are built around Luhe and the smaller waterways connecting to it. Compare to the relatively inaccessible main village road and the narrow trail linking village houses, the thoroughfare for villagers are waterways. Many village households have a boat. Traditionally boats are constructed with wooden planks. But wooden boats are expensive to build and difficult to maintain. By the 1990s, all the boats in Shuitou are built by cement. A cement boat is constructed by applying cement on a mode made of iron bars. Cement boat is cheaper and easy to maintain. A leak can be repaired simply by applying cement on it. A cement boat is heavy and stable. Since it is heavy, all the cement boats are propelled by diesel engines. The loud noise of diesel engine often disturbs the tranquillity of the village. While the use of diesel engine means that villagers no longer need to row boats, it also means that villagers have to spend money on fuel. Without absolute need, villagers will not take a boat ride.

For short distance travel, such as to the market town of Xitang, villagers ride their bicycles. In Shuitou, the adoption of bicycle as means of transportation is less than 20 years. Before the construction

of village road and the road from Yaoshui to Xitang in 1970s, the small dirt trail in the village was not suitable for people to practice bicycle riding. Boat was the only means to connect to the outside world. Many older villagers still do not know how to ride a bicycle. There are about ten motorcycles in the village by 1995. After the village road was broadened in 1994, one villagers bought a second hand light truck for his transportation business. But for transporting heavy and bulky goods, such as harvested grain, boat is often the only choice.

Shopping

The main staple in the village is rice which villagers grown themselves. Villagers also grow their own vegetables and raises their own chicken and ducks. For goods not produced by themselves, there are seven grocery shops in the village which sell soy bean sauce, noodles, cigarettes, wines, snacks and other food stuffs. There are three shops that sell pork and beef. Some villagers raise pigs. Shop owners buy pigs from these villagers which shop owners butchered themselves. There are about two to three pigs slaughtered each day. One shop owner also supplies pork to retail shops in market towns. There is no cattle in Shuitou. Beef sold in grocery shops are bought from market towns. Two grocery shops also sell cooked meat dishes. One of the shops painted a room which functions as a restaurant. The restaurant provides a formal setting where villagers can entertain important guests. Occasionally, there are traveling peddlers who sell fruits and fishes to villagers. These peddlers are outsiders who carry their goods on boats which park by the village bridges. For the goods not sold in the village, people go to market towns. The two market towns which villagers often go is Luxu and Xitang. For the smaller goods that can be carried on bicycles, villagers go to Xitang. For heavier and bulky goods, such as appliance, villagers travel to Luxu by boats.

Recreation

Watching TV is probably the most popular entertainment in the 1990s. However, reception of signal is not good. Usually one can receive two channels of the state-run Central Television, and two channels from stations in Shanghai. Jiashan county also has its own TV station which mainly reports news of the county. Sometimes one can also receive TV signals emitting from other stations in Jiangsu and Zhejiang. Most programs on TV are soap operas, sports, cartoon, and news program. Except in the daily news of the state-run Central Television, there is not much political propaganda. There are some foreign films, all have been dubbed with Chinese. Several families own VCRs. They can rent tapes from market towns. One grocery shop even have a video room which shows two movies every night. For those villagers who seek more exciting entertainment, they can go gambling or watch others gamble. There is a room attached to every village grocery which functions as a gambling room. The shop provides a place for the gamblers who often feel obliged to buy some snacks and cigarettes from it. The shouting and cursing in the game and large sums of money changing hands provides a living drama unmatched by the soap opera on TV. The village government is acquiescent about gambling. However, township police sometimes come to village to raid on village gambling. Villagers claim that the money confiscated often is embezzled by the police.

Village Government

As in all Chinese villages, the governing of Shuitou is through a two track system: the state bureaucracy and the party bureaucracy. On the state bureaucracy side, Shuitou village government answers to township government, which in turns answers to the county government. In

the village government, the main personnel are village head, deputy village head, villagers' representative, and three accountants. The village head, deputy village head and villagers' representative are elected by villagers every four years. The village accountants are recruited by village government. There is a Communist party branch in the village which is headed by a party secretary. The party secretary is appointed by party branch in the township. Since village head is also party member and subordinate to the party secretary in party hierarchy, the party secretary is the true leader of Shuitou.

One main function of the village government is to calculate villager's tax and the amount of grain that each village household must sell to the state based on the compulsory procurement quota. Tax and grain procurement is levied on household rather than individual person. Both the tax and procurement are calculated in terms of land acreage a household cultivates. The state tax counts about 5 percent and the state procurement counts about 45 percent of annual grain production. The procurement price changes every year. It is usually about 10 to 15 percent lower than the current market price. After the decollectivization in 1984, on average, each villager received about 1.6 mu of land (1 mu is about 1/6 of an acre). The state promised the land distributed to individual households in 1984 would not change for 15 years. The state's ability to re-distribute the land means that villagers have cultivation rights but not ownership rights to the land they farm. Villagers cannot sell their land to fellow villagers. If a person decided to forego certain amount of land, he/she must find another person who is willing to cultivate that piece of land and pay for the state tax and procurement quota. The change of cultivation rights are recorded on village account book so the village government can transfer the burden of tax and procurement grain from the giver to the receiver.

The village government's main income is based on leasing out its property to village industries. The most important of which are the four cement-board workshops and three factory buildings. A cement-board workshop needs a large field (at least the size of two basket ball fields). Village government holds an auction every year to lease out the four fields to the highest bidders. The three factory buildings are leased out to two village button blank factories and one paper box factory. The lease price is not set by auction but decided by the village government. This is mainly because there is no competition for leasing these buildings. Another income for the village government is the electricity and water fee collected from village households. A third source of income for the village government is the tax it extracted from villagers. There are three categories of village tax: irrigation fee, fee for maintaining village infrastructure, and fee for maintaining village welfare. Both the irrigation fee and fee for maintaining village infrastructure are based on the amount of land a household cultivates. The fee for maintaining village welfare is per capita based.

The major outlay for the village government is to pay for its staffs. Besides the village head, the deputy village head, and the three accountants, the village government also hires several people to oversee the water supply, the maintenance of electricity, the irrigation of village fields, and taking care of village trees. There are also other outlay for the village fund. For example, the broadening of village road in 1994. Usually it is the party secretary who decide how the money should be used.

Religion

Religion is reappearing in Shuitou. A dilapidated warehouse located on the site of the village temple destroyed after 1949 is converted into

a shrine. It did not have any image of god prior to 1994. In the center of the shrine, there was a table with a bamboo chair place on it. In 1994, several villagers went from house to house to ask for donation. The donors' names and the amount of money they donated are posted on the inner wall of the shrine. After the money was collected, villagers bought a statue and place it in the shrine. There is no name for the god yet. He is simply called laoye (old master), which is the general term to refer to any deity in this region. Most men claim that worshipping laoye is superstitious. However, their names, or more often the names of their wives, are always posted on the donor's list. Almost every household in the village donated money. Worshipping laoye is women's business. Every first and the fifteenth day of lunar month, village women often come to the shrine to burn incense and candle and kowtow to laoye. There is even an old woman who brings a basket of candle and incense to sell to the worshipper. Worshipping laoye is conducted by each individual. A worshipper would always express some wishes to laoye. Often the wishes are related to the success failure of one's business. As the development of village industries has differentiated villagers' social and economic standings, the utilitarian nature of the laoye worshipping has its appeal. Village government does not object nor encourage the worship of laoye.

Religious practice is most popular in the form of ancestor worship. Ancestor worship is performed three times a year in the lunar new year, the winter solstice, and the Qing-ming festival in the third lunar month. In an ancestor worship, several dishes are prepared on one's own stove (cooked food bought from outside is not allowed) and laid on a square wooden table set in the middle of the front room on the first floor. On each side of square lay two sets of eating utensils: chop sticks, bowl of rice, and cup of wine. Two candles are set in the middle of the table. Between the two candles is a bowl which holds the incense

sticks. The head of family lead family members to burn paper money and bow toward the table where ancestors are believed to be sitting and enjoy the offerings. After the ancestor worship is completed, the food for worshipping is then consumed by family members. Each family hold its own worship. There is not joint worship among agnates, such as brothers, once a family is divided. Besides the regular ancestor worship three times a year, one must also worship ancestor in major events of a family, such as marriage and construction of a house. If ancestor worship is not properly carried out, villagers say ancestors will be hungry and cause illness among family members. Not only one's patrilineal ancestor who could cause trouble, matrilineal ancestors could do so too. A village woman reports that her son get sick after visiting his mother's native village. According to this woman, it is because the child's maternal grandmother who just died loves the grandson so much that she wants to take him away with her. Only after plead with the maternal grandmother through offering did the grandchild get well.

There is a witch (*wupo*) in a near-by village. The witch have several followers in Shuitou. One follower claims that the spirits (often one's ancestors) can possess the witch and speak through her body. But the villager also claims that a spirit may speak to the witch who then related the message to others. Witch is said to be able to diagnose disease and locate lost objects. Compare to worshipping of laoye and ancestors, the village government and the Communist party is obviously more hostile toward the witch.

Kinship

There is no lineage organization in Shuitou in 1995. As a matter of fact, there has not been any lineage organization at far as villagers

can remember. For villagers, it is the agnates who are related within two or three generations are the most important relatives where patrilineal kin relationship plays out. They are expected to help each other in times of need. Within this close group of agnates, there exists a moral obligation toward each other. However, relations between them are not always amicable. The most important occasion where relationship within this close group of agnates go sour is during family division. A family is an economic unit. Before the division of family, the head of a family, usually the father, has the control of the economic unit. He control the resources of the family, determines the use of the family's labor power. The earnings of individual family members are supposedly turn into the joint family coffer and managed by the family head. Conflicts over who has contributed less but received more always disrupt the harmony within a family. This disruption becomes more intense when sons are married. In struggling for the interests of their respective nuclear families, married sons and their wives often argued with the family head about fairness of distribution of resources and use of family labor. To avoid further conflicts, family head would agree to divide the family into smaller units where each of the sons head their respective families and manage their own economic activities. All the properties of the families has to be evenly divided between the smaller units. Sometimes, the parents retain a share of property which will be divided among the brothers after the parents are gone. Conflicts over a fair division always plagues relationship between brothers. Often one's mother's brothers have to be invited as the judge of family division. After what and how to carry the family division is agreed by all parties, a contract is signed and each party retains an identical copy.

In Shuitou, family division follows two patterns. The first pattern is that after all the sons get married, they divide their parents family at once. This pattern means that the parents could at least maintain the

original family unit until all the sons are married. But generally, the parents do not have such ability. In Shuitou, the more prevalent pattern of family division is a serial one. When the first son is married and a child is born, the first son is divided from his parents' family which is then composed by the parents and their unmarried children. When the second son is married and a child is born, then he also divided from his parents' family. Often the parents would stay on with their youngest son. However, if the youngest son, or his wife, does not like to live with the parents, the youngest son may also separate from the parents' family.

This serial division of a family is related to high expense for a marriage. In recent years, the cost of marriage often approach to 30,000 to 50,000 RMB, roughly two to three years of annual income for an average family. The marriage expenses is viewed as parents' responsibility. After the first son is married, he often wants to divide from his parents' family before his younger brother is getting to marry. If he stays on, he would have to shoulder the marriage expense of his younger brother.

When a family is not yet divided, conflicts over contribution and distribution of family resources is a constant problem between brothers. But even after a family is divided, and brothers control their income and resources of their individual families, there is still conflicts over the supporting the parents. Supporting one's parents is viewed as the obligation of sons. But this does not mean they all accept this obligation without complaints. Often the aged parents are like unwanted burden kicking back and forth between the sons who accuse each other of been un-filial toward their parents.

Compare to relationship between brothers whose conflicts in family division and the responsibility toward parents which often leave bad feelings toward each other, one's relationship with affines is generally

more amicable. Unlike brothers, there is not intrinsic conflict of interest between affines. In Shuitou, women contribute a significant portion of family income and villagers claim this has made women more assertive in managing family affairs. Villagers also claim that women are more filial to their parents and their loyalty toward their natal families often bring their husbands in close contact with the wives families. This is reflected in many cases whereby village entrepreneurs are cooperating with their father-in-law or brother-in-law rather than their own fathers or brothers.

Economy

As one walks in Shuitou, the first thing catches one's eye was piles of white debris scraped off from button blanks. The first thing one hears is the roaring of the drilling and scraping machines and the tumblers for polishing buttons. Button industry is the bread and butter for Shuitou villagers. There are about 320 villagers directly employed by the button industry, which amount to about 45 percent of total village work force. The village button industry also employs about 180 migrant workers. All the button factories in Shuitou are privately owned: there are 39 button processing factories and two button blank factories. The daily button output in peak season reached about 1 million pieces a day, making Shuitou one of the major button producing region in the county.

The pillar of button industry in Shuitou is its sales persons. There are about 25 sales persons in the village. Sales persons are self employed. They contract orders from garment factories located in cities and market towns. A garment factory gives a salesperson button samples and demand certain amount of identical buttons must be delivered in certain number of days (usually within 20 days). Sales person then take

button samples to one of the two village blank factory to make blanks. After the blanks been produced, sales person then takes the blanks to a processing factories to make them into finished products. After delivering buttons to garment factory, sales person receives payment from garment factory which he then pays the blank factory for the blanks, and pays the processing fee to the processing factory. Often it takes two to four months for blank factory and processing factory to receive their money from sales person. Often a sales person has at least one processing factory that makes button for him. The relationship between processing factory and salesperson is often a close and stable one. Often the relationship between them are either brothers or brothers-in-law. A sales person needs a reliable processing factory to deliver an acceptable quality of button on time. And a processing factory needs a good sales person who can offer constant put-out jobs.

Button processing factory owner can make about 30,000 to 50,000 RMB a year³. A sales person could earn at least as much as the processing factory owner. Each of the two blank factories are co-owned by two villagers (and an outsider). All of them are also successful sales persons. Along with two other sales persons, these 6 men are the most wealthy people in Shuitou. Their annual income is estimated about 150,000 RMB. The background of these wealthy elites are quite different. The village's party secretary is one of the co-owner of a blank factory and one of the wealthiest man in Shuitou. His official post helped him in amassing wealth through bureaucratic connections. However, the other 5 men are not Communist party members nor held any official posts

³ The exact annual income of villagers is difficult to discover. It fluctuates depending on the success of the business. Villagers do not keep books on how much money they have earned. More importantly, while some villagers boast of their income to show off, other villagers are very prudent in speaking about their income. Thus, the annual incomes of villagers have to be estimated based on the source of income, such as processing buttons, and volume, such as how many buttons are processed in a year and the unit price.

before. One of them even had a "landlord" class label during the collective period.

Button processing factory offers the largest employment in Shuitou. Wage in a processing factory is based on piece rate. How much button a worker can produce determines the wage. Usually a worker can earn about 10 RMB a day. Women were usually more agile in operating the machines than men. Men, probably not willing to receive lower wages than women, are less inclined to work in the processing factories. All the workers in processing factories (except factory owners) are women. Often men involve in the village button industry are either owners of button factory, sales persons, or workers in the blank factories. In general, the ratio between women and men in village button industry is about two to one. (see Table 2.3)

Beside button industry there are other forms of rural industrialization in Shuitou. There are four cement-board workshops in the village. The pre-fabricated cement-board, which is about 4 meters by 50 cm, is used to lay as floor in house construction. Manufacturing cement-board is hard labor. Workers have to blend cement, sand, pebble, and water and dump the mix into a mode. A piece of cement-board is more than 100 kg. Four workers have to haul the board back and forth. For most villagers, to work in a cement-board workshop is too laborious. If they can find job elsewhere, no one would want to work there. While the owners of cement-board workshops are villagers, most of the hard labor are carried out by migrant workers.

The cement-board workshop is leased from the village government. The size of the four workshops are different and each of them are leased out to the highest bidder individually. Often the lease fee is as high as 20,000 RMB a year. Combining the money need to buy raw materials and machines, the investment in a cement-board workshop is higher than an average button processing factory. But its return is also higher. An

Table 2.3 Occupations in the West and North hamlets

Occupation	Farming		Button Industry		Cement board manufacturing		Transportation		Paper box factory		Grocery		Ribbon factory		Village functionary		Teacher, doctor		Work outside		Plasterer or carpenter		Peddler		Others	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Gender	46	36	74	15	19	8	33	4	3	6	8	3	2	6	12	1	2	3	32	16	18	0	5	0	10	0
Total				8																						
1915-1919		2																								
1920-1924	2	1	1						1						1				1						2	
1925-1929	5	6		2						1	2				3											
1930-1934	11	11		3						1					4				2		1		1		1	
1935-1939	9	8	4	6			1				1												1			
1940-1944	5	2	2	3	2	1					2					1			3		1			1		
1945-1949	8	3	7	14	3	2	3			1	1	1			1		1	1	4	1	1					
1950-1954	2	1	6	26	6	2	8	2	1				1	1	1		1		4		3		1		3	
1955-1959	1		8	30	5		5		1	1	1			2	1				4	2	4			2		
1960-1964	3		14	29	2	3	5	1		1	1	1	1						5		2		1	1		
1965-1969		2	15	21			7	1						1					6	4	3					
1970-1974			14	19	1		3				1			1	1			1	3	8	3		1			
1975-1979			3	4			1			1								1		1						

owner of cement-board workshop can earn at least 50,000 RMB a year. Although the return is high, the development of the cement-board manufacturing has its own limitation. A cement-board workshop needs a large piece of field which competes for farm land. The village government cannot open more cement-board workshop as it wants. The cement-boards produced in the village are mostly sold to outside construction projects, a person without good connections will not venture into the business. Because the price for cement-board and its raw material fluctuate, a person without previous experience would not dare to venture a large sum of capital investment in the cement-board business.

For men who are not employed by button industry and not willing to work in cement-board manufacturing, they often involve themselves in the transportation business. The raw material and finished products of the button factories and cement-board workshops need to be shipped in and out of the village. Since many villagers have a boat, transporting these materials becomes quite natural for many men in their thirties and forties. Transportation on rivers and waterways is not an easy task. Often the transporters have to help carry goods on and off board. They have to sleep on boat for several days and must on guard of thieves. For men over the age of fifty, they often have no such energy to participate in this business.

With the development of rural industry, the traditional farming in Shuitou is relegated to sideline. Villagers still farm. But farming is mainly to provide one's own consumption. Another reason that villagers still farm is because they have to pay their tax and meet the state compulsory procurement quota with grain. Since grain sold on the market is higher than the state procurement price, villagers would rather cultivate their own grain than buy grain on the market to pay for the tax and the compulsory procurement. But villagers are not willing to

cultivate more land than that can meet the need. Fallow land is not uncommon in Shuitou. For many villagers who are involved in rural industries, they would hire farm laborers than working in the field themselves. Except during peak agriculture seasons, one can hardly see any villagers working in the field. Without high labor input, the productivity is maintained by high input of fertilizer and insecticide.

Except a few cases, only older people who could not find job in the booming rural industries still depend their income from farming. For villagers, farming is at the bottom of their economic scale. On average, a person cultivates about 1.6 mu of land. Deducing one's own consumption need and other costs, a person can make 300 RMB of profit a year through farming. On average, a village household contains 3.2 people. A household solely based on agriculture can make 1,000 RMB a year. Compare to average worker in a button processing factory who earns about 10 RMB a day, one year's income in agriculture worth only about 3 months of salary in a button processing factory. For people who depend on farming as their main income, they still have to find other off farm jobs to make the ends meet. There are two privately operated construction teams in the village which pay 10 RMB a day for auxiliary laborers. There are about 15 older men (all over fifties) seek temporary jobs from these construction teams. However, the temporary jobs are not always forthcoming.

Button industry, cement-board manufacturing, transportation business, and agriculture are four most important income sources for villagers. However, these are not the only income sources. Table 2.3 shows the occupation of villagers in the West and North hamlets in 1995 (data on the South hamlet is incomplete, thus is not included here). The total population in the two hamlets is 746. Excluding younger generation who are still in schools or not in school yet and older generation who

are virtually retired from any work, the working force in these two hamlets is 505.

There is one paper box factory in Shuitou. The owner lease the factory building from the village government for about 10,000 RMB a year. Most workers in the paper box factory are close relatives of the owner.

There is a ribbon making factory in Shuitou. The ribbon is used for typewriters or computer printer. This privately owned factory is quite profitable. The owner's brother is said to have opened a branch office in Beijing. Probably the owner has some specially connections that can make his business successful; other villagers, lacking such connections, seldom express any interest to follow suit.

Village functionaries are those people who employed by the village. They include the village head, three accountants, and several people who oversee irrigation pumps, village water supply, electricity supply, and village roads. Many of the people who oversee irrigation pumps and village water supply, or the maintenance of village roads are former cadres. The village government gives them jobs as a sort of pension. The wages for performing the work are small, often less than 1,000 RMB a year. Most of them depend on farming as main income source. The village head and deputy village head receive about 4,000 RMB a year, and the three accountants about 3,000 RMB a year.

There is an elementary school in Shuitou. Students are drawn from Shuitou and another village to the west. Three villagers teach in the elementary school. There is also a kindergarten employing two young village women. Shuitou have two bare-foot doctors who can only administer simple medicine, and they charge fee for that. For serious illnesses, villagers go to market towns or to Shanghai for better treatment.

Shuitou has several peddlers. Most of them traveled by their boats. There is a scrap metal market in an adjacent township. Three of the peddlers buy and sell scrap metal. The other two deal with various kinds of merchandises.

There are 13 plasters and 5 carpenters in Shuitou. There was a peak time in house construction in the 1970s and 1980s. Plastering and carpentry provide the main off-farm jobs in this housing boom. Since the peak time has passed, many of the plasters and carpenters have since changed their profession to button-making. There are about six plasters (belonging to the two privately operated constructions teams in the village) and three carpenters still remain active. The remaining plasters and carpenters have to supplement their income from other sources, such as transportation.

Besides the above mention occupations, there are 10 other men who work in the village machine shop, operate a simple oil refinery to supply diesel fuel for the motor boats, and produce fish in artificial fish ponds.

Some villagers find employment in outside of Shuitou. Their occupation are diverse, for example: teachers, nurses, factory workers, drivers, township tax bureau, and clerks in grocery shops. Mainly their stay within the boundary of Jiashan county, and some of them still live in the village for most of the time.

Relationships between Elites and Commoners

Through the development of button industry and other rural industries, the economic status is stratified in Shuitou by the mid-1990s. Some factory owners and sales persons are becoming very wealthy, and villagers still depend upon agriculture as main source of income are sinking to the bottom of economic ladder. What's relationship between

the wealthy villagers who owns factories and the common villagers? Could the wealthy village elites dominate the common people? The village party secretary in Shuitou is a co-owner of a blank factory, a successful sales person, and one of the wealthiest man in the village. However, I find that villagers would ignore the command of the village party secretary if it interferes with one's welfare. And the village party secretary often has no means of enforcing his commands. Why does the wealthiest man and holder of the highest office in the village not able to control his fellow villagers? Although there is obvious economic stratification in the village, the stratification does not guarantee the domination of the wealthy elites over the common people. What caused the lack of control of the party secretary over villagers amid a high level of economic stratification? Why the economic stratification cannot be translate into a political hierarchy where the common people must obey the order of the rich?

If the wealthy village party secretary cannot control common villagers in the 1990s, could a village party secretary dominate commoners during the collective period when economic stratification did not exist but all the means of production were monopolized by collective units? Could the cadres who manage the use of monopolized resources punish and reward the common people? Prior to 1949, about 70 percent of land cultivated by Shuitou villagers were owned by absentee landlords living in market towns. There was a high degree of economic stratification between the absentee landlords in the market towns and peasants in the village, and the means of production were owned by the absentee landlords. Could this economic formation help the absentee landlords to dominant peasants in Shuitou? Can we see obvious change between elites and commoners between these three periods? In the next three chapters, I examine the relationship between elites and commoners

in three important historical periods: pre-1949, between 1950 and 1983,
and post-1984.

CHAPTER THREE

LANDLORDS AND PEASANTS

This chapter discusses the relationship between landlords and peasants in Shuitou, and in the Yangzi delta in general, prior to 1949. As owners of means of production, landlords are generally viewed as having the ability to dominate peasants who depend on their land for living. In the Yangzi delta, however, there were widespread peasant revolts against landlords prior to 1949 (see Bernhardt 1990). Evidence indicates that landlords in the Yangzi delta were weak and not able to control the peasants. The peasants, not fearing landlords' retaliation in taking away their means of production, were willing to show their discontent. In many of the peasant revolts, peasants were not resisting rent hikes but were rioting to demand that landlords lower regular rent. In the Yangzi delta, peasants were not fatalistic or passive in accepting landlords' abuses. If their interests were violated by landlords, the peasants actively attacked the landlords and asserted their rights. The peasant revolts in the Yangzi delta were not "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1985). Peasants were not secretly sabotaging landlords' granaries or humiliating the landlords through malicious gossip behind their backs. The peasant revolts were not shows of non-compliance but acts of open confrontation.

Why were peasants confident enough to openly confront the landlords? Could the landlords not withhold the means of production and make the peasants yield? If we wish to see one party as strong and the other as weak in the landlord-peasant relationship, it was probably the landlords

who were weak and the peasants who were strong. This chapter examines landlords' weaknesses and peasants' strengths from the point of view of landlords' inability to punish and reward peasants by withholding and releasing the means of production.

I first describe the general political economy of the Yangzi delta prior to 1949, with a special emphasis on the nature of landlordism. Next I examine the Shuitou peasantry, showing that there was a low level of social and economic stratification in the village. Finally, I analyze the relationship between landlord and peasant in the Yangzi delta, demonstrating how the peasants challenged the landlords, how the landlords responded to the peasants' challenge, and the power relations between landlords and peasants.

Political Economy in the Yangzi Delta

The Yangzi delta was one of the richest regions in China. For several hundred years, the easy irrigation and fertile land had made the Yangzi delta the grain basket of China. This was demonstrated by its location at the southern end of the Grand Canal, the major function of which was to transport grain produced in the Yangzi delta to the imperial court in the north. The Yangzi delta was also the most heavily taxed region in China. Government statistics for 1820 show that, although the registered land of the seven prefectures (Jiaxing, Huzhou, and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, and Suzhou, Songjiang, Changzhou, and Taicang in Jiangsu province) comprising the Yangzi delta included only 4.73 percent of total land under the Qing state taxation system, they shouldered 39.11 percent of the total state grain tax (Liang 1980:401-413). The heavy taxation, compounded by population pressure, forced peasants to pursue a commercialized economy. In the highland area of the

Lake Tai basin, peasants often switched from wet-rice production to cotton and supplemented their farm income with a handicraft industry in cotton spinning and weaving. In the lowland area of the Lake Tai basin, mulberry trees were grown on the embankment of the polder fields, and peasants supplemented their farming with silk reeling (Huang 1990: 75-87). Beginning in the sixteenth century, the Yangzi delta's status as a grain-surplus region was gradually eroded through this agricultural commercialization, and eventually the area became short in grain. In the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), the delta region imported large amounts of grain from the inland provinces in the Yangzi valley upstream. One estimate puts the import of rice at about 15,000,000 *shi* (1 *shi* equals about 160 *jin* or 80 kg) of rice a year in the Qing (1644-1911), enough to meet the annual consumption demand of entire delta population (cited in Huang 1990: 44-48). Rural people in the Yangzi delta exchanged their cotton and silk textiles for grain (produced both within the Yangzi delta and imported from the inland provinces of the Yangzi valley) with which they paid their taxes and fed themselves.

As the pace of commerce in cotton goods, silk textiles, grain, and other commodities quickened, there was rapid growth of market towns. According to Shih (1992:74), from fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the number of towns in four counties region in Lake Tai area of the Yangzi delta increased remarkably. In one county, the number of market towns grew from four in 1368 to seventeen in 1795. One estimate put the percentage of town dwellers at as much as 35 percent in Wujiang county in south Jiangsu in 1740 (cited in Bernhardt 1992: 18-19). The commercialization of the rural economy and the growth of market towns created three important factors influencing the relationship between landlords and peasants: absentee landlordism; the commercialization of land; and the "one field, two owners" land tenure system.

Absentee Landlordism

In the early Ming dynasty(1368-1644), large tracks of land in the Yangzi delta were held by residential landlords who operated managerial farms with the help of bondservants and slaves. Some of the big landlords were appointed grain tax captains by the government. The tax captains not only collected tax for the government, but also levied corvee labor for local agricultural development and construction projects, such as water control, irrigation, and roads. The whole process, from the assessment of taxes and labor services to tax collection, was managed independently by the tax captains. In assessing taxes and labor service, tax captains often manipulated their assessments to favor some and exploit others. In the early part of the 15th century, the tax captains' ability to punish and reward was seriously damaged when their authority to assess taxes and labor service was taken away by local governments in an effort to curtail their power (Shih 1992: 18-37).

To regain power, sons of tax captains often pursued political careers by taking the civil service examination. By becoming gentry (rather than tax captains), they could pressure local government officials through networks in the officialdom. In addition, gentry who passed the civil service examination were exempt from taxes and labor services. Small landholders, in order to evade taxes and labor service, often gave their land to gentry and attached themselves to gentry families as bondservants. As more land and labor went to the gentry who was exempt from taxes and labor services, the tax burden was borne by the remaining small landholders. This triggered more small landholders to attach themselves as bondservants of the gentry. (Shih 1992: 40-44)

As the political and economic power of the gentry in the rural community began to expand, increasing numbers of gentry landlords

distanced themselves from actual managerial activities and started to indulge in lives of luxury and extravagance. The management of farms was given to bondservants. Without supervision, bondservant-managers did not always act in the best interest of their gentry masters. Stealing and embezzlement of gentry landlords' property increased after the gentry's tax and labor exemption was canceled in the Qing (Shih 1992:133-135).

As market towns grew prosperous because of agriculture commercialization, they attracted the rural gentry landlords who had already distanced themselves from agriculture management. Living in town became appealing to the landlords, who sought after opportunities to accumulate wealth and were attracted by the colorful urban life. Another factor stimulating landlords' migration was social unrest. In the 1550s, Japanese pirates raided the Yangzi delta for several years. Wealthy landlords sought protection in walled cities. The Ming-Qing transition in the mid-seventeenth century and the Taiping rebellion and banditry prevalent in the mid-nineteenth century also drove the wealthy to seek sanctuary in the towns where the government bureaucracy was located. Here they were more numerous and could band together to hire mercenaries for defense. One eighteenth-century scholar estimated that 40 to 50 percent of the landowners in the delta lived in county seats; 30 to 40 percent lived in market towns; and only 10 to 20 percent resided in country villages (cited in Bernhardt 1992:17). The percentage of rural landlords probably declined to less than 10 percent after the eighteenth century as the migration to towns progressed.

The migration of the wealthy to cities can be seen in the rise of an urban gentry during the Ming-Qing periods. Shih (1992:85-86) found that urbanization was accompanied by a proportional increase in the number of gentry from urban family backgrounds and a decrease in the number of gentry from the countryside. A striking example of this change was the geographical distribution of imperial Juren degree holders (who passed

the provincial level, or the second level, of the three-level civil service examination). In Tongxiang county in Zhejiang province, the signs of change in the composition of Juren degree holders first appeared after the middle of the sixteenth century, followed by a decisive change in the later Ming and early Qing (between 1613 and 1675). During this period, rural Juren degree holders declined from 86 percent to 48 percent while those in urban areas increased from 14 percent to 48 percent. This trend became clearer between 1676 and 1703. From 1775 to 1889, rural Juren degree holders constituted no more than 1 percent of the Tongxiang scholars who passed the imperial examination. Almost all the Juren degree holders were from market towns.

Although the wealthy had moved to market towns, they still invested heavily in the rural area. Land rents were a source of steady and constant income for wealthy families. The exact amount of land owned by wealthy people living in market towns is hard to ascertain. Bernhardt estimated that at least 50 to 60 percent of farm land was owned by absentee landlords by the late 19th and early 20th centuries (1992:16). In some regions, the rate might have been as high as 75 percent (Fei 1939:191).

Commercialization of Land

As gentry landlords migrated to market towns, land became only one of the forms of investment for wealthy families in the Yangzi delta. Comparing the Yangzi delta with North China, Huang (1990:41-42) found that high per capita agricultural output and abundant water transport made for a highly commercialized peasant economy in the Yangzi delta. This high per capita agricultural output contributed to the landholding pattern in Yangzi delta. A large surplus over the subsistence level made investments in land by absentee landlords attractive and the highly commercialized economy of the area made the accumulation of capital for

these investments more feasible. According to Huang (1990:107), in Huayang in Songjiang county, Jiangsu province, "by the twentieth century, a nearly free competitive market in subsoil rights had come into being: they could be sold almost like stocks and bonds, without any regard to who owned the topsoil and who actually used the land. Most of the time the villagers were not even aware of transactions."

As land transactions became frequent and landlords bought and sold land for investment, land ownership became increasingly fragmented. In the countryside, often a peasant household rented land from two or more landlords who resided in different towns, and absentee landlords owned small pieces of land in several areas. According to Bernhardt (1992:17):

Absentee landlords seldom possessed contiguous tracts of property, owning instead tiny parcels dispersed over a broad area, frequently over several counties. In the mid-eighteenth century, for instance, a family Qu of Pinghu County (Jiaxing Prefecture) owned land scattered over 60 percent of the county. And between 1772 and 1886, a landlord family of Yuanhe purchased 490 small separated plots (totaling 990 mu) located in forty different polders.

As landlords moved to market towns, their contact with rural the population decreased. Often the only contact between absentee landlords and tenants was through rent collection. Rent could be collected in various ways. Although the simplest method was for landlords themselves to go directly to the countryside to collect rent, Fei (1939: 187-188) found that most landlords were unwilling to burden themselves by visiting several tenants living in different villages, most of whom were always ready to ask for exemptions or reductions. Thus, to minimize their trouble, landlords usually found someone else to collect the rent for them. Only a small group of petty landlords did their own rent collecting. Landlords owning large estates established their own rent collecting bureaus, and for a fee, the bureaus also collected rents for the smaller landlords.

With absentee landlordism and increasing land fragmentation, the use of rent collecting agents became a necessity for absentee landlords with large landholdings (Wiens 1980: 30-31). Under this arrangement, the relationship between landlords and their peasants became impersonal. According to Fei, peasants did not know and did not care who their landlords were; they knew only to which collecting bureau they belonged. And most of the absentee landlords knew nothing about their land, the crops grown, or even the men who paid the rents. Their sole interest was in the rent itself (Fei, 1939:187).

Since absentee landlords farmed out the rent collecting to rent collecting bureaus, rent collecting agents in some ways became the landlords to the peasants. The land for which they collected rents was very dispersed. According to Wiens (1980: 30-31):

The total acreage managed by a single bursury [rent collecting bureau] often amounted to several thousand mu and was composed of a large number of very small and dispersed plots, which sometimes extended to more than one county or prefecture and were intermingled with other plots owned by many other landlords or managed by other landlord bursuries.

A rent collecting bureau was not able to monopolize all the rent collecting in an area. Villagers were still able to rent lands from landlords using different rent collecting bureaus. In the market town of Luxu north of Shuitou, a former landlord told me that the rent collecting agents of urban-based landlords were poor relatives who also lived in the market town. According to him, absentee landlords would never trust their source of income to strangers. Without local affiliation, a rent collector was a blind mouse in the sea of fragmented plots that were spread over a vast area. Rather than an institution to promote local control, the rent collecting bureau was created to alleviate absentee landlords of the burden of rent collecting. Neither the absentee landlords nor their rent collecting agents had strong ties with the tenants.

This impersonal landlord-tenant relationship greatly reduced the chance that a landlord could influence the everyday life of his tenants. In addition, because of the dispersal of land among different absentee landlords, no single landlord (or rent collecting agency) could monopolize the means of production in the village. It also increased villagers' chances of renting land from different absentee landlords and, as a result, no peasant was totally depended upon a particular landlord. This left absentee landlord in a weak position to control his tenants who spread in different villages.

The "One Field, Two Owners" Land Tenure System

The most prevalent land tenure system adopted by the absentee landlords of Yangzi delta was the "one field, two owners" system, or dual ownership. According to Bernhardt, (1992:25-26) the "one field, two owners" system appeared to have begun to take hold in the Ming dynasty. The scattered evidence points to the existence of the system in most prefectures of the Yangzi delta by the mid-Qing.¹

In this land tenure system, the ownership rights or the subsoil rights (*tiandi*), and the cultivation rights or the topsoil rights (*tianmian*), were clearly separated. The holder of the subsoil, recognized as the legal owner of the property, was responsible for taxes and received rent from the holder of the topsoil. Although topsoil owners were tenants renting land from landlords (the topsoil owners), they held permanent rights to the topsoil. Both parties were free to mortgage or sell their respective rights, and a change in the status of one did not affect the other (Bernhardt 1992: 25). Because both topsoil and subsoil owners could freely sell their rights on the open market, land commercialization accelerated.

While the "one field, two owners" system created an environment for absentee landlords to buy and sell subsoil rights on the market with ease, it also protected tenants from eviction. A subsoil owner could evict a topsoil owner only if rent was not paid. The inability of landlords to evict their tenants at will greatly limited their ability to control their tenants through their ownership of the means of production. More importantly, even if rent was not paid, the landlords' ability to evict tenants was limited. In the 1930s, Fei found that, by law, if a tenant was unable to pay his rent for two years, his landlord could give him notice to quit the land. But the practical difficulty when evicting a tenant was to find a substitute.

Absentee landlords do not cultivate the land themselves. Outsiders from the villages will not be welcomed into the community if they come at the expense of old members. Villagers are not willing to cut the throat of their fellow members who for any good reason cannot pay their rent. [Fei 1939:185]

If they were unable to find substitutes for defaulting tenants, absentee landlords would rather let the tenants continue to farm the land, hoping they could pay back the rents later, rather than let the land lie fallow.

Absentee landlordism and land commercialization increased the social distance between absentee landlords and peasants. Through absentee landlordism, commercialization of land, and the "one field, two owners" system, a power-dispersed structure developed between absentee landlords in market towns and peasants in the countryside whereby the former could not punish and reward the latter by granting access to or withholding with the means of production.

¹ Bernhardt does not provide the exact dating of "mid-Qing." But mid-Qing usually points to a period between the mid-18th century to the mid-19th century.

Peasants In Shuitou

After landlords migrated to market towns, peasants left in the rural Yangzi delta were more or less equal in social and economic status. Differences in wealth were often simply the result of different positions in the development of family cycle. A peasant family in which the number of mouths to feed was more than the number of adult laborers might face financial difficulty and sell their subsoil or even topsoil rights. If all the members of a peasant family were adult workers, that family could lease, rent, or buy land and improve its financial situation. Thus, while one peasant household might cultivate more land than others at one particular moment, that did not necessarily allow it to be qualitatively differentiated from other households in a village. Thus Fei Xiaotong found peasants in Kaihsienkung in the 1930s were socially and economically homogeneous. According to Fei (1939: 192), the majority of the villagers belonged to a single socioeconomic stratum, and there was no clear-cut line distinguishing tenant farmers from small landholders. Based on findings of three field studies in the Lake Tai area, Shih (1992:174) also finds rural communities in this area to be relatively homogeneous and egalitarian.

Prior to 1949, the situation in Shuitou was more complicated than the egalitarian pattern generally found in the rural Yangzi delta. While most villagers were more or less equal in economic status, there was a gentry landlord family in Shuitou whose wealth and social status surpassed the rest of village households. What was the relationship between the gentry landlord family and rest of the villagers? Could the gentry landlord use wealth to control other villagers? Did the existence of this gentry landlord family make Shuitou deviate from the egalitarian pattern generally found in the rural Yangzi delta? These questions are addressed in the following sections.

Land And Land Rent In Shuitou

Prior to 1949, villagers in Shuitou were peasants who depended on agriculture for most of their income. Shuitou was comparatively land rich, although I do not have exact figures for the amount of land cultivated by the villagers prior to 1949. In the early 1960s, villagers in Shuitou cultivated about 1,800 mu of land with a population of about 550. It is likely that before 1949, the per capita land cultivation was more than the 3.3 mu of 1960s. This figure was much higher than that of Kaihsienkung (2.1 mu per person) where Fei Xiaotong (1939) did his study in the 1930s. The higher amount of land per capita land meant that there was ample land to absorb the labor force in Shuitou. Although peasants in the rural Yangzi delta often supplemented their income with handicraft industries such as silk reeling and cotton spinning and weaving, handicrafts were not an important source of income in Shuitou. Villagers claim that the soil in Shuitou was not suitable for growing mulberry trees, and thus, handicraft industry in silk reeling was out of question. I have heard that village women did weave cotton cloth before 1949, but it was mainly for home use rather than to supplement family income. The high amount of land per capita probably explains the relative underdevelopment of handicraft industries in the village prior to 1949.

Prior to 1949, some peasant-cultivators in Shuitou were small landholders who owned all the land they farmed, some were tenants who cultivated land owned by absentee landlords, and some were partly small land holders and partly tenants. On the whole, about 70 percent of the land cultivated by villagers was rented from absentee landlords. The land tenure system in Shuitou followed the "one field, two owners" system of the Yangzi delta described previously. In Shuitou, the rent a topsoil cultivator paid to the subsoil owner was called "small rent" or

"xio zhu". A topsoil cultivator could also sublease the cultivation rights to a third party and receive "big rent" or *da zhu*. The average yield for one mu of land before 1949 was about 2 *shi* of rice (1 *shi* equals about 160 *jin* or 80 kg). The average "small rent" a topsoil owner paid to the subsoil owner was 0.4 to 0.5 *shi* of rice per mu, or 20 to 25 percent of total yield.² The "big rent", however, was usually as high as 1 *shi* of rice per mu, or 50 percent of total yield. The high rate of the "big rent" reflected the fact that topsoil was the means of production. Villagers claim that the price for topsoil ownership was higher than that for subsoil ownership.

Since "big rent" was considerably higher than "small rent", peasants were not willing to rent topsoil from topsoil owners except under extreme difficulties. I have not found any villagers in Shuitou who rented topsoil and paid "big rent". There may have been some villagers who rented topsoil from other villagers, but such an arrangement must have been very rare. Without villagers willing to pay the steep "big rent", well-to-do peasants in Shuitou who owned topsoil rights had to cultivate the land themselves. If a household had more topsoil rights than its family labor power could farm, it had to either sell its topsoil rights to other villagers or hire farm laborers to help in the cultivation. Even when owners of topsoil rights hired farm laborers, they still supervise the cultivation of the land, which limited the extent of topsoil ownership. Owners of topsoil rights would face managerial problems if they increased their topsoil ownership indefinitely. This limit on the amount of topsoil well-to-do peasants could own qualitatively separated rich peasants in the countryside from

² Compared to roughly 40% of "small rent" of per mu yield peasants in Kaihsienkung peasants paid to absentee landlords, the "small rent" in Shuitou (20% to 25% of total yield) was considerably low. This was probably related to the higher per capita land ratio in Shuitou. Since land was more amply supplied in Shuitou than in Kaihsienkung, absentee landlords in Shuitou had to lower its "small rent" to attract tenants.

the absentee landlords who did not need to provide supervision and whose subsoil holdings could grow indefinitely.

In the late 1940s, there were three well-to-do peasant families in North Hamlet, all surnamed Long, who each owned 30 to 40 mu of land. They each hired 3 to 4 farm laborers to help with farm work. The amount of land they owned and the number of farm laborers they hired seem to be the limit that a well-to-do peasant family could manage. Most of farm laborers were from surrounding villages; I have not found any villager in Shuitou who worked as a long-term farm laborer. The farm laborers were contracted by land owners on yearly basis. The well-to-do peasants had to provide board for the laborers and give them certain amount of grain as wages. While they might own more land than other villagers, these well-to-do peasants had to participate in agriculture and did not enjoy the kind of leisure as absentee landlords did.

The maximum amount of land a peasant family could farm was limited not only by the supervision they could provide, but also by the number of adult laborers in a household. A family with two or three adult sons could often accumulate about 20 mu of land before family division came. In eight cases I examined in which sons had divided from their parents' households, most had received about five to eight mu of land. Over twenty years, a family could acquire enough land in proportion to its adult laborers to be divided again. In other words, the amount of land farmed by a family reflected its stage in the domestic cycle.

In summary, Shuitou's land ownership followed the general pattern in the Yangzi delta. Although there were differences in wealth among village cultivators, the differences were superficial. There was no way in which a well-to-do family could overcome the constraints of managerial problems in order to expand its land holding, nor could a well-to-do family sustain its wealth in the face of family division and the family cycle. Differences in wealth did not necessarily allow well-

to-do households to be qualitatively differentiated from other households in the village. Moreover, relationships among villagers were not of a landlord/tenant type. No villager monopolized land that others must depend on. In other words, no one could punish and reward other villagers with the means of production.

Dong Yi, the Gentry Landlord

The one that that differentiated Shuitou from the general egalitarian pattern of the rural Yangzi delta was that Shuitou had a gentry landlord, Dong Yi. Dong Yi came from a well-to-do family and had passed the lowest level of civil service examination during the Qing dynasty. After acquiring gentry status, he was able to marry a rich man's daughter who brought a sizable dowry to the family, making Dong Yi very wealthy and able to give his three sons higher education. Two of his sons even studied abroad. All of his three sons had married the daughters of wealthy urban families. Dong Yi died before 1949, leaving about 100 mu of land in Shuitou. We do not know how much time the Dongs actually spent in the village each year, but the Dong family's social world, at least for the three sons, was beyond Shuitou. It was very likely they lived outside the village for most of the time prior to 1949 because by the time the Communists came to power, the three sons had totally abandoned their residence in Shuitou. Their education and connections to the outside world provided them with advantages that enabled them to survive after the revolution: the oldest son retired from a position as a railroad engineer in Canton; the second son is a geologist living in Shantung; and the third son is a physician living in Shanghai. The Dong family story is that of an upwardly mobile rural gentry family. Their mobility was exhibited not only in their wealth, but also in their social world. Dong Yi was probably the wealthiest man in the Yaoshui township, but his 100 mu of land accounted for only about

1/18 of Shuitou's total land. His investments surely expanded beyond his native village. Dong Yi probably spent more time in Shuitou than did his sons, whose education, marriages, and social connections had pulled them to cities. If Dong Yi was rural gentry, his sons are best described as urban gentry.

Urban ties may have pulled Dong Yi's sons to the cities, but another factor also encouraged the rural gentry to migrate to market towns: the countryside was not particularly safe for wealthy people. Bandits roaming the lakes and waterways of the northern lowland region of Jiashan county were a constant threat to the wealthy families in the countryside and market towns. The market towns, such as Xitang, however, had organized forces to defend them from bandit attacks (Xitang Zhen Zhi 1994: 284). There was no organized armed force in Shuitou. As villagers were relatively poor, there was not a lot to attract bandits. An armed force in a village would probably provoke the bandits rather than scare them away. A village near Shuitou was abandoned in the 1930s because it had some wealthy people in it and was constantly harassed by bandits. I do not know whether Dong Yi had also been harassed. There was a village bully, surnamed Cheng, who people said had connections with a bandit group. Cheng might actually been a bandit himself as he was drowned by an other bandit group in the 1940s. It was possible that Dong Yi had to befriend this village bully in order to protect himself. Even if Dong Yi had enough money to fund a village armed force, I suspect no villagers would join. Banditry was a problem to the wealthy people, and the average villagers had no reason to risk their necks for the wealthy.

There was a great divide between absentee landlords who lived on "small rent" and rural topsoil owners. The divide was both social and economic. Dong Yi's case was special because he was able to cross the divide by passing the civil service examination and marry a woman from a rich urban family. When he crossed the divide, his social world and

economic activities expanded beyond the countryside, and his sons became urban rather than rural gentry. Dong Yi's fortune and status were not based on farming. Although Don Yi owned 100 mu of land in Shuitou, he did not participate in farm work. All his land was rented out to villagers and he received "small rent." Compared with the rest of the villagers, Dong Yi belonged to a leisure class. Dong Yi had only one patrilineal cousin living in North Hamlet. The cousin was quite well-off himself; he was able to go to school and became a teacher. All the land owned by Dong Yi was rented to fellow villagers who were not his patrilineal kin. For the village cultivators, there was little difference between Dong Yi and absentee landlords, even though he had a house in Shuitou. Villagers who rented Dong Yi's land still followed the "one field, two owners" system, and they could freely dispose their topsoil rights without the interference from Dong Yi.

To what extent did Dong Yi's wealth impact villagers' lives? People in Shuitou were proud that one of their native sons had done well. His status allowed villagers boast about Shuitou to outsiders. While Dong Yi's wealth was well known, the 100 mu of land he owned in his native village was not substantial enough to control the means of production of the majority of villagers. Most villagers paid "small rents" to absentee landlords in market towns rather than to Dong Yi. Compared to the village bully who harassed villagers, villagers have fond memories of Dong Yi. The most important deed Dong Yi performed for the village was to dig a canal that solved the problem of water clogging in a piece of farm land near Shuitou. He also probably contributed more money than did the other villagers to support the village festival at which traveling opera troupes entertained for a few days after harvest. Villagers generally describe Dong Yi as a nice person. He acted in a way befitting a wealthy person living in the countryside, but there seems to have been nothing unusual about him.

Leadership In Shuitou

Although Dong Yi had a residence in Shuitou, his interests and social world were beyond the village. With the exception of Dong Yi, Shuitou villagers were small cultivators equal in social and economic status. Since they did not depend each other for a living, no one could effectively punish and reward other villagers. In other words, a power-dispersed structure existed. The power-dispersed structure among village peasants had the effect of hampering effective leadership in the village. The state forced villagers to select an official village head from among their own ranks. The function of village head was to deliver government directives to villagers, to assist the government in carrying out orders, and to arrest villagers who did not pay rents. The village head was not a coveted position among villagers. Since they were more or less equal in economic and social status, no one would obey the order of another if the order was viewed as burdensome or unjust. The position of village head did not accrue any prestige. Since no one wanted the job, in Shuitou, it was rotated among the better-off villagers every two or three years. The relative social and economic equality among villagers and the frequent turnover of village heads prevented the building of a powerful institution and effective leadership in the village.

This lack of leadership also obtained among patrilineal kin. Chinese society is often viewed as kin-based. The most important theory supporting this view is Freedman's lineage theory (1958, 1966). According to Freedman, the formation of a corporate lineage needs a high degree of social and economic stratification. The rich agnates in a kin group have the wealth and leisure to organize their patrilineal kin into a corporate lineage. As noted in Chapter One, well organized lineages, such as were found in the Pearl River delta, depended upon a power-concentrated structure whereby lineage leaders could punish and reward

their agnates. In Shuitou, the low level of social and economic stratification prevented the building of lineages. The lack of ability to punish and reward under the power-dispersed structure in Shuitou prevented villagers from upholding patrilineal ideals.

While there was no formal leadership except the official village head, nor were there lineages to organize agnates into tight units, there were many voluntary associations in Shuitou before 1949. Villagers talked about "grain associations" in which a number of households pooled a certain amount of grain together and gave it to one household. In the next year, the right to receive the pooled grain went to another household. This helped individual households cope with some necessary outlay such as funeral or marriage ceremonies. There was a temple in the village, and villagers who were sick often went to the temple to plead to the deity for blessing. Sometimes, a desperate villager would promise to the god to become his fictitious son/daughter and be loyal to him if he/she were cured. This loyalty was expressed in the celebration of the deity's birthday, during which all the fictitious sons and daughters would jointly provide a feast as celebration. While these voluntary associations performed some economic and religious functions in the villagers' social life, they nevertheless lack institutional constraints that could force villagers into involuntarily participation.

Relationships among Landlords and Peasants

Prior to 1949, the Yangzi delta was a polarized society. On the one hand, wealthy landlords lived in the highly stratified market towns and enjoyed a leisure life. On the other hand, peasants with low but homogenous social and economic status lived in the countryside. On the rare occasion when a peasant family achieved wealth and status, such as in the case of Dong Yi's family, it would shortly migrate to market

towns and become part of the urban elite. The tie between the absentee landlords and peasants in the countryside was mainly through the economic connection of paying rents and receiving rents. This economic tie, however, did not expand into other spheres. Absentee landlords in the market town often had no kin relations with peasants in the countryside. Often an absentee landlord did not know who cultivated the land he owned. Peasants, by the same token, paid their rents to the rent collecting bureaus and had little knowledge of who their landlords were. Under such situations, how did the absentee landlords and the peasants in the countryside deal with each other? Often we perceive landlords, who own the means of production, as having control over peasants. In the face of landlords' abuses, peasants' could only passively resist landlords by non-compliance or gossiping behind their backs. This was not the case, however, in the Yangzi delta prior to 1949.

Peasants' Challenge

The relationships between absentee landlords in market towns and peasants in the countryside were impersonal. The absentee landlords' sole interest was extract rent from peasants. And peasants' only obligation toward landlords was paying rent. Thus, rent was the basis of the landlord/peasant relationship. According to Shih (1992: 148-149), between 1687 and 1764, the Fei lineage of Huzhou prefecture in northern Zhejiang had three types of rent arrangements. The first was the "inelastic fixed rent" or *shizu*. Under this arrangement, peasants had to pay landlords a fixed amount of rent no matter how the crop turned out. The second was the "elastic fixed maximum rent." Under this arrangement, landlords could not ask for more than the fixed figure no matter how good the harvest was, but they had to give a rent reduction to their peasants if crops failed. The third was "sharecropping." Under this arrangement, landlords usually provided land, seeds, and farm tools; the

peasants contributed only labor. Both parties shared the same risks in farming. According to Shih, fixed rent tenancy was the prevalent customary farm practice during the early Ming period (from mid-14th to mid-15th century), and the sharecropping arrangement was applied only occasionally and mainly as a temporary and transitional measure. After the mid-17th century, the elastic arrangement was more popular.

As landlords increasingly absented themselves from the rural area and were unable to oversee the harvesting of their fragmented land, it was reasonable to abandon sharecropping (Bernhardt 1992: 21), but why did landlords opt for the elastic rather than the inelastic fixed rent? Both Shih (1992:152) and Wiens (1980: 8-19) found that the supply of labor declined during the Ming-Qing dynastic transition in the mid-seventeenth century (due to warfare), assuring that a peasant would have no difficulty finding land if he were dismissed. Because of this labor shortage, landlords in the Yangzi delta had to attract tenants by sharing the risks in agriculture. The elastic fixed rent was therefore the landlords' reaction to the labor shortage. Peasant renters could evade the control of landlords because of ample tenancy opportunities.

After the mid-eighteenth century when population increased and farm labor was once again abundant, however, absentee landlords were not able to turn against the custom of risk-sharing. Landlords' refusal to share the risk often resulted in rent resistance. In combination, the factors of land commercialization and fragmentation and the absentee landlords' inability to evict their peasants (because of the "one field, two owners" system mentioned previously) gave peasants bargaining chips against landlords who had little means to punish and reward them. Rent resistance was often caused by peasants' claims of bad harvest and landlords' refusals to give rent reductions. According to the gazetteer of Wuqing town edited in 1760: "Whenever there was a slight drought or flood, the peasants of the neighboring area made alliance. They secretly

decided how much rent they should pay, and made contracts as the proof of their promises" (cited in Shih, 1992:163). Refusing to pay rent based on claims of bad harvest was often the cause of tension between the landlord and peasant in the Yangzi delta.

If peasants refused to pay their rents, landlords could not pay their land taxes. Since the mid-Qing, one sign of the powerlessness of landlords was the intervention of government in mediating the conflict between the two groups. To protect peasants from abuse by landlords, local governments set rent ceilings. To aid landlords if their peasants did not pay the rent set by the local government, the local government took the responsibility of forcing them to pay. The local government gave semi-bureaucratic status to the landlords' rent collecting bureaus, allowing them to arrest peasants who defaulted on rent (Wiens 1980: 30-31). Nevertheless, Fei argues that "if the peasant is really unable to pay, he will be released at the end of the year. It is no use keeping him in prison and leaving the farms uncultivated" (Fei 1939:189). One Shuitou villager jokingly described how a villager who had defaulted on rent packed his bag and waited for the landlord's agent to take him in as if he were embarking on a weekend excursion.

While a single peasant could be jailed if he did not pay rent, if a natural disaster struck and many peasants were affected, peasants would collectively ask landlords to lower rent. If landlords refused to share the risk by lowering rent, collective rent resistance might occur. Bernhardt (1992:190-191) counted 126 cases of collective rent resistance throughout the Yangzi delta in the heyday of rent resistance between 1921 to 1936. In 101 of the 120 collective actions in which tenant demands are clearly spelled out, demands for reduction in the usual rent (rather than resistance to rent hikes) was the primary claim. She argues that there was no sign of rents rising. In places where local officials routinely participated in the setting of rent ceilings, rents may even

have been lower than they were in the late Qing. But during times of natural disasters, particularly during the depression of the 1930s, even if landlords did not demand any more from their peasants, the burden of rent might still have been unbearable. As the officials involved themselves in the rent relationship between landlords and peasants, the peasant collective rent riots turned against the local government.

There were several collective riots against landlord gentry during the Qing and Republican periods in Jiashan county that are recorded in the county gazetteer (1995). The best recorded case happened in 1911. Most rice fields in Jiashan were surrounded by waterways. To protect rice fields from splashing waves, peasants built embankments circling the rice fields. Such fields were called polder. The local government levied taxes to fund the reconstruction of embankments if they were destroyed or damaged by rain or other causes. In the summer of 1911, heavy rain had destroyed polder embankments in seventeen villages in the northwest of Jiashan county. To rebuild the embankments and to reinforce existing ones, the seventeen villages sent representatives to county government to get polder funds. Government officials expressed indifference toward the villagers' dire situation, and disputes erupted between the officials and the peasants. Out of anger, the peasants vandalized the office of county government. The peasants learned that the county government had already sent the fund to a township in the east of Jiashan. Carried by more than 50 boats, the peasants from the seventeen villages went to the eastern township. Suspecting that a local gentry, Shen Zhuang, the manager of the polder fund, had embezzled the money, the peasants vandalized his house and a school supported by him. Upon learning the news, Shen Zhuang, who was not at home when peasants attacked his house, plead to county magistrate to uphold justice. The magistrate sent troop to arrest the peasants. At dawn, the soldiers caught the peasants, who were on their way home. Ignoring the warning

shots, the peasants encircled the troops and attacked them with clubs. Soldiers shot back and twelve peasants were killed. The remaining peasants ran back home in panic. To revenge their dead fellow villagers, on the morning of the same day, more than one thousand peasants from the seventeen villages massed and marched to the county government office to demand justice. As the procession passed other villages, other peasants joined in the march. When they arrived at the county government office, the angry peasants numbered several thousand. The county magistrate panicked in the face of the mob. He tried to appease them and send food to them. Shen Zhuang, the manager of polder fund, was in the county government office at the time. When the peasants found him and his paternal cousin, who had accompanied him to the county seat, they killed both. Afraid the peasants would kill him too, the county magistrate fled. As the news spread, other gentry landlords fled from the city, afraid of being attacked by the angry peasants. Later, three of the peasant leaders were arrested. Two of them were released in two years and one died in prison (Jiashan County Gazetteer 1995: 734-735).

Although this case did not involve conflicts over rent, it is apparent that the peasants were not reluctant to lash out when they felt they had been wronged. In their vandalism of the county government office, destroying the property of the gentry, attacking soldiers pursuing them, surrounding the county yamen, and killing two urban gentry, the peasants were actively asserting their demands. If their demands were not met, they would vandalize, attack, or kill the people generally perceived as having high status. The county magistrate and the gentry, on the other hand, seemed to be in a passive position. When the office of county government was first vandalized by the peasants, the magistrate did not arrest them. Only when Shen Zhuang's house and school were destroyed by the peasants did the country magistrate had to act, and then only on Sheng's plead. As the riot broke out in the county

seat, other gentry landlords fled from the city, even though they were not connected to the matter. When the riot quieted down, only three peasants were arrested and were released in two years (except the one who died in jail). This seems to be quite a light punishment for killing two gentry. It is as if the local government dared not provoke the peasantry again.

Landlords' Appeasement

Facing an assertive peasantry that was not reluctant to vandalize landlords' houses or even kill landlords, landlords must be careful. Peasants were no longer submissive to landlords. To protect their own interests, landlords had to present a kindly and understanding appearance. For example, in a letter to his peer, a seventeenth-century Yangzi delta landlord complained:

The wages, wine and food of laborers may seem like trivial matter, but the loyalty of workers always depends on them. ... Human feelings are fickle, changing from one moment to the next, and cannot be ignored. Even more so with liberty or stinginess in food and drink; no matter how small the difference, even if lacking a pitcher or a catty, the worker will immediately grumble unhappily about the shortage; the same is true for meat or fish. They not only appraise the quantity, but even the temperature or timeliness of meals! ... Should you not know sympathy for hard work, or show concern for their health, you are bound to lose men's loyalties (quoted in Wiens 1980: 21).

Without loyalty from farm workers or peasants, this landlord told another friend that:

We fear our inability to retain peasants. Should we not keep them in harness and have to seek a new peasant, the latter won't necessarily be any better. If our land is left uncultivated, financial loss is severe and it can only add to our distress. ... Nowadays the petty people [peasants] are as a rule foxy and recalcitrant; only two or three out of ten are honest and trustworthy (quoted in Wiens 1980: 14).

These complaints reflected the problems that Yangzi delta landlords faced in controlling peasants. Under such conditions, absentee

landlords' good deeds should be viewed as defensive mechanisms rather than as instances of moral sympathy toward peasants. The helplessness of absentee landlords toward peasants could also be observed in the creation of the philanthropic institutions by the elites. The institutions, rather than giving favors in a paternalistic fashion, were more survival strategies to appease peasants. There were many elite-managed philanthropic institutes recorded in the Jiashan County Gazetteer (1892), for example: orphan homes, burial agencies for unclaimed skeletal remains, schools, and welfare agencies. Some were funded by individual gentry landlords, and some were sponsored by guilds with funds based on levying surcharges on particular merchandise. When famines struck, the urban elites also arranged relief and grain supplies for the poor. This active participation in welfare institutions was an effort by the Yangzi delta gentry landlords to counteract their inability to control peasants. The elite, therefore, clearly did not dominate peasants.

Power Relations among Landlords and Peasants

Prior to 1949, what we see in the Yangzi delta is peasants actively demanding that landlords lower rents and share risks of natural disaster and threatening landlords' property and even their lives. Landlords, on the other hand, had to appease peasants by showing a kinder and gentler face. What was the cause of the peasants' advance and landlords' retreat? What kind of power relation existed among absentee landlords and peasants in the countryside?

As landlords migrated to market towns, the relationship between landlords and peasants loosened. Absentee landlords often did not know who cultivated the land they owned, and peasants often did not know who owned the land they cultivated. The sole interest of the absentee landlords was to extract rent, and the sole responsibility of peasants

to landlords was to pay rent. They belonged to two different social worlds connected only by rent relations. But the rent relation was not benefiting the absentee landlords. The commercialization of land brought about the dispersal of land ownership. Seldom did a landlord own a large tract of land on which everyone in a village must depend. And villagers sometimes rented land from two or more landlords living in different market towns. Without the ability to monopolize resources, landlords had little leverage to control peasants. In addition, peasants acquired permanent cultivation rights through the "one field, two owners" system. Landlords could not evict peasants at will. Although landlords owned the subsoil rights and were entitled to receive rents, they had no ability to punish and reward peasants by taking away peasants' means of production. They could not threaten peasants' livelihoods. All were involved in a power-dispersed structure.

With landlords migrating to market towns, peasants left in the village were more or less equal in economic and social status. Most of the peasants were renting land from absentee landlords in the market towns. Although some villagers owned more land than others, peasants usually did not rent land from other peasants. A well-to-do peasant would probably hire farm laborers to help him with excess land rather than rent the land out. The relationship between peasants was not a landlord/tenant one. But even if a peasant rented topsoil from another peasant, the "one field, two owners" system would still prevent the peasant landlord from evicting his peasant tenant. The equality between peasants also resulted in a power-dispersed structure where no peasant could punish and reward other peasants with means of production. The effect of this power-dispersed structure was a lack of effective leadership in the village. An official post as village head was a thankless chore. One had nothing to gain but everything to lose. Without power to enforce laws, a village leader was criticized by the state.

Most peasants saw state directives as nuisances. Those who carried them out became targets of attack. An official post did not win respect from villagers but incurred dislike. In Shuitou, this detested job had to be rotated among well-off families. Shih finds that in Lake Tai area of Qing period, "The most distinctive characteristic was that nobody, even the local leaders, had more rights, either administrative or judicial, than others. In other words, no single villager could legally force his fellow countrymen to do what he wanted them to do" (Shih 1992:179).

Huang (1990: 150) finds that in the 1930s, leadership in a rural community in Yangzi delta was "strictly ad hoc and informal." This lack of leadership not only existed in a village but also among agnates. Without the means to establish corporate property, set up lineage halls, compile written genealogies, and hold joint ancestral worship, peasants in the countryside did not form corporate lineages. Indeed, Fei Xiaotong (1946) suggests that lineages were solely an institution of the gentry in market towns.

The lack of effective leadership or overarching institutions made indirect control (by absentee landlords) impossible. What the absentee landlords had to deal was a mass of peasants who were not organized or restrained by an existing institution. When their welfare was threatened, peasants congregated into a mass of mobs and demanded that landlords lower rents. These riots lacked persistence, however, and no permanent organizations developed from the collective riots (see Bernhardt 1992: 195-196). A leader might be produced in the course of a collective action, but once the collective action passed, the leader's authority disappeared. The peasants had no political agenda nor did they intend to change the status quo.

In the Yangzi delta, power-dispersed structure existed between absentee landlords and peasants, and between peasants themselves. The power-dispersed structure between landlords and peasants allowed

peasants to actively pursue their demands, and landlords, not able to punish and reward peasants, were left powerless. The power-dispersed structure among peasants resulted in a lack of organization in the countryside. The peasant riots were spontaneous and leadership ad hoc. Peasant riots in the Yangzi delta were never revolutionary but only a series of skirmishes that did not shake the foundations of the society.

CHAPTER 4

POWER RELATIONS IN THE PRODUCTION TEAM

The small peasant economy of the rural Yangzi delta was transformed after 1949 when the Chinese Communists came to power. Previously, the state was satisfied with extracting taxes from the countryside. So long as taxes were paid, the traditional state had little interest in interfering with local affairs. The new government, however, determined to revolutionize China and to penetrate deeply into the countryside as the collective system, beginning in the late 1950s, changed the basic structure of the society. As this system was developed, peasant households were no longer economic units in which the head of the family determined how the labor power should be deployed and how the income should be divided among family members. As an economic unit of ownership and distribution, the peasant household was usurped by a production team, each composed of more than ten peasant households. The production team, however, was not merely an enlarged peasant household. The composition of the production team, the selection of its leader, the use of property, the management of labor, and the distribution of profits were regulated by the state. There is no doubt that the state, through its administrative clout, could affect a peasant's life. But how about the relationship between the leader and the members of a production team? Could the leader dominate the members through the monopolized resources? Were the members of a production team submissive to their leader? This chapter attempts to answer these questions.

Development of the Collective System in Shuitou

The collective system was not built overnight but went through several stages. After the Chinese Communists took power in 1949, it took nine years for them to cultivate a feasible groundwork for the collectivization of the peasant economy. Even after the collective system was firmly established under the People's Commune in 1958, it took three years of trial and error for the system to mature into a stabilized form in which the production team became the unit of ownership and distribution.

Land Reform (1950 to 1951)

En route to Shanghai in 1949, the People's Liberation Army entered Jiashan county after a bloody battle at the outskirts of the county capital. In 1950, a man and a woman came to Shuitou to supervise the land reform. They were in their twenties and both of them were from Shantung province. They were sent to the village by the county government. While land reform aimed to reorganize the economic relationships in the countryside, its other function was to change the rural area's political structure. The experience of the Chinese Communists, whose main base was in north China, was that rural areas were controlled by landlords. This experience was carried to the Yangzi delta where landlords were much weaker than those in the north. To create a solid base for the new socialist state, it was necessary to destroy the landlord class and put the peasants in command. The first procedure in land reform was to assign everyone a class label, which had a lasting effect on the population at least until the late 1970s. One's life opportunity was determined by his/her class label. A bad class label (including the categories of landlord, rich peasant, anti-revolutionary, and evil elements) meant a person would not be able to

join the Communist Party or the People's Liberation Army or receive higher education. Worst of all, to have a bad class label meant that a person was an easy target during political campaigns which came later. Often anything that went wrong in the collective unit was blamed on the bad class. There is a Chinese saying: "Killing the chicken to warn the monkey." While the majority of the villagers were viewed as the monkeys, someone with a bad class label was always the chicken.

As shown in Chapter 3, Dong Yi's family was the wealthiest landlord unit in Shuitou, while the rest of villagers were more or less equal in economic status. But Dong Yi's family left Shuitou before 1949 and the land reform lost its primary target. Nevertheless, because of Dong Yi, Shuitou had a reputation as a wealthy village. Someone then had to take the Dong family's place as landlord, but most peasants in Shuitou were owners of topsoil and paid rent to absentee landlords who owned the subsoil. While some villagers had more land than others, they usually still had to participate in farm work. In this community, there was little class distinction and class contradiction. To cope with this local situation, class categorization in Shuitou was based on "degree of exploitation." A household that extracted up to 15 percent of its annual income from hired laborers or from rent was labeled "rich peasant"; if it extracted more than 15 percent, it labeled as "landlord". In the North hamlet, three families, all surnamed Long, were assigned labels of landlords or rich peasants because they had large landholdings (30 to 40 mu of land) and hired farm laborers. In other parts of China, where economic stratification was high, land reform was often bloody. Some landlords were killed because their oppression was well known and peasants hated them. Some landlords organized forces to resist land reform, which also led to bloody crackdowns (see Perry 1989). In Shuitou, and probably in the Yangzi delta in general, land reform was relatively peaceful.

A third label assigned during the land reform was "counter-revolutionary." Two families in Shuitou were assigned this anti-revolutionary label. Both of them had migrated to Shuitou in the 1930s and 1940s. The first family was headed by Ye Chi, whose shop in Luxu, a market town just north the Shuitou, was destroyed by the Japanese in World War II, after which he sought refuge in Shuitou where his paternal grandmother was born. Ye had worked for the Nationalist Party when he was in Luxu and thus was labeled an "anti-revolutionary". The second family labeled "anti-revolutionary" was headed by a man surnamed Gong who also came from Luxu. He was once a rent collector for absentee landlords in Luxu. His rent collecting covered Shuitou and thus he knew people in Shuitou. Rumor had it that Gong got into some trouble with the authorities in Luxu and fled to Shuitou for safety. His trouble with the law was revealed during the land reform and earned him an "anti-revolutionary" label.

A fourth label was "evil element" and this was assigned to those who had committed a crime. One family in Shuitou was so designated. The head of this family was a teacher. Some villagers said he had killed someone in the city, others said he had molested a student; nonetheless, he acquired an "evil element" class label. With the exception of these six families assigned bad class labels, other villagers in Shuitou were assigned the politically safe categories of "middle peasant" or "poor peasant."¹

¹ I do not have the total number of households in each category in Shuitou in 1950. In the mid-1990s, often a person claims to be in one category but neighbors believes the person to be in another. A person's class category inherited from one's parents. The number of households in each category changed over time as households divided. In one production team for which I have reliable data, there were 8 households with "middle peasant" and 10 households of "poor peasant" labels in 1963. Households subdivided in subsequent years, and in 1970, there were 12 households of "middle peasants" and 19 households of "poor peasants". The faster growth rate of "poor peasant" households is because such households had more small children than "middle peasant" households when class labels were assigned in 1950. Thus, the number of household with "poor peasant" labels increased faster than "middle peasant" households. This is congruent with the argument stated in Chapter Three that poverty was related to the mouth/label ratio in a household.

After all villagers were assigned class categories, the land, farm tools, draft animals, houses and furniture of the "landlords" and "rich peasants" were distributed to "poor peasants." The intent of land reform was not to equalize land ownership but to eradicate "landlords" and "rich peasants" by confiscating and distributing their property to "poor peasants", thereby reducing the gap between rich and poor. Based on the calculated mean amount of land per capita, the excess land owned by "landlords" and "rich peasants" was distributed to "poor peasants" on a per capita basis, irrespective of age or labor power. The land cultivated by the "middle peasant" was generally un-changed. Often the "middle peasant" who owned more land than the "poor peasant" prior to land reform still had more land after the land reform. Land reform ended within a year. While villagers no longer paid rent to absentee landlords in market towns, they paid taxes to the state. After the land reform, the state knew exactly how much land a household farmed. With exact records of land ownership, the state had better statistics to pave the way for a planned economy.²

The Mutual-Aid Group (1953 to 1954)

Before 1949, peasants in Shuitou, and Jiashan county in general, often helped each other during the agricultural peak season, exchanging farm tools (such as water buffaloes, boats and irrigation wind mills) and labor. But exchange relationships between villagers were not always stable and sometimes a family had to seek a new partner every year. The next program introduced by the government, therefore, was the mutual-aid group (*huzu zu*), which was similar to this pre-revolution exchange practice but which the government helped to formalize and organize. The development of mutual-aid groups varied across Jiashan county. According

² Traditionally, the government did not have exact records on land ownership. Yamen runners who collected taxes treated land records as their own property.

to Jiashan county gazetteer (1995: 192), the earliest mutual-aid group was established in the northwest of the county in 1949, and this group served as a test point for those that developed later. Not until the end of 1952 did the county government try to implement the mutual-aid group program on a large scale. In the latter part of 1952, the county government held seven training sessions on the procedures and methods of cooperative activities, and nearly 3,000 rural cadres and peasant activists participated in the sessions (Jiashan County Gazetteer 1995: 193). Shuitou's first mutual-aid group appeared in 1953. Participation in mutual-aid groups was voluntary, cadres used their personal connections, through patrilineal or affinal kinship and friendship, to persuade others to join. Families with bad class labels were not allowed to take part for fear that they would sabotage this first experiment in collective activities.

Members of a mutual-aid group pooled their land and farm tools (the most important of which were water buffaloes, boats and irrigation wind mills), but they still retained ownership of all their land and farm tools. Even though the land was jointly farmed, each household still kept the harvest from its own fields. Since the land/labor ratio households differed among households, those households with more labor power were helping those with less labor power in farm work. To facilitate a correspondence between labor input and reward, a work point system was instituted. The work point system was a means to measure the amount of labor that a household put into joint farming. Each household gave itself work points based on the amount of work it put in. All the work points of a mutual-aid group were then added up and a mean score was calculated. Those household whose labor input was under the mean had to pay grain to household that had put in more labor. Since the work point system was separated from the amount of land a household owned, a household with less land but more labor power could get more work points

than others, which then equalized the income differences of those households. This program provided a definite advantage for "poor peasants" who owned few farm tools and had had to borrow them in the old days. If a family was poor because it had many mouths to feed but insufficient farm labor, the mutual-aid group also provided laborers for the excess land (obtained in the land reform) that it could not farm. Most of the villagers who participated in the mutual-aid group program were poor peasant families. Some "middle peasants" who could survive without help shunned participation in the program.

The Elementary-Stage Cooperative (1955 to 1956)

The next step toward collectivization was the "elementary-stage cooperative" (*chuchi she*) implemented in 1955. Under this system, participating households lost ownership of their land to the cooperatives. According to villagers, the amount of land pooled under the cooperative was no longer a factor for calculating returns.³ Farm tools still remained under individual ownership but were pooled into the cooperative as individual investments. Through discussion, participating members gave a price and assigned a share value to tools. After deducting taxes and other expenses, the profits gained by the cooperative were distributed to participating households according to the amount of labor they put in and the share values of their farm tools. The labor input in farm work was still calculated in terms of work points. In contrast to the mutual-aid groups, where each household assigned its own work points, work points for each household were discussed and decided by all participating households.

There were three elementary-stage cooperatives in Shuitou. One was in the South hamlet and two crossed the hamlet line between the North

³ The Jiashan county gazetteer (1995), however, says both the land and the tools an individual contributed to the cooperative were calculated as shares.

and the West hamlets. As with the mutual-aid groups, participation in the elementary-stage cooperative was voluntary. Anyone who did not get along well with other cooperative members could change to another cooperative. While membership was supposedly voluntary, and the state mandated that it be voluntary, cadres faced great pressure when the government evaluated their performance based on their ability to attract and organize a large number of "willing" participants. To preserve the pretense of voluntarism, cadres had to visit non-participating households to "persuade" them day in and day out until they became "willing" to join. No one was forced to take part at gun point. But the bombardment of constant house calls had great effect. As more and more villagers caved in, the pressure on the recalcitrant (mostly "middle peasants" who owned enough labor and farm tools) mounted. In the latter part of 1955, the state demanded that cadres show greater efforts, the collectivization process intensified, and many middle peasants were "persuaded" by cadres to participate in the cooperatives. One villager estimated that 70 percent of families in Shuitou joined the elementary stage cooperatives.

The Advanced-Stage Cooperative (1957 to 1958)

In 1956, the elementary-stage cooperative was transformed into the "advanced-stage cooperative" (*gaochi she*). To intensify the collective process by including all rural populations in the collective system, the state mandated the participation of all the bad class families in the cooperatives. The number of collective units was reduced so that all villagers in Shuitou participated in one single cooperative, rather than having three. As the consolidation process proceeded, another village was added into the advanced-stage cooperative based in Shuitou. Eventually, four villages participated in a single cooperative, whose headquarters was in the West hamlet of Shuitou. The distribution of

profits and harvest was similar to that of the elementary-stage cooperative. But the distribution of individual households' dividends based on contributed farm tools was ended and all the means of production were then owned by the cooperatives.

An important difference between the elementary-stage and advanced-stage cooperatives was that the latter grew much bigger. Because it was bigger, the advanced-stage cooperative was able to absorb more resources and allocate them more easily than its predecessor. Not only were peasant farmers included in the cooperatives, village plasters and carpenters were also included. The advanced-stage cooperative set up a "farm tool repair shop" to allocate work for village plasters and carpenters. The farm tool repair shop later grew into a so-called "ship-building shop." The idea of having a big cooperative was to create an economy of scale and allocate labor efficiently. Because a cooperative unit could allocate labor power under its control, it created a mechanism for the state to draft rural labor forces effectively. In 1957, through the coordination of the county government, some villagers were sent to dig a canal in a neighboring township.

People's Commune and the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961)

Legally, the cooperatives were organized by the people and not under the direct control of the government. But it was through the People's Commune that the village economy was formally incorporated into the state's bureaucratic structure. The first People's Commune in Jiashan county was organized on September 18, 1958. On October 1, 1958, 19 townships of Jiashan county were organized into six communes (Jiashan County Gazetteer 1995). Yaoshui township and two other townships merged and formed the Xitang Commune, the central command of which was located in the market town of Xitang south of Shuitou. Xitang Commune included

20 production brigades. Shuitou and four other villages combined into the Shuitou brigade (Xitang Zhen Zhi 1994).

The People's Commune was part of the effort of the Great Leap Forward, which aimed to jump-start China's production and to catch up with the West. To do so, the Communists believed, rural production must follow the principle of economies of scale. The bigger the basic economic unit the better. With a large economic unit, capital and labor would travel freely and be applied efficiently. The large collective unit would also eliminate economic differences among communities and promote equality. The commune became the basic economic unit that monopolized all resources. Within the commune, grain, labor, and farm tools were collected and redistributed to individual brigades. Private endeavors were attacked as selfish and undermining of the collective spirit. Thus, for example, cooking in ones home was not allowed. People ate at the "mass eating halls" set up in various settlements. In the mass eating hall, everyone could consume as much as he/she desired. There was no rationing and the work point system was, in effect, abolished. The land in Shuitou brigade was divided into several pieces. Each piece of land was designated for the growth of a particular kind of crop. In what was called "big regiment cultivation," all the available laborers in the brigade camped in a settlement with a designated field nearby. The field was cultivated by all the brigade's labor force at once. After it was done, then all laborers traveled to another settlement to cultivate another piece of land.

The "big regiment cultivation" lasted only one crop season. The resulting harvest was so bad that the "big regiment" had to be dissolved. Since too many laborers were involved, it was extremely difficult to manage. Size alone could not produce efficient farming. Also, at this point, many adult males were extracted by the commune for the Great Leap Forward efforts. Some were sent to mine iron ore, some to

build steel furnaces, and some send to dig canals. With a large number of able-bodied male laborers drafted to participate in non-agriculture activities, only old and the weak were left in the big regiment farming. This also contributed to the low agricultural production.

All the grain produced was taken away by the commune which was then redistributed back to each brigade. While grain reserves in the commune ran low because of unlimited consumption in the "mass eating hall," and grain production went down because of inefficiency of "big regiment cultivation" and the drafting of male laborers for non-agriculture activities, another mismanagement compounded the situation in all the communes in the Jiashan county. In the political zeal of the People's Commune and the Great Leap Forward, commune cadres started to inflate reports of grain production to show their competence and to validate the correctness of the state policy. Some cadres proclaimed that one mu of land could produce ten thousand jin (5,000 kg) of grain. (Even in the 1990s, with high yielding strains and ample fertilizer, the best harvest in Shuitou was only about eight to nine hundred jin of grain.) When the government commanded communes to deliver grain in proportion to their announced increased production figures, commune cadres were forced to comply. They did so by taking away the grain needed for basic consumption. (Since all the grain produced by brigades was taken away by the commune and redistributed to them on the basis of central planning, there was no grain stored at the brigade level.) Starting in late 1959, massive starvation set in. According to villagers, Jiashan county had reported one of the highest inflated harvest figures and was severely hit when huge amounts of grain were extracted from the countryside. The over-reporting of grain production was less severe in Jiangsu province than in Jiashan county. Many villagers therefore sent their children to nearby Jiangsu villages to beg for food. In early 1960, when the food

supply of neighboring communities was also strained, people started to flee to Shanghai and Jiangsu where the situation was better.

By the end of 1960, the problem was so serious that the central government issued directions to correct the situation. First, cadres giving inflated production reports were reprimanded. In 1961, Mao sent his personal secretary, Tian Jiayin, to Jiashan county to examine the situation (Jiashan County Gazetteer 1995; 195). Villagers said that the head of Jiashan county was individually picked out and criticized by Mao himself and relieved of his duties. Most lower-level cadres, however, escaped reprimand. Since the problem was so widespread, it was not possible for the state to remove all its local cadres. To further correct the situation, the commune, brigades, and production teams were all down-sized. Instead of the commune owning the means of production, the brigade became the basic unit of ownership and distribution. Intracommune transfer of labor, capital, and other resources was banned. In 1962, the down-sizing continued. Instead of five villages and more than eight hamlets, the Shuitou brigade was reduced to three hamlets. The basic production and distribution unit was further downgraded from brigade to production team in 1962. The brigade became only an administrative unit. There were 14 production teams in 1962 in Shuitou brigade. The membership of production teams was based on proximity of peasant's houses rather than self-selection.

The state also instituted the system of "private land" where peasants could do private farming. The produce from private land was not under the planned economy and was not taxed. In Shuitou, each person received 0.2 mu of private land irrespective of age and gender. The state also opened agricultural markets allowing peasants to sell produce from their private land. Needed grain for basic consumption, seed for the next season, and feed for animals were calculated by the production teams (approved by the brigade and the commune) and retained by the

production team after harvest. Grain was no longer extracted by the commune and redistributed back to production teams. The work point system was also reinstated and work points were calculated in two ways: piece-rate and day-rate. Under the piece-rate system, a farm task was assigned a value (the amount was discussed by team members) and a person received work points by completing the task. Under the day-rate system, a person received a fixed number of work points for showing up to work. In the early period of restoration, to boost production and increase incentive, piece-rate was the rule of the day. This two-track work point system seems to have been adopted by the commune as a whole, but the assignment of piece-rates or day-rates to a particular task was left for each production team to decide.

From 1962 to 1983

From 1962 until its end in 1983, the collective system in the countryside remained a three-tier system. The commune was the lowest bureaucratic unit of the state (commune cadres were employees of the state). The production team was the basic unit of ownership and distribution. The brigade was an administration unit that linked the production team to the commune. While this basic framework did not change for 22 years, there were episodes that affected the collective system, the most important of which were the Great Cultural Revolution in 1966 and the reform initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. These changes were not initiated from below but were results of the power struggle in Beijing.

Mao Zedong, who initiated Great Leap Forward in 1958, stepped down as the "State Chairperson" after the Great Leap collapsed and Liu Shaoqi took his place. It was under Liu that the size of the commune was reduced, the production team became the basic unit of ownership and distribution, "private land" was instituted, peasant markets were

opened, and the piece-rate in the work point system was encouraged. In 1966, Mao initiated the "Great Cultural Revolution" to attack Liu and regain authority. Many of Liu's methods were branded as "capitalist." "Private land" was eliminated and the peasant market banned. Under Liu Shaoqi, the distribution of earnings to production team members was aimed at giving incentives to individuals who could produce more. This was attacked as individualistic and not in accordance with the socialist spirit. Mao promoted the "Dazhai work point system", which assigned work points based on devotion to production; the evaluation of devotion was, however, subjective and controversial. After the height of the Cultural Revolution had passed in the early 1970s, many production teams reverted to the two-track system of day-rate and piece-rate. There was also talk during the Cultural Revolution of making the brigade the basic unit of ownership and distribution. To pave the way, a process of consolidating the number of production teams in a brigade was begun. Although this "up-grade" of the basic collective unit never materialized, the number of production teams in Shuitou was reduced from 14 to 7 in the late 1960s.

It was not until after Deng Xiaoping consolidated his authority in 1978 that he promoted decreasing the size of production teams, believing that smaller units could be managed more efficiently. The 7 production teams in Shuitou were divided into 13 production teams between 1978 and 1979.⁴ Deng also encouraged the collective units to start rural industrialization to solve the problem of surplus labor in the countryside and increase rural incomes. Previously, many areas in the Yangzi delta has been designated grain producing zones. Industry had been discouraged since it might disrupt grain production. After 1978, many communes and brigades in the delta region began to establish light

⁴ All the seven teams, except team no.2, were divided into two. The division was mainly based on geographical proximity. Team 2 claimed that its land was so intertwined that a division would cause lower production.

industry and peasants were given more freedom to seek off-farm jobs. Shuitou established a brigade-owned cement board workshop in 1978 and then a button processing factory. The cement board workshop and the button processing factory paved the way for rural industrialization in Shuitou in later years. When villagers were allowed to seek off-farm jobs after 1978, many young men tried to learn a trade other than farming. The most popular ones were plastering and carpentry. Since there were already plasters and carpenters in the village, it was relatively easy to seek a master craftsman and learn the trade from him. The most important trade for Shuitou village's later development, however, was mechanic for the button machines. Because the brigade button factory could not absorb all these people, more than 20 young men went to Wenzhou district in central Zhejiang province to work in button factories. Their experience in button manufacturing and the ties with merchants in Wenzhou helped the development of button industry in Shuitou.

The Functioning of the Collective System in Shuitou

The collective system became stabilized in 1962 although there continued to be changes.

Shuitou Brigade

Under the collective system, a commune included several brigades, each of which, in turn, included several production teams. For the state, the commune was the lowest level under the supervision of county government. Cadres at commune level were state functionaries and their salaries were paid by the state. Cadres at brigade and production team levels were ordinary villagers who were not on the state's payroll and had to work as production team members in order to receive work points

and rations from their teams. The controlling mechanism for the party-state below the commune level was mainly the party bureaucracy, with a party branch in every brigade. At the production team level, the party-state had no formal mechanism of direct control.

A brigade was not a production unit. It did not control labor power and means of production. The main function of a brigade was to supervise the production teams and to transmit orders from commune to production teams and relay conditions of production teams to the commune. To better grasp the conditions at the production team level and to diffuse resistance to state policy, political reliability was the most important criterion in picking the brigade party secretary. For the Communists, political reliability was related to class background. People with the "poor peasant" class label were clearly preferred.

From 1962 to 1978, the party secretary of Shuitou brigade was Long Yu of the North hamlet. Long was the most common surname in Shuitou, but Long Yu's relationship to other Longs was not close and I could find no genealogical relationship between Long Yu and the other Longs in Shuitou. Long Yu's mother had been a widow when she married Long Yu's father, who died before 1949. This family owned only a few mu of land and was assigned a "poor peasant" label. Long Yu was 28 years old when he was appointed brigade party secretary. He was generally viewed by villagers as a nice guy, although some have accused him of doing nothing to mediate conflicts within production teams and not being a firm leader. He was not particularly respected or feared in the village. Long Yu was not a controversial figure and did not like confrontation. This, I believe, was partly contributed to by, and the result of, the growing tension in the village. Since production team members were forced to share a limited pie produced by the team, conflict in the production team became a constant problem. In comparison to production team leaders whose average tenure was two to three years, Long Yu's sixteen year

tenure was extraordinary. If he had been a leader who stood firm and intervened in everything, he probably could not have occupied the position that long. While Long Yu could not be described as a domineering leader, he was good at coping with upper-level officials. When I talked with him about the functioning of the collective, he showed me bags of documents issued by the state. Long Yu had made marks on almost every page. I was impressed when he eloquently recited the details of important directives. To upper-level officials, this ability to memorize details of state directives at least showed a political loyalty that was important for Long Yu to retain his position. At the same time, by reciting state directives to production teams, he could hide behind the state if the implementation of an unpopular policy (such as what crop to plant and how to plant it) was unavoidable.

In negotiating between commune and production team, the brigade party secretary was in a relatively weak position. He faced pressures from the commune to implement policy but had no direct authority to allocate the labor and resources of production teams. Beginning in 1962, the production team had full control of labor and means of production. Brigades had to negotiate with production teams to use the team's labor and means of production. This is exemplified in the working of brigade-level enterprises. Shuitou brigade had established several brigade enterprises in the 1970s. There was a fish pond, a mushroom greenhouse, a fruit tree garden, a sheep farm, a cement board workshop and a button processing factory. The workers for brigade enterprises were still controlled by production teams and received their work points from their respective production teams. The amount of labor drafted by brigade enterprises was different for different production teams because people with special skills were not equally distributed among teams. Those teams that supplied larger numbers of workers often complained that their resources had been depleted by the brigade. To solve the problem,

all the work points and rations for the brigade enterprises workers had to be equally shared by all production teams. The brigade had to compensate production teams if their enterprises made profits. The compensation, however, was not paid directly to individual workers but to the production teams to which they belonged. The labor power of individuals belonged to their teams rather than to themselves or to the brigade. Therefore, even with enterprises under its management, without direct control of labor force, a brigade was never a full-fledged production unit.

Production Teams

In Shuitou, there were 14 production teams between 1962 and 1966. From 1966 to 1978, because of the Great Cultural Revolution described above, the number of production teams was reduced to 7. After Deng Xiaoping came to power, the number of production teams increased to 13. Even though there were changes in the number of production teams, the general characteristics of the production team remained the same. In Shuitou, everyone belonged to a production team. Production teams monopolized all the means of production (land, farm tools, and labor power) and distributed their profits (work points and rations) to their team members. Team members could not find outside employment without the consent of the production team. Opportunities for individuals were constrained by their production teams. Every member of a production team had to share the proceeds earned by the production team. In this "encapsulated" environment, we can find several characteristics of the production team that affected the personal relationships within a team.

Permanent Membership. The collective system could be said to be a totalitarian system in the sense that no one could live outside the system. Everyone had to belong to a collective unit. It was through the

collective unit that the state controlled the movement of people and their labor power. The state would have no control of a person outside a collective unit. Thus, the state assigned everyone to a collective unit. To adopt a person into a collective unit also meant that the collective unit had to provide him/her the basic necessities: rations, housing, etc. In a sense, people exchanged their freedom of movement and their labor power for a guaranteed livelihood.

A production team had to support all its members with basic rations (how rations were distributed is discussed later), but it could not throw unwanted members out. In Shuitou, after a person was assigned to a production team, team membership was usually permanent and a person could not change from one team to another at will. There were a few exceptions to this permanent membership. For example, a marriage would transfer a woman's membership to that of her husband's team, or a man to that his wife's team if he was an adopted son-in-law. Without the ability to transfer from one team to another, team members were "encapsulated" by their teams. While everyone had to share the profits made by production team, not all members made the same contributions to the team. Some members, such as old people who could not perform farm work, drained the resources of a team and became a liability to other team members. A production team could not transfer its burden to another team by sending unproductive people to other teams. This relatively permanent team membership also meant that those people who antagonized team cadres could not be "fired" by the cadres, and they still received basic rations provided by their teams. Team cadres could not withhold basic rations or remove a person from the team. A production team was like a traditional family in which labor management may not follow a rational model such as that of the modern corporation that employs or lays-off workers as it sees fit.

Election Of Team Cadres. In Shuitou, production team cadres were elected annually by all team members. Team cadres were not always party members (but brigade cadres were almost always party members) and not all party members in a production team were team cadres. Since the performance of a production team directly related to each person's own welfare, team members were less worried about the class label of team cadres than their ability to lead the team. The candidates did, however, have to be "certified" by the brigade as fit for the position, and people deemed politically unreliable (that is, people with bad class labels, six families in Shuitou brigade as a whole) were not allowed to become team leaders. In an exception, two members of the "anti-revolutionary families in Shuitou were allowed to become team accountants. A team always had a team leader, a deputy leader, an accountant, and a cashier. After candidates for production teams were accepted by the brigade as fit for the position, they were elected through secret balloting. Team leaders and deputy leaders supervised work assignments and other everyday affairs. They were always able-bodied men who were known to be hard workers and able to plan and direct collective work. An accountant recorded peasants' work points and rations. Since this was a position that needed absolute impartiality, an accountant was always recruited from another team or even another brigade. To avoid accusation of favoritism, an accountant had to post the work points earned by every team members at least once a month so that every team member knew how many work points he/she earned and how many others earned. A cashier managed the production team's money. This was a position that nobody wanted because money can be lost through bad bookkeeping or misplacement but can never increased by careful handling. If there was something wrong in the books, a cashier had to make up the difference. I was told that cashier was the only position in a team that earned a regular salary; other cadres had to earn their work points like other peasants.

Once a cashier was charged with embezzlement because he had changed the value on a receipt and pocketed the difference. Thereafter, an inspector was instituted to check the cashier's bookkeeping. The position of inspector was rotated among team members; their task was to examine the authenticity of sales receipts that a cashier recorded as a team's cash outlay.

Since team cadres were elected by team members each year, their positions were not secure. Team cadres, especially the team leader, who was responsible for the management of the whole team, had to balance himself between opposing forces that were intrinsic to this "encapsulated" environment.

Centrifugal Force And Centripetal Force. Team members earned work points in performing farm work in the production team. After a production team made its profit, mainly through selling grain to the state, the profit was distributed to individual members according to the work points they earned. The value of one work point was calculated by dividing the work points earned by all team members into the total money earned by the team. The money for one work point was not constant. If the total work points earned by the whole team was up in one year and the profit earned by the team remained the same as last year, the value of one work point would drop. Even if a person earned same number of work points in two years, the amount that person would receive might be different because of changes in the value of work points. Thus, a person's actual earnings were related not only to how many work points he/she earned, but also to how many work points others earned. Economically, a team member could not isolate him/herself from other team members. If one person got more, others must get less.

The main income a production team earned came from selling grain to the state. How much a production team sold to the state was calculating

team members' consumption needs (based on consumption quotas, discussed later) from the total grain output. If the consumption grain for team members rose, the amount of grain sold to the state decreased and the total profits earned by a team dropped accordingly. Thus, how much rationed grain one team member received also affected the welfare of other team members. If grain production was good, and there was grain left after fulfilling team members' consumption needs and the state's procurement quota, members could receive extra-quota grain. If one household received more in the consumption quota (because of new baby, or a marriage, for example), the possibility of having extra-quota grain would be reduced. In a production team, one's own welfare was negatively related to the welfare of others. A team's members not only had to mind their own business but had to probe into other people's business to see whether others had taken any advantages for themselves at the expense of others. In this "encapsulated" environment, the "image of limited good" (Foster 1967) was particularly acute. Conflicts often erupted over how work and rations should be distributed. The most common resulted from accusations of laziness at work.

While conflicts over the distribution of resources was endemic within a production team, team members had to work together in a production team. If team members did not cooperate and grain production fell, everyone would suffer. Harmonious working conditions were necessary for the welfare of all team members. A sense of "riding in the same boat" developed between members of a production team. It was expressed in the mutual help of team members at marriages and funerals and in the building of houses. At a marriage, one must present gifts to other team members even if there has just been a fight. All team members must attend one another's funerals and chip in for the funeral costs. If one team member was building a house, other team members must help. Mutual help among team members could also be disruptive, however. For

example, when team members came to help build a house, the owner of the new house had to supply them with meals. There were cases in which the meals were not up to standard and the hosts were insulted in public. Seeds for future conflicts were thus planted.

The Distribution System in Production Teams

Although production teams monopolized the means of production and distributed profits to team members, there were various constraints and regulations limiting team leaders' ability to assign work and distribute rations. The constraints mainly resulted from the need to reduce conflicts and maintain harmonious working relations among team members. The government also issued regulations, such as the basic quota of consumption grain for each individual. The regulations, however, were not always followed if they would promote conflicts in teams. For example, the Dazhai work point system instituted during the Cultural Revolution of 1966 increased conflicts among team members. Friends and relatives helped each other in raising their work points and claimed others had been lazy and should receive fewer work points. Because of the conflicts, the Daizhai system was abandoned unofficially in Shuitou in 1969. The following section discusses the work point system in Shuitou and how a harvest was divided.

The Work Point System

Under the collective system, peasants were like factory workers. They worked on the land and received work points. After a production team sold its grain to the state (through the compulsory procurement program and sometimes the over-quota procurement), the money received was divided among team members according to their work points. They then used the wages to buy grain. How much grain one could buy was based on ration quotas. There were basically two types of work points: day-rate

and piece-rate. In day-rate, one received a fixed amount of work points for showing up to work. It was expected that one put in full effort in the work. Since people differ in their physical prowess and willingness to contribute in production, the main problem of the day-rate system was how to evaluate the contribution of each individual. Theoretically, one's day-rate was to be linked to one's labor power. A team meeting was held to evaluate the worth of labor power. The team members jointly decided the day-rate for each individual member. Since work points were directly related to wage income, being given a lower day-rate affected a person's welfare. A low day-rate also showed that the person was a bad farm laborer, which was insulting and bad for one's reputation. The evaluation process could bring up conflicts over the worthiness of individuals. To avoid conflict, labor power was usually linked to "objective" criteria of gender and age. An adult man was usually given 10 work points in the day-rate, and an adult woman 8 work points. For older people or adolescents, day-rate work points were proportionally decreased. The lesser day-rate work points received by women reflected a cultural ideology that men have greater labor power than women. Potter and Potter (1990: 120) found the same discrimination and a similar ratio (men 10, women 8.3) in Zengbu commune of Kwangtung. It is likely that this discrimination was nationwide.'

As day-rates were more or less fixed according to gender and age, the problem of foot-dragging became apparent. Since one would receive the fixed day-rate so long if he/she showed up to work, there was little motivation to work as hard as one could. To partially remedy the problem, a piece-rate was also implemented. In piece-rate work, a task was assigned a given number of work points. How much a task was worth in the piece-rate system was determined by its difficulty and the time needed to complete it. A person received the work points by finishing the task. If it could be completed in a short period of time, the worker

could take the rest of the day off or do something else. Piece-rate was often used in three situations. Some farm work could be done by a large number of team members at once, and some could not. If a task, such as repairing irrigation ditches, could be done by a larger number of people, it would be easily supervised by cadres and peer group pressure could keep workers from foot-dragging. For work, such as preparing fertilizer, that could be accomplished by one or two individuals and for which cadre supervision was impossible, the piece-rate was preferred. Piece-rate was also used in work that needed to be completed quickly. This was especially the case during agricultural peak season when work load was heavy and grain must be harvested and planted in a short time. Under the piece-rate, work points were received for completing the task, and a fast worker could accumulate more than a slower one. The problem with piece-rate work was that workers often neglected the quality of the work. Thus piece-rate was often used in jobs where quality of work was not a major concern, such as transporting bags of fertilizer to the field. For work needing attention and care, the day-rate was preferred. The day-rate did not necessarily guarantee that work would be done in the proper manner, but at least it did not encourage people to finish the task hastily.

Most of the time, a production team combined both day-rate and piece-rate in its work point system. During the Cultural Revolution of 1966, the piece-rate was eliminated on the grounds that it emphasized individual accomplishment and neglected common welfare. In its stead, the Dazhai work point system was instituted. The Dazhai work point system was essentially a day-rate system, but it differed from the usual day-rate in the method of assigning work points to individuals. The doctrine behind the Dazhai system was that differences in reward should not be based on a comparison between people of different physical prowess, but should be based on a comparison of devotion to work. If a physically

weak man worked as hard as he could, he should be given the full work points (10 work points a day). A laborer who always foot-dragged in farm work should be given fewer work points. Work points were to be linked to devotion in building a socialist society rather than to physical ability. While the Dazhai system was aimed at eliminating the foot-dragging in the day-rate system and the individualistic spirit of the piece-rate system, it encountered the problem of how to evaluate devotion. Following the Chinese Communist version of democracy, the evaluation of devotion in agricultural production was left for the whole production team to decide. Daily meetings were held to evaluate everyone's devotion.

As could be expected, conflict erupted in the process of work point evaluation. Villagers wanted to increase their own work points by accusing others of being lazy. The daily evaluation meetings became a constant struggle among villagers and damaged the necessary harmony in production teams. Because of this unavoidable problem, the Dazhai work point system was unofficially abandoned in Shuitou in 1969 (and probably in other localities as well).⁵ The previous method of combining day-rate and piece-rate returned.

Under the work point system, the work points in day-rate and piece-rate were rigidly set to avoid conflict over contributions to agricultural production. The only discretionary power a team leader had was in assigning work to team members. Light work might be assigned to a team leader's favorite, hard and dirty work to his opponents. This discretionary power was limited, however. If a work assignment violated a team member's sense of fairness, the disgruntled team member might work slowly or hastily and carelessly finish farm work. This would affect the output of the team and the team cadre might receive a reprimand from higher level cadres. A well managed team could sometimes

⁵ The Dazhai system was officially abandoned by the state in 1980.

earn as much as 20 percent more than a poorer team in actual wages. Villagers were eager to compare the performance of production teams, which created pressure on the team leaders. Since the position of team leader was elected by the whole team on yearly basis, if production fell below average, a team leader could be voted out of office. A competent team leader not only had to be a good agriculture planner but also had to be fair in assigning work in order to maintain good working relationships. A team leader who showed blatant favoritism would definitely be opposed by other team members and would not receive the necessary cooperation. The need to avoid conflict generally constrained a team leader from arbitrarily assigning work.

There were different types of work in a production team, some preferred and some shunned by team members. To deal with this, tasks would often be rotated among team members.⁶ In Shuitou, one of the coveted jobs was the weekly purchasing trip to market towns. Travel to the market town was an excursion for peasants. The person assigned could avoid routine farm work and would get normal day-rate work points and was also provided with pocket money by the production team to buy some snacks on the road. Those who wanted to go to the market⁷ registered with the team and the job was rotated among them. If a task, such as supplying laborers for brigade enterprises, could not be rotated among team members, qualified members sometimes drew lots to decide who should go. Job rotation and drawing lots were the most often used methods to make the distribution of farm work as equal as possible. Work points were recorded by the team accountant who was always recruited from

⁶ Rotation of disagreeable tasks among team members were also found by Potter and Potter in Zhengbu Commune in Kwangtung. In Zhengbu, "there was a clock-like circular wooden device, with a pointer in the middle and the numbers of team households written around the circumference, which served to indicate which household was due for such tasks." (Potter and Potter 1990: 107)

⁷ Only men could go. Women were viewed unworthy to protect team's money and goods on the road. It also probably had to do with boat traveling. Villagers travel by boat to market towns. While woman do row boats, it was always a man's job to row boat if distance was long.

another production team and sometimes from another brigade.⁸ The accountant had to post every team member's work points so that one not only knew his/her work points but that of other team members. To know how much other people earned was crucial because it also affect one's own income.

Dividing the Harvest

A harvest was divided among three parties: the state, the production team, and the individual households. The state claimed three categories of grain from a production team: (1) tax; (2) state procurement quota; and (3) if harvest was good, there would be over-quota procurement. The production team itself kept three categories of grain: (1) seed for the next planting; (2) fodder for draft animals and collectively-raised pigs; and (3) emergency grain. Individual households received rations of three categories of grain: (1) consumption quota; (2) if harvest was good, there would be over-quota consumption grain; and (3) fodder for privately-raised pigs that had to be sold to the state. The amount each party was entitled to was supposed to be fixed under the planned economy, but a harvest could easily exceed or lag behind the planned production. The proportion the three parties actually received was then determined by the harvest of a particular year and its comparison with harvests of the previous years. Each of the three parties had to give up some in bad years, but the state tax could never be violated. The peasants' consumption quota might be reduced to a certain extent, but after the Great Leap Forward, Shuitou's peasants always had enough to eat. Among the rest of the categories of grain share, some were more elastic than others. In general, the procurement quota was less

⁸ A good accountant would work in a production team under various team leaders. Since he/she was always an outsider who did not belong to any factions, he/she would be elected again and again if he/she was capable and committed no wrongdoing.

negotiable than others. The production team's shares, on the other hand, were often used as a reservoir to satisfy the state's extraction and the peasants' needs. If the harvest was good, a production team would take more than usual. If the harvest was bad, a production team would take less from the total grain output. If the harvest was good in two consecutive years, the production team might take more in the first year and less in the second year.

The State's Share. While villagers often referred to both the state tax and the compulsory state procurement as state grain (*gong liang*) without distinction, these two forms of state extraction actually belonged to two separate categories. The difference between state tax and state procurement was that the state had to pay money to production teams for the procurement grain but not for tax grain. A team's state tax and procurement quota were determined by the land it owned.⁹ From the late 1960s until the end of the collective system at the end of 1983, the amount of state tax and procurement quota did not change in Shuitou. It was the production team's duty as a property owning unit to pay the tax to the state. There was never a tax reduction in Shuitou, but for the most part, the state tax was light. In Shuitou, it was usually less than 7% of total grain output. The state procurement quota took a much larger share, often as much as 35% of total grain output. In a poor harvest year, a production team could apply to the brigade for a reduction of the procurement. The application had to be sent to the commune for approval. If a harvest was bad, a production team, with the

⁹ Property controlled by production team was called *dui you*. *Dui* refers to production team. *You* means ownership. The usage of the term can be seen in the production report a team submitted to the brigade and commune. Production team property was jointly owned by all team members. It was because the ownership belonged to production team that state tax and state procurement was two distinct categories, even though villagers viewed them as the same. There were also *si you*, meaning private ownership; and *guo you*, state ownership. However, the legal ownership did not mean much when the state could interfere with the management of the property. But still, we can find the production team property ownership was respected by other level of bureaucracy after the Great Leap Forward. The state could not transfer production team property at will.

approval of the commune, could also use its emergency grain to pay the state procurement. If the harvest was good, the state might purchase more grain than the fixed quota. The state's over-quota procurement was bought at a higher price than the price for the regular procurement. The percentage of the state's total share varied from year to year. In a good harvest such as in 1970, the state took 43.14% from Shuitou's total harvest. That figure included 5.27% for state land tax, 31.32% for the grain procurement quota, and 5.75% for over-quota procurement.

Peasants' Share. Individual consumption under the collective was based on a quota system determined by the age, gender, and labor power of each individual. Everyone in the production team was assigned a quota category.¹⁰ Between the ages of 1 and 17, there were 6 categories. The first category, age 1 to 3, had a quota of 140 *jin* (about 70 kg) of grain per year. The next categories added the the same amount in incremental order to the sixth category, age 16 and 17, which had a quota of 510 *jin* of grain. People below age of 18 were considered adolescents. No gender distinction in terms of grain quota was applied. People between 18 and 55 were considered full laborers. Their labor power was rated in three levels. Level 1 had a grain quota of 680 *jin* grain per year; Level 2 had 630 *jin*; and Level 3 had 560 *jin*. A full labor power adult male was rated level 1, and a female was rated level 2. Weak and infirm people (such as the handicapped) of both genders in this age group were put in the lower levels depending on their individual condition as decided in the team meeting. Those above age of 56 formed the last quota category with 520 *jin* of grain per year

¹⁰ A similar system also existed in Zengbu Commune in Kwangtung (Potter and Potter 1990: 124), but the age categories was slightly different from Shuitou, and Zengbu calculated grain ration on monthly basis, and Shuitou was on yearly basis. However, the exact amount for different age groups was similar between the two localities. Thus, this method of grain rationing was probably adopted nation-wide, but there were still regional differences.

irrespective of gender. If older people still participated in farm work, the team meeting might decide to increase their consumption quota.

Under the quota system, peasants still had to pay the production teams for the rationed grain. It was by no means free. The quota was the amount that an individual was entitled to purchase. A person with no money to buy the quota grain, however, could borrow from the production team. This often happened among older people without support of children. Often they were never able to repay their debts, but their closest agnates who inherited their property would have to pay back the debts to the production team. Although a person might be poor when alive, the property -- an assigned house and furniture in the house -- could be worth a sizable amount.

If a harvest was good, a production team (approved by the brigade and the commune) could raise its members' consumption quotas to as much as 25% above normal rate. But the distribution of the over-quota grain was not based on quota categories. In Shuitou, from 1966 to the end of 1983, the over-quota consumption grain was distributed according to the work points an individual earned. The team accountant divided the total amount of the over-quota consumption grain by the total work points in a production team. One work point was worth certain amount of over-quota grain. Since the accountant posted everyone's work points each month and everyone knew exactly the total work points in a team, there was no room for manipulation.

This method of distributing over-quota consumption grain was a modification and legacy of the incentive approach adopted after the Great Leap Forward. After the disaster of the Great Leap Forward, in order to deal with the wide-spread famine, the communist party thought if those people who contributed more labor in production received more grain, grain production could be boosted. But under the quota category system, no matter how much one contributed to production, his/her

consumption grain was fixed. In an effort to increase grain output, a method was proposed to increase the difference in amount of grain between those contributing more and those contributing less labor. Under this incentive system, the total grain to be distributed to team members was divided into two categories: (1) consumption quota grain and (2) work point grain. The ratio between them varied. Most often it was 60/40 or 50/50. In the 60/40 ratio, if a production team had a total of 10,000 jin of grain for peasants, 6,000 jin of grain was to be divided according to the guaranteed quota and 4,000 jin was to be divided by the total work points earned by all team members. If the production team originally guaranteed an adult male 680 jin of grain, now it would only guarantee him 60% of the original quota, or 408 jin of grain. If he wanted to get the remaining 40% (272 jin) of his original allocated quota, he had to earn it based on his work points. Assuming the work points in the production team totalled 2,000, each work point would be worth 2 jin of grain. If the man had 136 work points, he got the 272 jin of grain. If he did not work enough, he would get less work point grain. And have to make do with 408 jin of grain, which could never satisfy his needs. If his work points exceeded 136, he could get more grain than under the consumption quota category system.

This incentive method encouraged individual competition, but this competition was at the expense of the weak and the infirm. An old man who was supposed to receive a guaranteed quota of 520 jin of grain under the incentive method could only receive 60% of it. If he could not work, he might go hungry. Objection to the method was strong from families in the stage of their developmental cycle of having many old and young. For parents with three children whose original consumption quota was cut by 40%, it was very hard to make up the difference with their own work point grain. The system created conflicts between families whose children had grown up and were earning work points and families whose

children were not able to earn work points. Since the ratio between consumption grain and work point grain was decided in team meetings, those in weak positions insisted on the 60/40 ratio (60% distributed according to the consumption quota and 40% according to work points) and families in strong position asked for the 50/50 ratio (50% distributed according to the consumption quota and the other 50% according to work points). After 1966, this incentive method was partially abandoned in Shuitou. The linkage between one's consumption grain and one's work points was severed. From late 1966 onward, all the regular consumption grain was based on the consumption quota. Only when the harvest was good was the over-quota consumption grain divided according to work points. Those people who earned more work points would be given more money; however, in a society where many material goods were rationed, money had little use without the ration quota.

The third category of grain for the peasants' use was the fodder for pigs. Before the mid-1960s, pigs were raised collectively by the production team. According to villagers, the collective pig farm was not functioning well. The growth rate was too slow because piglets should be fed with cooked fodder. Piglets might die because pen was not kept clean or die from cold in the winter. By the late-1960s, the major portion of pig raising was left to individual households.¹¹ Pigs raised in Shuitou provided pork for urban population and also for export to other countries. There was a high demand for pork and the state was willing to give incentives for pig raising. There was a quota as to how many pigs a production team had to sell to the state. The production team then divided up and transferred its quota to individual households. By fulfilling their quota, team members received money for pigs sold to the state. Since the consumption quota grain for humans was not enough to

¹¹ It is likely that it must have been modified by the Cultural Revolution of 1966 since it was more "capitalistic" than the private land or the piece rate.

feed pigs, the production team had to provide fodder to individual households to raise pigs. Just as team members had to use their work points in exchange for consumption quota grain, pigs had to pay their way. Pigs had to earn their food by the dung they contributed since pig dung was used by the production team as fertilizer.

The three categories of grain mentioned above were part of the planned economy and were distributed by the production team. There was a fourth source of grain to the peasants that was not under the purview of the production team: grain planted on private land. After the disaster of the Great Leap Forward in 1962, each individual was assigned private land, and neither the state nor the production team had any claim to the produce from that private land; there was no tax, compulsory procurement, or shares to the production team. Although private land was supposed to be cultivated by individual households, from the Cultural Revolution of 1966 to the end of collective system of 1983, private land in Shuitou was pooled and farmed by production teams in the same way as the collective land. During the Cultural Revolution, private land was accused of being the "capitalist tail" and there was great pressure on the team to eliminate it. Pooling the private land and cultivating it collectively was a strategy to ride out the political storm. After the political storm subsided in about 1969, private land in Shuitou did not revert to individual households. Villagers said this was to have better management of team labor. Before the Cultural Revolution, some Shuitou villagers went to sell produce from their private land during the agricultural peak season and disrupted the collective's farming. Based on this previous experience, private land in Shuitou was still pooled and collectively farmed.

I believe, however, there was a more important reason for not returning the private land to individual households: there was great

difficulty in adjusting private plots to the population change. In the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward, the private land was distributed to each household on a per capita basis irrespective of age and gender. Each person received 0.2 mu of land. The private land constituted about 7% of the total land in Shuitou and was shared by about 600 people in early 1960s.¹² But population in Shuitou has doubled over the last 30 years, while the total amount of private land given to Shuitou villagers stayed the same. The state was not willing to increase the amount of private land in accordance with the population increase because it could not claim any produce from the private land. To increase the amount of private land in accordance to the increasing population means shrinking both the state's tax and procurement quota. Since the total amount of the private land remained the same and population has increased dramatically, the per capita private land has been shrinking. The problem was then how to divide the private land to adjust to the constantly changing population in a fair and acceptable way. Private land was assigned to individual households rather than to individual persons. If a family had five people, the production team would give it one mu of land. Peasants would spend a lot of energy to increase the productivity of the private land. In a better year, 0.2 mu of land assigned to each individual could produce as much as 150 jin of grain, which was more than 20% of the annual consumption grain for an adult male laborer. If a household had lost two members, it was extremely difficult for the production team to get 0.4 mu of the private land back from this family so as to be able give the land to another family who had gained two members. Even if the number of people in a household stayed the same over the years, its entitlement to private land would

¹² The 7 percent of land assigned as private land seemed to be county-wide policy. In Xitong Commune, the same percentage for private land was adopted. (Xitong Township Gazetteer 1994: 109). But in Zhengbu Commune in Kwangtung, private land counted about 10 percent of total land owned by the commune. (Potter and Potter 1990: 109)

change because the population changed. Since population changes constantly, it would be impossible to regularly adjust private land accordingly. The inability to adjust the distribution of private land to population changes was a point of contention between families whose population had increased after the allocation of the private land and families whose population had decreased. The pooling of private land with collective land, all to be cultivated by the team as a whole, therefore, was meant to solve the conflict.

The Production Team's Share. A production team needed to preserve a certain amount of grain as seed for the next year. It needed to preserve grain as fodder for collectively owned draft animals and pigs and to set aside for emergencies. To use emergency grain, a production team had to receive permission from the brigade and the commune, and it should restock the emergency grain to the same level in the next year if conditions permitted. Because of the emergency grain, the state was able to lessen its burden in times of disaster. It functioned as a kind of reservoir balancing the claims of the state and the needs of the peasants. If a harvest was bad, and a team just had enough to satisfy the consumption quota for its members, it could apply for reduction in procurement. The commune would generally demand the production team's emergency grain as the state procurement. If there was not enough for team members to eat, emergency grain could also be used for consumption. If there was no emergency grain left, which never happened in Shuitou, the state would sell grain back to the team at the procurement price. The amount of emergency grain for each year was not fixed since it depended upon the condition of harvest. In a good year like 1970, 17.74% of total grain in Shuitou was taken by the production team, 7.10% was stored as emergency grain, 7.37% was reserved as seed for the next season, and 1.72 % was used as fodder.

Relationships among Team Cadres and Team Members

The production team was the basic unit of ownership and distribution. The team cadres controlled the use of the resources and the distribution of work and rations. But to what extent could team cadres use their position to punish and reward their team members? How did team members deal with unpopular team cadres?

In this "encapsulated" environment, management of a production team was not an easy job. Team cadres' abilities to punish and reward team members were severely limited. Production team cadres were not like managers of a modern corporation who can hire or fire workers or raise or lower wages. Team cadres could not threaten a team member with loss of team membership since the production team was responsible for supplying the members' basic necessities. Based on the quota system, team members' entitlement to rations was regulated by the state, not determined by cadres. The distribution of work had to be fair and often the desired or detested jobs had to be rotated among team members or decided by drawing lots. Work points had to be posted so that everyone in the production team could know whether anyone had cheated everyone else. The change from the Dazhai work point system to the day-rate and piece-rate system was to avoid conflicts among villagers.

The regulations regarding the distribution of work and rations were both the causes and symptoms of tensions within a production team. Since the welfare of a team member was seen as negatively related to that of other team members (if one received more, others must receive less), conflicts over the distribution of work and rations were severe. To reduce conflicts, regulations about the distribution were instituted, but once the regulations were in place, team members became increasingly aware of whether they were being taken advantage of. One bowl of grain

missing from a ration could bring an uproar against cadres who managed the distribution or other team members who might profit from the mistake.

In this "encapsulated" environment where everyone was on guard against everyone else for fear of being taken advantage of, a small difference between supposedly equal members of a production team would be exaggerated and become a point of contention. Even though the distribution of grain and work were strictly regulated and there was little chance for team cadres to manipulate the system, there were still things that were not or could not be regulated, which opened the doors for conflicts. For example, there might be two stocks of grain, one fresh and the other a year old. Although both could fill the stomach, the former might be more tasty than the latter. If one team member was notified late and the better stock had already been picked by others, he/she felt victimized.

There were also many occasions for team cadres to distribute minor punishments and rewards. Even though these punishments and rewards did not threaten livelihoods, they were clearly felt by team members. In an "encapsulated" environment where people were at each other's throats, these small differences could easily be exaggerated by the villagers themselves. When villagers attributed their receiving of a lesser quality of grain to not having good relationships with team cadres, and when they saw themselves as having been taken advantage of by cadres, this limited power of team cadres gained importance to team members. This does not mean favoritism was prevalent in production teams. To preserve harmonious working conditions for collective farming, team cadres would not blatantly show favoritism. The problem was the "image" of favoritism. In the "encapsulated" environment, any hint of favoritism would provoke conflict among team members resulting in factional fighting.

Kin relations were generally the basis in the formation of a faction. In Shuitou, a production team was composed of several descent groups, but a descent group as a whole was not always the basis for a faction. For example, two opposing factions in Team Number 3 of West Hamlet had members from the same descent group. The struggle between these opposing factions was severe. Each of the two camps had six families. There was rumors that members of faction A jointly cheated faction B by changing records of grain production and sales receipts and dividing differences among themselves. For the villagers, patrilineal kin relations were more important among agnates related within three generations. It was this smaller group, sometimes called an extended family, within a descent group that was the basis for a faction. When we examine the tenure of team leaders, we find that men belonging to larger extended families had longer tenure on average. Belonging to the same extended family group did not always mean factional membership, however. There are cases in Shuitou in which individuals left the factions of their extended families and joined the opposing camps because of marriage relationships. Sometimes members of the extended family did not get along well and jointed opposing factions. While belonging to the same extended family was generally perceived as *de facto* faction membership, an alliance could also be created through marriage. Before 1949, the endogamy rate in Shuitou was less than 35%. During Cultural Revolution, when internal struggle became more severe, village endogamy reached about 60%. Villagers interpreted the increase in the endogamy rate as a strategy to create alliances in the intense factional fighting.

The position of production team cadre was decided by production team voting every year. A person inspired to become a team leader must get factional support. In other words, he was using the centrifugal force within a production team. Once elected, however, the team leader

he must down-play the factional background to create harmonious working conditions in the team. Without cooperation of all team members, the production might fail and the leader would be voted out of office. Thus, he must try to maintain and promote the centripetal force in the team. This might endanger factional support and risk the opportunity for the next year's election. A team leader had to walk a tightrope between centrifugal and centripetal forces. Between 1970 and 1983, there was a high turnover rate of team leaders in Shuitou.¹³ The longest tenure was four years. Some held office for only one year, while the majority held it between two to three years. This high turnover rate demonstrates the extremely unstable conditions in production team politics. Team cadres were not members of a privileged group who could keep their office indefinitely. They were the center where conflict among team members was played out.

If we define power as the ability to punish and reward, production team cadres had little power. The regulations and constraints on the distribution of work and rations limited cadres' ability to manipulate. Without the ability to punish and reward, the relationship between team cadres and team members was a power-dispersed one. The effects of this power-dispersed structure can be seen in the high turnover rate of team cadres and the factional fighting among team members.

¹³ I do not have records for the pre-1970 team cadres.

CHAPTER 5

POWER RELATIONS UNDER THE MARKET ECONOMY

China entered a new era when the collective system in the countryside was abandoned in 1984. People were no longer constrained in the "encapsulated" structure of production team which controlled all the labor power and means of production. They no longer needed to share the fruits of their labor with other members of production team. People could choose what they wanted to do with their labor power and means of production so long if their tax and the compulsory procurement grain was delivered on time. The different use of their labor and means of production created economic stratification qualitatively different from the two previous periods where differences in wealth were mainly caused by family's different positions in their developmental cycle. After 1984, increasing economic stratification in Shuitou resulted from the development of rural industry. The wealth of a family no longer depended upon the number of its adult laborers but on a family's ability to make money in the newly burgeoning rural industry. By the mid-1990s, a wealthy button factory owner or sales person could have an annual income more than 10 to 15 times higher than an average villager. What was the relationship between the rich and the poor under this high degree of economic stratification? Often economic stratification meant differences in "power." People with more wealth usually were seen as having an upper hand over people with less wealth. But has this been the case in Shuitou?

This chapter is divided into four parts. The Part One describes the transition from collective economy to market economy. Part Two deals

with the economic development in Shuitou in the post-1983 period. Part Three discusses an incidence of conflict in the village. Part Four examines power relationships in Shuitou.

Transition from Collective Economy to Market Economy

Under the collective system, the production teams were the smallest economic units to the Chinese government. Production teams, rather than individual citizens or families, were the basic property (land and other means of production) owning units and, was responsible to pay tax, sell grain to the state under the procurement program, and receive fertilizer and other rationed materials. Individual villagers worked in the production teams and supported by the production teams for their basic necessities. After 1984, the collective system was replaced by the family responsibility system. Under the new system, the basic economic units in the countryside became the individual families: each family was given certain amount of land and farm tools; it could freely deploy its means of production and labor; it has the duty of paying tax and selling the quota procurement grain to the state; and it has to take care of their own livelihood for the state has suspended its responsibility of providing the necessities to villagers. This chapter is divided into two sections. Section One discusses the division of production teams' land and farm tools in Shuitou at the end of 1983. Section Two discusses some effects of the family responsibility system.

The Division of Means of Production by Production Team

The collective system was formally abandoned in 1984. At the end of 1983, the production teams of Shuitou brigade held their last redistribution. This time, however, was not about dividing grain ration, but the means of production owned by the teams. Like the distribution of

grain ration and work, fairness was the most important criterion. Two types of property were divided at the end of 1983: land and farm tools. Land of a production team was put into three categories: the private land, the ration land, and the commercial land. The differences between the three is that private land does not have to pay tax nor fulfill procurement quota, the ration land has to pay tax but not the procurement quota; the commercial land had to pay both tax and fulfill procurement quota. The amount of private land a production team could distribute to its members was still the same amount that was allocated to it in the early 1960s (about 7 percent of the total land). Based on the population of 1983, the private land was equally divided among individuals on per capita basis irrespective of age and sex. In Shuitou, the amount of ration land for each individual was based on the consumption quota (according to the sex, age and labor power of each individual). Ration land counted about 20 to 30 percent of the total land a production team owned. The rest of land was commercial land. The amount of commercial land an individual entitled to was determined by the labor power of the individual. Only adults between age of 18 to 55 received commercial land. However, if a person over 55 could still work, he/she could still get commercial land if his/her sons promised to fulfill tax and procurement quota after the person is unable to work. While land allocation was individually based, land was actually assigned to each household rather than to an individual. Any population change in a household, then would not require any redistribution of land, and the government guaranteed that the land distributed to individual household would not change for 15 years. (However, this promise was broken in Shuitou when land was redistributed in 1995. As will be discussed later, the promised 15 years did not hold because the economic condition in the village had changed.)

Each production team in Shuitou held land allocation meeting to divide the farm land. Each household had to send one representative to the meeting. After the amount of each household had been calculated, the allocation meeting decided which household should receive which piece of land. Two major factors were involved in the allocation of land: land fertility and its location. Based on fertility and distance to the village, land was divided into several grades in the allocation meeting. Each grade of land was divided equally among all households. That is, each household would receive a combination of different grades of land. Often, a household received five or six small plots located in different places. While it was very inconvenient for the villagers, it was necessary in order to make things equal. After the land grade was decided, individual households drew lots to determine which piece of a particular grade of land it should receive, and the order of lots drawing, I was told, was decided by another lots drawing.

Except for a few farm tools, such as the threshing machine for wheat and barley, which continued to be used by the whole team, property owned by a production team were sold to team members. First of all, farm tools and other properties were assigned a cash value in team meeting. Then, individual households drew lots to decide who should buy which property. Lots drawing was compulsory and individual household could not refuse to buy the property which it had drawn. However, since the cash value of the property was decided in the team meeting, it was usually below the market value. After one bought a piece of team property, it could be resold. One team member got a boat which he sold immediately and made a small fortune. If one could not pay all the cash at once, he/she could pay back in several installments. Production team given part of the money thus collected to individual households (based on the amount of land it received and estimated capital input per mu of land in a year) as initial capital for agricultural production. Deducting all the

initial agricultural production capital for member households, what was left from the money collected from selling production team property was saved as fund for the production team, under the custody of brigade, or village (brigade as a bureaucratic unit was re-named as village, and production team re-named as cooperative after 1984). Production team (or cooperative) leader could not use them at will. He had to file report to use it. In effect, the money was appropriated by the village government.

The Family Responsibility System

Under the collective system, the production teams had to support the basic necessities of all its members irrespective of whether it is economical. The Chinese government abandoned its responsibility to peasants under the new family responsibility system. After each family were given land and other means of production at the end of 1983, peasants have to take care of their own welfare at least on the economic level. They have to determine how they were going to manage their land and satisfy their needs. After nearly thirty years of collectivization, peasants were not accustomed to do so. Before, they were told by team cadres what to do. If something went wrong, they could blame their team leaders. Under the family responsibility system, they have to blame themselves if seeds selected for next season were bad, or irrigation was not done on time, or fertilizer was not properly administered. They have to arrange labor for farm work. Peasant households without enough laborers have to negotiate with other households to exchange labor. Shuitou villagers have to re-familiarize themselves as to how to take charge themselves. It is no surprising that villagers in Shuitou were not enthusiastic about the family responsibility system when they first learned about it. They were birds caged for thirty years. In the cage, they could expected to be fed on time. After 1983, they were let loose and face the uncertainty. But the new system have some positive effects.

Worrying about the uncertainty, and understanding the fruits of their own labor needed not be shared by other peasants, villagers did their best to cope with the new environment. Agriculture production increased dramatically in Shuitou. Villagers claim there was as much as 20 percent increase in grain production in 1984 compared to the previous year. And it was because of rising living standard that the new economic system found its justification.

While the state shed off its responsibility of providing basic necessities to villagers after the adoption of the family responsibility system, it also relinquished its control over villagers' labor power which was previously monopolized by production teams. Without constraints from production team, villagers could seek off-farm jobs and participate in economic activities of maximum returns. Although the family responsibility system was not by itself a measure to promote rural industrialization, it was the freeing of labor power under the new system that encouraged the economic development in Shuitou.

Economic Development in Shuitou

Compared to the previous period, Shuitou indeed became more wealthy by the mid-1990s. The prosperity brought by introduction in the early 1980s of the family responsibility system, the market economy and a significant development of button manufacturing industry in Shuitou was especially obvious in the 1990s. Most villagers were living in two-story houses. In 1995, nearly every household had a television set. The first private telephone, which was hand cranked, was set up in Shuitou in 1989, and by 1995, mostly owned by button factory owners. Several of them even owned mobile phones that cost more than 15,000 RMB a set, more than the annual income of an average village household (about 10,000 RMB). The new found wealth was also displayed in the sky-rocketing

marriage expenses. Besides jewelry and modern appliances for bride price, it was often said a woman would not marry into a family unless her future parents-in-law built a new house for the couple. When new house was not built, a room for the newly weds would often be luxuriously furnished with all the modern appliances such as refrigerator, washing machine, color television, and VCR. Generally, the parents of the groom had to prepare 30,000 to 50,000 RMB for a marriage. Young men usually saw their marriages as their parents' responsibility and contributed little to the marriage expenses.¹ Those villagers who could not afford such high costs often had to marry outsiders, often from distant areas.²

The newly found wealth was clearly associated with the development of button industry in Shuitou. But the button industry was not the only source of income in the village. Until the implementation of the "professional grain producing household" (*jong lian da hu*) program in 1995, most villagers still did, at least, some farming. Agriculture, however, as a way of life that had lasted thousands of years for the majority of Chinese, was now dying out in Shuitou. It was at the bottom of economic ladder. In this section, I describe the process why agriculture was coming to an end in the village. The death of agriculture as a way of life was the work of Shuitou's booming button industry, the development of which I will show.

¹ One old villager told me the two responsibilities of a man are to build a house for his family and to provide decent marriages for his sons. However a father's effort to provide for his sons does not always receive a similar treatment in return. As one villager jokingly put it: "A father provides for his sons based on a market economy [that is, uncontrolled investment], and a son provides for his father based on a planned economy."

² Several villagers married women from other provinces. Although illegal, there exists a bride market. Women from poor provinces are brought by friends or even relatives to coastal provinces under the assumption of finding a job but "sold" to families who cannot afford high marriage expenses.

Agriculture

Before the implementation of the "professional grain producing household" in 1995, most villagers still farmed. However, farming was becoming a sideline rather than the main occupation. Aside from their own consumption of rice, most villagers had to pay their tax and the state procurement with grain grown in their own land even though they had the option of buying the grain in the market. Beyond these two purposes, however, villagers were becoming less willing to grow more grain. It was estimated that 40 mu of land lay fallow in 1994. While it was a relatively low percentage in the total of 1,632 mu³ of land in Shuitou, fallow land was a growing problem. Even if land was not left fallow, villagers were spending less time on land. Except in the agricultural peak season, one could not find many people working in the fields. Beyond the basic need for consumption and one's duty to the state (tax and government procurement), almost no new capital investment was put into agriculture. Villagers would rather buy a button-making machine than a tractor. Agriculture represented backwardness that many villagers try to shunned away from. Everyone born in the village was expected by oneself to be a peasant. But to get ahead meant to getting rid of one's peasant status and leave agriculture behind. Almost all the wealthy villagers had suits and wore them as often as they possibly could. Toiling on the land under the sun was not to the taste of villagers if they could make a living under the protection of a roof. The wealthy villagers would rather hire farm hands (mostly from villages where the button industry was less developed) than do farm work

³ The official registration of farm land decreased in Shuitou from 1,800 mu in 1970s to 1632 mu in 1995. On the one hand, more land has been converted to non-agriculture use, such as the building of factories and for village housing. Also, after the de-collectivization, land around lake side has been eroded faster. Without collective effort to protect land, individual households are less able to build stone banks around their land.

themselves.

One problem with agriculture for the Shuitou villagers was that it did not pay. One mu of land could produce about 1,200 jin of grain a year if two crops (barley/wheat for late Winter and early Spring, and rice for early summer) were planted. The three grain crop arrangement prevalent during the earlier collective period had almost totally disappeared. In 1994, the per capita land in Shuitou was about 1.6 mu. Thus an average person could receive about 1,900 jin of grain a year in all his/her share of land was fully planted. Deduct enough for one's own consumption (about 600 jin of grain), and for state tax (62 jin of grain per mu, or about 100 jin per person based on 1.6 mu of land), left about 1,200 jin of grain per person.⁴ The state procurement was 530 jin per mu, or 850 jin per person (based on the average land of 1.6 mu per person). The procurement price was 0.55 RMB per jin. Based on the average of 1.6 mu of land per person, one could get 466 RMB from selling grain to the state. The remaining 350 jin could be sold in the open market (average 0.65 RMB per jin) for 230 RMB. Combining grain sold to the state as quota procurement and sold on the open market, a person could earn about 700 RMB a year from grain production. But the expenses for agriculture were high. Chemical fertilizer, pesticide, irrigation and other expenses coasted 300 RMB per mu, or 480 RMB per person in 1994. Thus, a person could only earn about 220 RMB a year from grain production. Those villagers who spent more of their energy on raising productivity and reduce expenses possibly could earn about 300 RMB per person. If farm laborers were hired for planting and harvesting, the total expenses amounted to about 420 RMB per mu, or 670 RMB per person. In that case, a person would earn only 30 RMB from grain production in a year. However, if they totally abandoned their fields, they then had to

⁴ Since villagers are now spending less energy on land, their grain consumption has decreased dramatically. Some villagers claim could eat four bowls of rice a meal during the collective period but now can eat only two.

use cash to buy grain from open market for their own consumption and also to pay off their tax and procurement grain to the government. That meant a cash outlay of nearly 950 RMB per person. Because their financial loss would be great if all their land was left fallow, villagers therefore would only leave small amounts of land fallow so as to maintain a balance.

In 1994, there were about 1028 people in Shuitou in 318 households for an average of about 3.3 people per household. If a peasant could make 300 RMB from grain production in a year, the average household yearly income from grain could reach 1,000 RMB. This was definitely too little compare to working in button factory where one can earn about 10 RMB a day.

But grain production was not the only way to make money from the land. In 1990s, in between the two grain crop seasons, villagers had often planted watermelon. In a good season, 5,000 jin could be produced per mu. Since watermelon yield decreases dramatically if the same piece of land was used for two consecutive years, a household often planted less than one mu of watermelon a year. In 1994, the best price was 0.3 RMB per jin. Deducting all the expenses, a peasant could make a net profit of 1,000 to 1,200 RMB. However, the price for watermelon fluctuated. The low price in 1994 was about 0.15 RMB per jin. It was not only affected by the quality of the fruit but also the timing of the harvest. When weather was hot, watermelon could fetch a good price from traveling merchants who came to buy the fruit directly from villagers. Watermelon was relatively new to Shuitou. There were some techniques not all peasants could command. For example, the selection of seeds is very important to the yield. And if watermelon contracts disease, one could lose money. This was also true for other cash crops, such as mushrooms.

Mushroom growing had created a disaster in Shuitou. In the late 1980s, the county agriculture company encouraged villagers to grow

mushroom for export market. There was a saying that "if one wants to build a house for people, build a house for mushrooms first." Because the capital investment for building a green house for mushroom was high, the agriculture company promised to buy from the peasants at a set price. After the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, the export market for Chinese mushroom disappeared. The agriculture company refused to buy the guaranteed quantity from peasants because their own outlet had been shutdown. Because there was no buyer, it was reported that peasants had to dump their rotten mushroom in rivers. After the export market was gradually re-established, and consumption of mushroom increased among the Chinese urban population, the price for mushroom went up. In mid-1990s, a good mushroom house could produce a net profit of 5,000 RMB a year. However, there were probably less than ten villagers growing mushrooms in 1995. This was a result of the many villagers scared off by the market crash, the unwillingness to invest 2,000 to 3,000 RMB to build a mushroom house and for other expenses. In addition, it was easy for mushroom to contract disease from the soil which villagers dug from river bed and mixed with cow dung. Mushroom had to be kept warm when sprouting. It must be collected before dawn. For many villagers who could make a living from other sources, therefore, growing mushrooms was not attractive even though it could be highly remunerative. It was not that cash crops earn less than other investment sources but because cash crops were risky. It was unlike working in factories where one could expect to earn a pre-determined wage based on one's labor input. One could lose money even if he/she had put in much efforts in cash crops. The fluctuation of market was totally beyond the control of villagers. For the less adventurous villagers, who are more likely to stay in farming, cash crops were not as dependable as grain which the state offered a guaranteed price and which they must consume anyway.

By mid-1990s, about 80 villagers of Shuitou had farming as their main occupation. They were less aggressive in seeking fortune in the market economy. Many of their children had married before the soaring marriage expenses of the late 1980s and faced lesser financial burdens. Their economic activity was therefore mainly aimed to sustaining their own living. But obviously, since agriculture could not totally satisfy their economic needs, they often had to do odd jobs to earn extra income. For 10 RMB a day, men might be hired as auxiliary labor for the two private construction teams in the village. For 10 RMB a day, older women might be hired by button factories to count buttons and pick out the bad ones. But these odd jobs were not steady, especially for the men.

Farming as the main occupation was not limited to ordinary villagers. Cadres or retired cadres also farmed. For many production team leaders of the collective period, farming was still main occupation. Even previous brigade cadres might still farm. But they fair a little better than ordinary villagers because the village government often found regular jobs for them to save them from competing for odd jobs with ordinary villagers. For example, Long Yu, the old brigade party secretary for 16 years was hired by the village to look over the village water supply which earned him about 3,000 RMB a year. But in 1990s, this money was not much by village standards. Giving him the position was probably more to save face for both Long Yu and the communist party than to support him with a comfortable life. Farming was Long Yu's main occupation and he was living in a sub-standard one story house. His son owned a button processing factory which was not particularly prosperous compared to the other 36 processing factories in Shuitou. There was no indication that he could use his party membership or cadre status to gain advantage in the booming button industry for himself or his son.

Even the current cadres might still farm and be at the bottom of the economic ladder. Ma Shan, the incumbent village head (a position next in command to the party secretary), was a case in point. He was in his late forties by 1995; he had become a communist party member while in the army. He was mainly a farmer even though he receives a regular salary from the village government (about 4,000 RMB annually) by serving as the head of the village government. This salary was enough to support him so as not to have to work at odd jobs, but it is considerably less than the earning of an average button processing factory owner (30,000 RMB to 50,000 a year). Village head was elected by all villagers every four years. I suspect villagers (especially the older ones who have remained as farmers) elected him to balance the party secretary (a position decided by the Communist Party), Xiao Hu, who made a fortune in the button business. While Xiao Hu was more aggressive in industrializing the village (which increased disparity among villagers' wealth), Ma Shan, on the other hand, was a conservative who tries to keep things equal. Although exaggerating the comparison, we could say Xiao Hu was speaking for the rich and Ma Shan was speaking for the poor. Their difference showed in the management of village affairs. For example, in 1993, Xiao Hu wanted to open a road (wide enough for cars) to Yaoshui township seat so transportation of buttons could be made more easily. Ma Shan opposed it for spending too much of village funds. Since the main income of the villagers depended on the button industry, support for Ma Shan was weak and his objection failed. While there must be chances for Ma Shan to open a button factory, he seemed determined to remain a land cultivator. The lower economic status of being a peasant-cultivator gave Ma Shan a moral edge in asserting his communist ideals. However, for some villagers, Ma Shan's tilling the land was hardly a thing to be proud of. It only showed his inability of taking advantage of the market economy and not daring enough to take risks. In an environment where an

individual's social status was determined by his/her ability to make money, Ma Shan's peasant image did not win much respect from many villagers.

Jiashan county has traditionally been a grain producing area. The low profit and low incentive in agriculture production had driven down the total grain output in the county. Sensing the problem in falling grain production, the county government pushed a new program, the "professional grain producing household," in 1994 to boost production. The program was based on the notion that production could only increase if people finds more profit in it. As discussed previously, there was still profit in grain production. If a peasant spent more energy on land, a person could earn about 300 RMB a year based on 1.6 mu of land, or about 120 RMB per mu in net profit. Since an average household with 3.3 person had only about 5.3 mu of land, the maximum profit a household could earn from grain production was about 1,000 RMB per year. However, if a household cultivated more land, its income from grain production could rise dramatically. If one mu could produce 1,200 jin of gain, and if a household had 100 mu of land, it could produce 120,000 jin of grain a year. Deduct the consumption needs of the household of about 2,000 jin grain (600 jin per person), and 6,200 of state tax (62 jin per mu), this household would have nearly 92,000 jin of grain left. If all the grain sold to the state based on the procurement price of 0.55 RMB per jin, gross profit could be 50,000 RMB a year. Deduct the 300 RMB per mu input of fertilizer and pesticide and other expenses, this household could still make 20,000 RMB a year, comparable to the annual earning of a button processing factory owner.

In 1994, Shuitou was chosen by the township as a testing point for the new "professional grain producing household" program. It was so chosen because button industry in the village had absorbed a great part of labor force and the number of people who solely depended upon land

was small. To implement the program, the first thing was to redistribute the land ownership. In 1994, land was redistributed on per capita basis. Each individual, regardless of age or sex, was given 0.7 mu of land. This number was based on the average consumption need of an individual. In this program, each production team (or cooperative) was the basic unit of distribution. Villagers of the same production team held joint meetings to decide which part of land should be reserved for themselves (usually the best farm land and nearest to the settlement), and which portion should be given to the "professional grain producing households." After the land left for average villagers had been decided, each household drew lots to determine who should receive which parcel of land. The whole process was very similar to that of land distribution in 1983 when the collective system was abandoned as described above.

The remaining land, about 850 mu, was then contracted to willing villagers who wanted to be professional farmers. A contract of 10 years was signed between the village and the professional farmers. The minimum amount of land contracted by the professional farmer was 50 mu. But the usual contract was signed at 100 mu. The professional farmers had to pay 2,000 RMB as deposits that guaranteed they would farm the land. The professional farmers had to shoulder all the procurement quota and the land tax of all village land. Ordinary villagers who received the 0.7 mu of land would not pay the state duties. Because the contract was signed for 10 years, village government limited the contractors to those under 50 years of age for fearing that those above that age would not be able to till the land in the later part of the contracts.

This program was welcomed by the majority of villagers. The reason that villagers still farmed was not because they can make money in grain production but because the need to satisfy their own consumption and their duties to the state (the tax and procurement quota). The professional grain producing households would alleviate villagers'

duties to the state and left just enough land for their own consumption. Now they could concentrate more on their money making business. However, this program was criticized by the older villagers whose main occupation was agriculture and were often at the bottom of the economic ladder. They might not be able to afford the 2,000 RMB deposit. The initial capital input for the chemical fertilizer and pesticide and other expenses for 100 mu of land (about 30,000 RMB) was too high for most of them. What's more, the village limited only those under 50 of age could contract the land barred most of them from becoming the "professional grain producing households." The 0.7 mu of land assigned to individual villagers was less than half the amount they previously farmed (1.6 mu). Even though the older villagers (including the village head, Ma Shan, and the former party secretary Long Yu) opposed this programs, they were in the minority. More importantly, their children were for it. Consequently, they could do nothing but grudgingly accept it. (Ma Shan's and Long Yu's discontent with the "professional grain producing household" program surfaced later in the conflict over building of the new elementary school and will be discussed later.)

Although the villagers most likely to be able to afford to be the "professional grain producing households" were factory owners, they were among those least likely to contract the land. On the other hand, those villagers whose incomes were mainly from farming were least able to contract the land. As can be expected, not many villagers were interested in becoming a professional farmer. There were only three younger villagers who expressed interest. Some of them had tried to get into the button business but failed. The majority of the land contractors, therefore, were from outside the village, some as far as Shaoxin, about 100 km southeast of Shuitou. Actually, according to the party secretary, Xiao Hu, the village government preferred to contract land to outsiders, since outsiders would be easier to deal with and the

village leadership could do everything according to the book. If the contractor was a villager, there was simply too many personal relations involved. Village leaders could not relentlessly pursue a fellow villager if tax or procurement quota were delayed or not fulfilled.

With the implementation of the "professional grain producing household" program, there was no security net left for villagers if their button industry went bad. During 1989, where the button industry faced a crisis because of the market's disappearance after the Tiananmen Square incident, many villagers then could return to farming so as to sustain themselves. Now, with the 0.7 mu of land per person, they could not do so any more and villagers had no choice but to deepen the industrialization process. For thousands of years, Chinese villagers have been forced to toil on the land. Now, in Shuitou, they finally got rid off land and became factory workers (or owners) in the true sense of the term. The "professional grain producing household" program, therefore, symbolizes the end of a way of life. Twelve years after the abandonment of the collective system, Shuitou is on a new road of no return.

The Button Industry

In the mid-1990s, button industry in Shuitou employed about 45 percent of village work force. It not only offered the largest employment, it also was the most vibrant rural industry in the village. Besides people directly involved in the button business, there were other villagers who provided services to the industry. The main income of the village's seven grocery stores depended on the purchasing power of button factory owners, workers, and sales persons. Most households whose occupation was transportation depended on the shipping in and out of raw material and finished products of the button industry. Of course, the button industry did not develop over night. The development of

Shuitou's button industry can be divided into three periods: 1978 to 1984, 1985 to 1989, and 1990 to 1995. I will discuss them in the following.

1978-1984

From 1962 onward, the production team was the basic unit of production and distribution under the collective system. Directly above it was the brigade. In theory, as an administrative unit, a brigade had no means of production; everything it needed was extracted from the production teams. To support itself and to finance public works involving the whole brigade, the Shuitou brigade set up its own enterprises to earn income.

In 1978, the state began to encourage collective units to establish light industries. Stimulated by the success of button manufacturing in an adjacent village to the southeast, Shuitou started its own brigade button processing factory and the village also had several other brigade enterprises. In 1978, there was a cement-board workshop, a greenhouse for mushrooms, a sericulture farm, and the button processing factory. Although not as profitable as cement-board workshop when it first started, the button processing factory soon outshone the cement-board workshop. Compared to working in the cement-board workshop, villagers preferred to work in the button factory. Manufacturing cement-board was hard labor: hauling bags of cement, mixing it with sand and rock, and putting it in molds. Each cement-board weighted about 100 kg and workers had to haul them back and forth. The work load in button-making was considerably lighter. A worker sits in front of a machine under the roof protected from the elements. It was probably the lightest job one could get as a full-time adult laborer. Cement-board manufacturing was team work with seven to ten people cooperating to produce a single board. In button-making, work was performed individually. One could leave to

attend other chores if need arose. The performance of the button factory soon attracted great interest among villagers. If the factory was profitable, it could expand, more villagers would be drafted to work in the button factory. The success of the button factory became the major topic in villagers' conversation. And it was because the button factory was successful that its manager, Xiao Hu, later was made the Communist party secretary of the village in 1987.

At its beginning, the processing factory had four regular employees: a manager, a sales person who was also in charge of buying raw material and two workers. The raw material at the time was plastic board, about 40 cm square. Workers had to use a manual hollow-drill to make cylindrical blanks from it. Since this procedure was slow, it restricted the output of the factory and, sometimes, the factory had to give up larger orders because of this restriction. Nevertheless, working in the brigade button factory familiarized villagers with procedures in button making, and helped the later development of the industry. The brigade factory sold most of its buttons to state-own garment factories in Shanghai, with state garment factories being the biggest consumer of buttons. Developing a good rapport with its managerial personnel was important for marketing buttons. The manager and the sales persons of the village factory developed contacts in the garment factories which they later put into good use when they established their private businesses.

Although agriculture still dominated, young village men were eager to learn a trade in order to escape the drudgery of farm work. To be a craftsman (*shi fu*, a term referring to a person with special skills other than farming) repairing machines and oversees button production intrigued them. However, they could not be fully employed by the brigade button factory. Used mainly for shirts and coats, the size and shape of the buttons were monotonous, and the demand was seasonal. Factory

workers still had to work in the field during harvest. Thus, the factory operated on and off according to orders from garment factories and the farming cycle. This kept the number of regular employees in the button factory low. Since the factory could not take in all the ambitious young men who wanted to become a *shi fu*, and the county government was reluctant to allow private industry to operate, (even if they were approved by the government, the initial capital investment was often beyond what villagers could afford) these aspiring young men were forced to find work elsewhere. In the early 1980s, there were about 20 of them left Shuitou for Wenzhou area to work as *shi fu* in button factories. Wenzhou, some 200 miles southeast of the village, is in a mountainous region with little land but a large population. In order to survive, its policy has been more flexible than others. The local government reportedly allowed private enterprise to grow much earlier than in Jiashan county. Nearly twenty years of development, therefore, has made Wenzhou the largest button manufacturing and retailing center in China. The experience and contacts developed by young people in Wenzhou had beneficial results in moving to the next developmental stage of the button industry in Shuitou.

1985-1989

Although there had been 2 privately-owned button processing factories opened in 1984, they closed within 2 months. The reason was they could not find buyers. Before 1990, a small privately owned operation was not able to earn enough confidence from a state garment factory to place order. Buyers would worry about the quality and whether the goods could be delivered on time. A private factory usually had no credential in the business and had no collateral to guarantee fulfillment of contract. If the deal went bad, the garment factories had no recourse. Also important was that business at the time mostly was

conducted on IOU basis. Because private factory did not belong to the planned economy, it was difficult to make business arrangements between state and private factories under such terms. The transaction for raw materials was also done on IOU basis, and without credential, a private factory had to buy raw material with cash. To amass enough capital to buy enough raw materials was difficult for a newly established private factory, making their survival more difficult. It was not till after a period of familiarization that the state factories gradually trusted the ability of their private counterparts.

In 1985, one year after the dismantling of the commune system, the brigade-owned button processing factory was leased out to the highest bidder. For 8,000 RMB a year, 8 men leased the factory for the first year. They were shareholders but acquired their shares by participating in the production or marketing of the button. The lease fee was paid at the end of the year so they could pay it after they had made some profits. The three major shareholders were cadre-managers (including Xiao Hu) of the previous brigade button factory of the village. Although the factory was now privately managed, it was still registered as a village-owned factory (because it paid lease fee to the village). The advantages of leasing the village button factory was that the new operators could use the original license issued by the government to the village factory, and the village government became the guarantors of business contracts. This made business much easier than the short lived private-own factories in negotiating deals. Later, in the face of growing number of privately-owned processing factories, paying a heavy lease fee to the village became a bad business deal. The lease practice lasted for two years. In 1988, the machines were sold, the village factory dissolved, and many shareholders started their private businesses.

It was in 1985 that Shuitou's first sustainable private-own button processing factory emerged. In fact, the owner was the brother-in-law of Xiao Hu, the manager of the village factory. It is commonly believed that Xiao Hu had an investment in his brother-in-law's business and that, while contracting business for the village factory, used his position to find spill-over for his brother-in-law. The other two cadre-managers soon copied this pattern of doing business by supporting their own relatives in marketing their buttons. Between 1985 and 1986, there were at least three private factories in the village. They had depended upon the cadre-managers for business. For these private factories, it was obvious that marketing was more important than manufacturing, and the cadre-managers who controlled the marketing channel controlled the life line of these factories.

However, the domination of the marketing channel by the cadre-managers did not last long. From 1986 onward, merchants from Wenzhou area traveled to Shuitou to buy buttons in large quantities. This was obvious the result of the connections established by the young villagers who had worked in Wenzhou as button *shi fu*. This opened up more opportunities for those who wanted to enter button manufacturing. Even with good relationship with the cadre-managers, it was sometimes difficult to secure orders from them. While the cadre-managers might have contacts in some garment factories in Shanghai, the networks of the Wenzhou merchants have been nation-wide (see Huang 1990: 261-263). As the number of factory grew, most of them would depend upon the Wenzhou merchants for buying their buttons. The merchants then sold the buttons to garment factories or to retail shops all over the country. Since the state factories were still reluctant to deal with private business, selling to the traveling merchants was less troublesome than selling to state factories. Rather than IOUs, often traveling merchant paid cash for the buttons. Villagers did not need to develop outside contacts or

credentials which they lack in the first place. The private factories needed to concentrate only on manufacturing using the surplus labor in the village.

During this period of development, most of the factories were joint ventures of two or more individuals, since the initial capital investment to setup a factory was often more than a single household could afford. Besides the initial investment in machinery, the overhead in running a button processing factory was high. Usually to start a factory required 6,000 RMB, of which, 3,000 RMB was for the machinery, and the other 3,000 RMB the overhead for cash flow. The high overhead was necessary as a result from selling to the traveling merchants. To sell to the merchants, an owner first had to buy the raw material, pay for electricity for the machines, and then stock the manufactured buttons and wait for the merchants. If the merchants did not come or came late, one would be in big trouble. Most factories did not have enough cash and the owners had to borrow from fellow villagers.⁵ The interest rate was as high as 3% per month. If the buttons were not sold in time, the high interest rate could destroy a factory.

In this earlier stage, most of the buttons manufactured in Shuitou was plastic ones for shirts and coats. Shirt buttons was for summer and coat button was for winter. The demand was seasonal. The seasonal factor in button demand was compounded with the demand for laborers during agricultural seasons. Usually a button processing factory operated only 6 months a year. To maximize the window of production, owners tried to manufacture as much as possible, and stock them till the buyers came. However, the more buttons one stocked meant more overhead, and higher interest to pay. Understanding that factory owners were eager to sell

⁵ During the collective period, many villagers saved a good amount of cash because they had no place to spend it. Often one had to have both cash and ration coupons to buy things. Since the ration coupons were distributed by the collectives and hard to come by, there was limited use of cash.

their buttons to solve their cash flow problem, traveling merchants were often able to get a bargain price. A bargain price means a drop in unit profit, and the villagers had to produce more to earn a descent profit. This created a vicious circle: the more you produce, the higher the overhead and interest, the lower the net profit per unit, and the easier to drown.

This precarious situation made cooperation between partners unstable. While there was always the problem of calculating how much effort each partner had put in, how to cope with the precarious business environment was another point of contention. Most of these joint ventures did not last two years, and has had lasting effect on the psyche of the villagers, who now frown at the idea of joint ventures. As a result, almost all the processing factory in Shuitou since 1990 have been owned by single families. The button business was precarious and necessitated that more buttons to be produced in order for a button manufacturer to survive. Since, as unit profit went down, it was only by producing more that a factory could stay profitable. But a little ripple might cause a great disaster. In the beginning of 1989, there were about 15 button processing factories in the village, waiting for the impending crisis of June 1989.

1990-1995

The Tiananmen Square incident in June 1989 had great impact to the village button industry. Afraid of social unrest and expecting a downward market, the traveling merchants did not come to the area in the latter half of 1989. Although they returned to Shuitou in the following year, the industrial structure in the village had already gone through a rapid change and the village button manufacturers do not depend on the traveling merchant as they used to.

As can be expected, not being able to sell their products to the traveling merchants, at first, many button processing factories closed. But with so many buttons in stock, factory owners were forced to find buyers themselves. They traveled about coastal provinces to find garment factories needing buttons. With no contacts, they would stop at a big city, and look through the phone books to find possible buyers. Occasionally intimidated by factory securities, they still managed to go to the manager's office to present samples of their buttons. Although villagers were not accustomed to business negotiations, now it was a matter of life and death. By offering handsome kickbacks to the managers, their efforts sometimes paid off. A few village factory owners were able to sell their stocks to state garment factories. Probably, also, because the traveling merchants temporarily stopped shipping buttons to the garment factories, their managers also needed to find new suppliers. Without competition from the traveling merchants, villagers had a better chance to market their buttons. Business then went back on track for those factories who could sell directly to garment factories. If an order was large, they not only cleared their own stocks, making some commission, but also could help their fellow villagers to pass this crisis. In the following years, these factory owners-turned-salespersons became well connected. When they were aware that a middleman could earn at least as much as a manufacturer, a good many of them became professional salespersons. Some of them handed over their machinery to close relatives to process buttons for them and they would do the marketing. For example, the biggest processing factory in Shuitou in 1995 was operated by the father of the best salesperson in the village. Xiao Hu, gave his machines to his brother-in-law. When other villagers discovered that one could make money by only talking and socializing, and saw that one could strike it rich by receiving one single large order, many of them (especially young men), with little experience in

button manufacturing, joined their fellow villagers in search of the new wealth. Since there were little qualification to be a salesperson, everyone could try his/her luck.⁶ A person just needed to prepare the necessary traveling expenses. Kickbacks to the garment factory managers were deducted from the payment for the buttons after the goods were delivered. Of course, not everyone was successful. But there was always hope. By 1995, the regular salespersons in Shuitou was about 25. Usually the profit margin was equal to the button processing factory working for them and the marketing channels were now under the control of villagers rather than the traveling merchants from Wenzhou.

While the Tiananmen Square incident temporarily cut business ties between traveling merchants and village factories, and created a new breed of village salespersons, there was a more important factor in changing the structure of the village button industry. Since 1989, there has been a shift in demand to high quality buttons. A growing export market for Chinese made garments and demands for higher quality clothes in domestic market rapidly drove out the old plastic button. Consequently, by 1995, less than 10% of button manufactured in the Shuitou were still in plastic. In its stead was resin buttons. Resin buttons had several advantages over the plastic. First, it could be designed with various patterns on the surface. Second, resin button could be made more colorful than plastic buttons. Third, a resin button had more gloss than plastic ones. All these design advantages met the requirement for higher quality clothes, which buttons were not an appendage but an integral part of the design.

Generally, the clothes were more uniform before 1989, so that the plastic buttons also went with them were uniform in size, shape, and color. Because there were seldom changes in design and color, a factory owner could stock them and wait to sell to the traveling merchants.

⁶ There were two woman salespersons in Shuitou in 1995.

Since 1990, as garments became more diversified in design, the buttons could no longer be as uniformly as before. As demand from each batch of buttons was different in the higher quality garment, factory owners could not make button beforehand and stock them. They had to run the production line according to the specification of each order. The unit price for resin blank was about 3 times higher than plastic. This also prohibited the factory owners from stocking in large quantities. They simply could not go back to their previous practice of selling to the traveling merchants. This resulted in a kind of lean production of manufacturing by order. This gave village salespersons a competitive edge over the traveling merchants who did not live in the village. The demands for buttons were often urgent in the garment business and, after receiving an order, a salesperson usually had to deliver the goods within 20 days. Salespersons had to constantly monitor the processing factories to deliver buttons on time. Without permanent residence in the village, a traveling merchant, who came to Shuitou several times a year, could not meet to the tight schedule.

Both the Tiananmen Square incident and the change from plastic to resin button transformed button industry in Shuitou. In the 1990s, the village salespersons sold resin buttons to garment factories in the eastern half of China. After receiving orders from garment factories, salespersons asked the resin factories to produce the blanks according to specifications. They then took the blanks to processing factories to have them processed. The more successful salespersons had two or more processing factories working for them. The factories did not stock buttons anymore. The processing factories operated when there was an order. Factory owners was more secured. Not only that they needed not to balance between over-stocking and under-stocking as in the pre-1990 period, they did not have to buy blanks, which they could not afford anyway. Blanks were provided by salespersons. Without the need to buy

blanks and operated only when there was order, the cash flow problem for the processing factories virtually disappeared. Capital investment for a processing factory was low. In 1995, with 10,000 RMB, almost every villager could setup a processing factory. Since the entrance fee was low, the number of processing factory grew dramatically from about 8 factories since the low point of the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square to 39 in 1995. However, profitability depended upon whether its salesperson could find orders. Without a good salesperson, to open a new factory was equal to suicide. On average, a processing factory with 8 workers can make 30,000 to 50,000 RMB a year. The largest processing factory owner in Shuitou, whose salesperson was his own son, made about 150,000 RMB profit in 1994. For salespersons, if they could get orders, it was never difficult to find a button processing factory to work for them. Processing factory was in equivalent of performing put out jobs for the salespersons. Salespersons become the pillar of button industry in the village. The resin blank factories competed for their order; processing factories counted on them for work. Good salespersons became heroes in the village. How they made their first big deals became legends and attracted more young villagers to follow suit.

To meet the tight schedule, it was good to have a resin blank factory close-by. Villagers first bought their resin blanks from a general store in Yaoshui township and also from factories in an adjacent village. In January 1993, two village processing factory owners turned salespersons and an outside person from a nearby village started the first resin blank factory in Shuitou with an initial investment of 400,000 RMB. Its output was about 0.6 million pieces per day. It not only provided the need of Shuitou but also the surrounding villages. Its business was so good that the factory runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It was said the initial investment was recovered in the first year. Jealous of its success, two other village salespersons (including

the party secretary Xiao Hu) and another person from another county opened a second resin blank factory in January 1994 with initial investment of 700,000 RMB. The market became somewhat saturated. Although it can produce more, its daily output was about 0.5 million pieces.

There were 12 button blank factories in the township by 1995. Since the two village blank factories in Shuitou were the largest, competition between them was most fierce. In order to attract more salespersons to place orders, they all operated on IOU basis. Thus, salespersons did not have pay for the blanks until they received payment from the garment factories. This might be as long as 2 to 4 months. However, since the chemical compounds for resin blank was in hot demand in the mid-1990s, the blank factories had to pay cash for their raw material. Although they were making big profit on the book (about 400,000 to 500,000 RMB), in reality, as more salespersons placed their orders, the blank factories were more in debt. By the end of 1994, the two blank factories were said to be nearly half million RMB in red. Xiao Hu once complained to me: "I am feeding them (the salespersons and processing factories) with my own blood." This, however, was built into the structure of the button industry of Shuitou. Because the salespersons did not need to have any initial capital except traveling expenses, many villagers went out to try their luck. If the salespersons had to pay cash to get the blanks, most of them simply could not afford it, and the button business in Shuitou could not expand as fast as it had. Without expansion in button demand, the blank factories probably could not recover their investment. The blank factories had to feed the salespersons and processing factories with their blood in order to survive.

Another important change since 1990 was the labor shortage of village workers and the flooding of migrant workers into Shuitou. In 1995, there were about 180 migrant workers in Shuitou, 150 in processing

factories and 30 in the blank factories. There were several sources to recruit migrant workers: some just came in and present themselves to the factory owners; some workers were brought by friends or relatives already working in Shuitou; some salespersons would take in a few workers whom the garment factory manager recommended; also there were professional middlemen who helps factory owners to find workers for a fee.

The wage for both native and migrant workers were based on the same piece-rate. The more you worked, the more you earned. Each button needed at least three procedures on the blank: scraping the top, scraping the bottom, and drilling holes. A good worker could drill 70 pieces, or scrape 50 pieces a minute. Because the output was different for scraping and drilling, they were paid differently. In 1995, on average, it was 4.5 RMB per 10,000 pieces for drilling and 5.5 RMB for scraping. Usually a woman could earn 10 to 11 RMB a day. Although the basic piece-rate wage was the same, a migrant worker actually cost more for the processing factory. A owner must provide board and cooking utensil for the migrant workers. They also gave migrant workers 1 RMB a day as food supplement. For most owners, the extra 1 RMB was affordable. What bothered them most was to provide board and to baby-sit the migrant workers who were mostly single young women. Sometimes owners received letters from the migrant workers' parents begging them to take good care of their daughters. Migrant workers usually did not have previous experience in button manufacturing. Factory owners had to train them on site. Some owners complain of language barrier⁷ had made the learning process slow, and it took a while for a migrant to reach average output. Although the slower worker were paid less, a owner preferred an fast worker. Since the machine was constant running, and the electricity bill

⁷ Most migrant workers came from inland provinces and spoke different dialects from that of the Yangzi delta. Although almost all the migrant workers and factory owners could speak Mandarin, Mandarin was not their mother tongue.

stayed the same despite worker's efficiency, lower output meant higher cost per a piece of button. Migrant workers were here to make money. If they could find a place that pays more, they would probably be gone the next morning. And even if they had developed good relationship with the owner, they still had to go back home for Chinese new year or for other matters. Once they were gone, there was no guarantee they would return the next year. Considering the energy spent to train them, the high turnover rate of migrant workers made many factory owners reluctant to hire them.

However, the migrant workers have one definite advantage over native ones. Native workers have to take care of their housework, and, more importantly, harvests. Usually there were two harvests in a year. Each lasted 10 to 15 days. During a harvest, a processing factory totally depended upon native workers had to be temporarily shut down. One reason factory owners welcomed the new "professional grain producing household" program was that the time needed for harvest could be greatly reduced. Native workers fall into two categories in their relationship to the owners. Some were relatives, some just worked there. For the non-related workers, they were there to make money. If a factory could not receive stable orders, if a factory did not have its own power generator (interruption in power supply has always been a problem in Shuitou in mid-1990s) they would leave for another factory. As for the workers related by kinship, if the factory was just started and short of labor, relatives might come to help if asked. If the factory was well established, they were no different from other workers. The smallest factory in the village had only 2 workers: owner's wife and his sister-in-law worked there. No one, not even migrant workers, will work under such unstable condition. The largest processing factory employed more than 20 workers. They were all villagers. The factory owner said he simply could not provide board for 20 or even 10 migrant workers. The

rest of factories mostly employed a mixture of native and migrant workers.

While successful salespersons could always find processing factories with migrant workers to do work for them during peak agriculture season, the resin blank factories did not have backups. Their production lines did not allow any disruption from harvest. The native workers in the factories were mostly young men who could leave their share of land to be cultivated by their parents. There were two methods in making resin blanks: stick method and roller method. These two methods involves techniques that were not familiar to villagers. How to mix different chemicals and pigments, and make patterns on blanks required years of experience. In 1995, most of the technical stuffs were handled by outside technicians who are brought in by the non-villager co-owners of the blank factories. However, the village owners were trying to train native workers to learn the techniques so if the outside technicians left they could have their own people running the factories. But even if the technicians were villagers, it did not mean they would stay loyal to a factory owner. When the second blank factory opened in 1994, it attracted a village technician of the first blank factory with an annual salary of 100,000 RMB plus dividend to manage the resin stick production. His changing of loyalty had caused disruption in the first factory. This made all blank factory owners more cautious about their technology and the flow of production line.

Compared to the older villagers who contented in farming, factories owners and salespersons were a totally a new breed of people. They were mostly younger generation under the age of 50. They did not see any future in agriculture. Aspired by the wealth of the factory owners and salespersons, the career plan of the younger generation was to work from *shi fu* (a professional of a trade) to *lao ban* (owner of an enterprise). Farming never came to their mind as a way of life. After the adoption of

the "professional grain producing household" in 1995, there was no chance for them to be peasants even if they wanted to.

A Case Of Conflict

Comparing the post-1983 to the collective period, villagers claimed that conflicts between villagers were dramatically less after the de-collectivization. During the collective period, everyone in a production team had to share a limited piece of pie. If one person got more, others must get less. The welfare of one family was negatively related to the welfare of other families. After de-collectivization, this "encapsulated" environment was gone, and each family could pursue its own fortune without sharing with others. Villagers needed not to compete inwardly with their fellow production team members for the limited piece of pie but could compete outward in the market economy.

But conflict still existed in the 1990s. One the most intense conflicts in the mid-1990s was the building of a new elementary school. This case mainly involved six families who belonged to the No. 4 production team in the North hamlet and the party secretary, Xiao Hu, who not only occupied the highest office in the village but also was a successful button salesperson, owner of the second blank factory, and one of the wealthiest man in Shuitou. In 1994, several repatriated villagers came back to Shuitou and donated money to build a new elementary school there. Everything went well in the begin. Villagers were thrilled to replace the old dilapidated school. A new school could boost Shuitou's image as the wealthiest village in the township. However, when it came to the school site, conflict broke out. A site was chosen by the donors and officially approved by the village, township and county authorities. It was located in the farm land between the main village road and the North Hamlet (see map 2.2). Local custom prescribes

that all houses should face south. Since villagers always left their doors open when they were at home, having door open to the south would not let in the cold north wind in the winter, and in the summer, wind blowing from south would keep down the heat. The main door of the new school faced south to the main village road. But its back wall would be about 20 meters away from the front doors of six houses in the North Hamlet. While other villagers agreed this was a good place to build the school, these six families behind the proposed new school site opposed it on the ground that that their share of south wind would be blocked. Also, the school site would occupy the land they farmed. If the school was to be built there, they then would be assigned to a field further from their houses.

Many villagers disagreed with their complaint because there was a second row of houses 10 meters behind the houses of the six families. If the houses on the second row did not complain about losing their share of south wind being blocked by their neighbors' houses in front of them, there was no reason the for first row households to complain about the school's location. As a matter of fact, the 10 meters between two rows of houses was in accordance to the state building code. Since the distance between the complaining households and the school was twice the distance than between their distance to the second row of houses, the first row household already got their fair share. If the school could not be built on the selected site, it had to be moved to a place far to the west or east of the village. That meant children had to walk a longer distance to go to school. More importantly, if the people who donated to the school found out their good intentions had been rejected by some villagers, other villagers were worried the donors might withdraw their funding. Based on their own interest, other villagers insisted on the school site and criticized the opposing families as being selfish. Village cadres and party members held meetings to discuss

the situation. Many of them thought that since the site had been approved by the village and the township, everything should proceed according to plan. If the school site could be changed because some villagers opposed it, the village government and the communist party could never win respect from average villagers. Also, if the six families got away with that, it would set a bad example for other villagers and the village government could not function any more.

The six families included Long Yu, the former brigade secretary for 16 years and at the time managing the water supply of the village, and his wife worked in the first village blank factory; Long Yu's son who operated a button processing factory; Gong Jin, Xiao Hu's brother-in-law who was a button salesperson and buys blanks from Xiao Hu's blank factory; a owner of a cement-board workshop surnamed Gong (he was a married-in son-in-law who was not related to Gong Jin in patrilineal or affinal kinship); a family whose head, surnamed Ye, was a truck driver and his main income was from transporting buttons; and a family whose head was a farmer, surnamed Cheng, but with two members working in button processing factories. The economic condition of the six families was diverse. Gong Jin and the owner of cement-board factory were quite wealthy. The truck driver and Long Yu's son who operated a button processing factory were in the middle of the economic ladder. Long Yu and the farmer were at the bottom. All six families, except the owner of cement-board workshop were involved in the button industry in the village.

Although there was pressure from the village, the six families were adamantly oppose the building of the school in front of their houses. The negotiation between the village and the six families was complicated by another matter. In 1994, the initial procedures for the "professional grain producing household" program began. Each production team had to hold meetings to determine which parcel of land should be divided among

themselves, and which parcel of land should be left for the professional farmers. All of the six families belonged to production team No. 4. During the land redistribution meetings, they refused to discuss the division of land until the matter of the school site had been settled to their liking. Since the "professional grain producing household" program was a government policy, there was great pressure on the village to complete it before the dead-line at the end of 1994. By refusing to discuss the land redistribution, the six families were able not only to stall the building of the new school but also the "professional grain producing household" program.

Xiao Hu, the party secretary was caught in between. The site of the new school had been approved by the village, township and county governments. If Xiao Hu obliged the six families, he had to answer to the upper level government about changing the school site, and he would lose face in the village. Xiao Hu's authority would be questioned and no one would listen to him the next time. What's more, if the donors found out the school site had been changed without their knowledge, they might withdraw funding. There was already rumor in Shuitou that some township leaders had arranged a construction team and ready to make some money from the project. If this was true, the village party secretary might harm the personal gain of township cadres if the school project was canceled. But if the school site did not change, the "professional grain producing household" program could not be implemented and Xiao Hu would definitely be severely reprimanded by upper level government.

Evaluating the situation, Xiao Hu decided he could do no more than try to persuade the six families to accept the school site and proceed with the land redistribution. The village party secretary met fierce resistance. To be sure, although the village leadership had reached a consensus that the six families must yield, there were indications that the party secretary Xiao Hu and the village head Ma Shan were not

totally in unison. Ma Shan was mainly a peasant who depended on agriculture for most of his income. The "professional grain producing household" program cut off more than half of the land to which Ma Shan was entitled. Even though he dared not to oppose the program that was decided by the county government, he was less than enthusiastic in supporting it. Xiao Hu, on the other hand, being the advocate of village industrialization, fully embraced the "professional grain producing household" program which could further his plan of building Shuitou into an industrialized village. Xiao Hu was also eager to build the new school. If the school project was successful, he thought he could build ties with the donors and attract investment from them. But Ma Shan seemed to view the wealthy donors as a problem that could only increase disparity in the village. He blamed the conflict over the school site on the donors as stirring up trouble in the village. Nevertheless, he had to go along with Xiao Hu who not only was his superior but also was supported by the township government and majority of villagers.

Since Xiao Hu was the proponent of the planned school site and the one pushing for the division of farm land, challenges from the six families were mainly toward him. First he was humiliated in front of the public. A woman from the farmer's family kneeled down in front of the party secretary and banged her head on the ground asking mercy from him not to let the school build in front of her house. This over-exaggerated ritual submission was meant to embarrass the party secretary. He could do nothing but run away. Xiao Hu later described it in disbelief that the woman could pull that kind of stunt on him. Her action was equal to portraying the party secretary as the evil landlord so frequently found in the communist propaganda of the pre-Revolutionary era. The public embarrassment did not work. Later, Xiao Hu was physically attacked. The attacker was no other than Xiao Hu's wife's brother, Gong Jin, a successful salesperson who also ran a processing factory. As a matter of

fact, Gong Jin's button business was first helped by Xiao Hu who sought button orders for him. But in the mid-1990s, Gong Jin was well established and did not need help from Xiao Hu any more. It was reported that Xiao Hu and Gong Jin had a heated argument about the school site in the village government office when Gong suddenly took a chair and threw it at Xiao Hu. Xiao Hu's wife was so frustrated that she advised her husband to give up his post as village party secretary. According to her, the official position not only could not win respect from villagers but brings humiliation as well. It is not worth being a cadre anymore. She asked her husband to concentrate more on his button business where the family prosperity really lies. In 1996, Xiao Hu finally heeded to his wife's advice and left his post.

No only was Xiao Hu intimidated by the six families; the donors' relatives were also verbally abused by them. One donor's relative, Ye Chin, complained that he was trying to do good deeds for the village by bringing his relatives back to build the school; but his efforts were not only not appreciated but he had been accused by the six families as a trouble maker. Ye had suggested to the donors that they should suspend their plan and save their money. The problem was so out-of-hand, the township government had to intervene. Both the party secretary of the Yaoshui township and the head of the township visited Shuitou and talked to the six families in person. This was quite an unusual move, for the ordinary villagers and the township leaders were a world apart. While the members of the six families welcomed the visit of the township leaders and promised that they would not harass the relatives of the donors and that they would negotiate with village party secretary to come up with a solution, no definite conclusion was reached in the meeting.

While the six families were in a stand-off with the village government, other production teams were proceeding with the land

redistribution in the "professional grain producing household" program. After the other twelve production teams had completed the land redistribution, the pressure increased on the six families to participate in the land redistribution in their own production teams. By then, since all other land had been distributed, the only place left for the school was the site originally proposed. If the land redistribution was successful, that also meant the school site could be finalized. To facilitate the process, the deputy township leader came to administer the distribution meeting. As could be expected, there were heated arguments at the meeting. While the deputy township leader was administering the meeting, members of the six families banged the table and shouted at him. Finally, since there was no chance for the six families to stall the land redistribution or building of the new school, they had to comply.

Most interesting was the attitude of Long Yu, the formal village party secretary for 16 years (between 1962 and 1978). Like the village head, Ma Shan, he was not happy about the "professional grain producing household" program. His opposition to the site of the new school was probably in part a resistance to the new agricultural program. His relationship with Xiao Hu was not good. Having been left out the booming button industry, Long Yu was somewhat bitter against Xiao Hu who had once worked under him. As a party member, Long Yu should support the decision made by the party member meeting on the land redistribution and the school site and lead other villagers to follow the party line. In fact, he was one of the most firm opponents to the land distribution and the new school. With his well-versed communist rhetoric of the previous era, he tried to struggle against the donors of the school as creating contradictions between villagers. In the communist parlance, contradiction exists on two levels: between the people who share the same goal but have different points of view, or between enemies whose

goals are totally different. The situation for the former is less severe and allows compromises. But the latter was a life and death struggle without any compromise. Long Yu did not make clear what kind of contradiction he meant, but this really raised the eyebrows of villagers, Xiao Hu, and the deputy township leader. Although Long Yu was very vocal in his attack of the new school, he was not the leader of the six families. As a matter of fact, there was no leader among them. After it became clear that the site of the new school could not be changed, the truck driver suggested the school to move a little bit to the east so that his house would not be totally blocked by the school. This caused great anger on the part of Long Yu. It ended in a fist fight between Long Yu and the truck driver. After the meeting, Long Yu kept complaining that people were not united together against what he saw as transgression of his rights.

Power Relations in Shuitou

The conflict over the new school site showed that the village party secretary did not have much leverage dealing with recalcitrant villagers. Although some families were poor by village standards, even they could still openly show defiance against Xiao Hu who not only held the highest office in Shuitou but was also a successful button sales person, owner of a blank factory, and one of the wealthiest people in the village. However, there was nothing Xiao Hu could do after having been publicly humiliated and physically attacked. The main problem Xiao Hu faced was that he could not punish or reward the six families. Long Yu was a farmer whose livelihood did not depend on the party secretary. Although Long Yu also got a job as manager of village water supply, this was a kind of pension that the village gave to the former party secretary who served the village for 16 years and Xiao Hu was unlikely

to take that position away from Long Yu. Long Yu's wife worked in the first button blank factory which compete business with Xiao Hu's blank factory. It was not possible for the owners of the first blank factory to pressure Long Yu's wife to heed to Xiao Hu. Long Yu's son opened a button processing factory. He received his order from his brother-in-law who lived in another village. Xiao Hu had no control over Long Yu's son's button business. Gong Jin was himself a successful sales person. Although his button business was first helped by Xiao Hu, he did not need Xiao Hu any more. He bought blank buttons from Xiao Hu. But he could easily shift his order to the other blank factories in Shuitou or other villages. Although Gong Jin and Xiao Hu were brothers-in-law, the affinal tie did not mitigate Gong Jin's open confrontation with his brother-in-law. The owner of cement-board workshop had to lease his shop floor from the village government. The leasing was done by open bidding. The highest bidder would receive one year of lease. The possibility for Xiao Hu to manipulate the bidding process and sack the cement-board workshop owner was not likely. The truck driver depended most of his business from transporting buttons for the sales persons in the village. Beside Xiao Hu, there were more than 20 salespersons in Shuitou. The truck driver did not depend on Xiao Hu for living. The last family was headed by a farmer whose income also was not depended on Xiao Hu. Although two of the family members worked in a button processing factory, there was no direct link of the button processing factory to Xiao Hu. While none of the six families did depended on Xiao Hu for a living, neither did they depend upon each other. There was no definite leader in the group. When there was no chance for them to change the school site, they themselves began to fight among themselves, each to have more open space in the front of his own house.

As a matter of fact, there was seldom anyone in Shuitou who must depend on another. Button manufacturing was the most important economic

activity in Shuitou in 1990s. But no one held dominant position in dealing with others. First of all, the shortage of labor, as testified in the importing of migrant worker, gave village workers an upper hand in dealing with factory owners. If they were not satisfied with their wage or working condition, they could leave and find work in another factory. No single factory monopolized the job market. Since no one really depended on one factory for a living, working for a particular processing factory was not a favor given by the factory owner, and the factory owner could not intimidate factory workers by threatening to fire them. To be sure, a factory worker could indeed fire a worker, but no one worried about being fired since other work could be easily found elsewhere. To retain its labor force, a factory owner often had to actually appease the workers by giving better treatment.

Each processing factory depended upon its salesperson for orders. While a processing factory owner had to cultivate a good relationship with the salespersons, the relationship was more often a mutual dependency. If a processing factory did not deliver goods in time, the garment factory would lose faith in the salesperson and not place an order again. Thus, a sales person also needed the cooperation of the processing factory. The relationship between salesperson and the processing factory was generally stable. Often the sales person and factory owner were close kin, either brothers, or parents-children, or brothers-in-law. Also, we must note that there were more than 25 salespersons in the Shuitou by 1995. Even though a processing factory did not change its salesperson as frequently as workers changed factories, a processing factory owner could still find another salesperson if its relationship with previous salesperson soured. More importantly, there was almost no qualification to become a salesperson. If the factory owners were willing, they could try their luck to sell button directly to garment factories. In the coastal provinces, garment

factories were everywhere and no one garment factory or salesperson monopolized the market.

In Shuitou, the owners of the two blank factories were the biggest creditors in Shuitou. They provided the blanks to salespersons on IOU basis not out of good will but necessity. The business arrangement in the garment industry was that the salespersons only received payment after delivering button. If the blank factories did not provide blank buttons on IOU basis, the whole button industry would collapse. But the owners of blank factories did not have the upper hand when dealing with the salespersons. There were two blank factories in Shuitou, and twelve in the Yaoshui township. Competition between them for orders from salespersons was fierce. Capital investments in blank factories were heavy. If their cash flow decreased, they might be forced to close. Thus, although the blank factories supported the whole industry, they were in more precarious position than any of the others in the button business. They controlled the development of button business in Shuitou, but they could not use this position as an instrument of domination. The credits they gave to the salespersons was not done as a favor to the salespersons. On the contrary, it is the salespersons who gave favors to the blank factory owners by getting credits from the blank factories. In the button business in Shuitou, neither factory owners or salespersons held real power in punishing or rewarding the other parties. Shuitou in the 1990s was in a power-dispersed structure.

The development of rural industry has widened the income disparity between villagers. Villagers equated a person's wealth to his capability. A poor villager was viewed as good for nothing. Wealth meant prestige and the wealthy villagers were objects of envy to poorer villagers. To show themselves as capable, young villagers rushed to become button salespersons. The expanding button business was also immersed in this atmosphere of "judging everything by money" (*xian qian*

kan). However, we should not simply equate wealth and prestige with power -- the ability to punish and reward. What we see in Shuitou was a high degree of economic stratification, but if their interests had been violated, the poor were not submissive to the wealthy.

CHAPTER 6

PATRILINEAL KINSHIP IN SHUITOU

Chinese society is often been described as "kin-based", the best example is Freedman's works (1858, 1966) on southeast China lineages. In Chapter 1, I have shown that the dominant lineages in the New Territories were embedded in a power-concentrated structure. Land was a scarce commodity in southeast China. A lineage with large corporate land holding attracted agnates to live together. The lineage estate managers could punish and reward lineage members by retaining or releasing the lineage's corporate land for rental tenure. With a large number of agnates, a dominant lineage could use its man power to compete for resources with other lineages and make the smaller and weaker lineages into its satellites. The wars with other lineages, and the domination of the satellite lineages within its territories created a sense of unity between lineage members. This sense of unity was facilitated by such institutions as lineage halls, written genealogies, collective worship of ancestors. This unity among lineage members were not based on equal participation in a lineage's affairs. Within a lineage, members were differentiated and organized by genealogical relations. It was through a clear genealogical knowledge that members of a lineage knew where they stood in the lineage hierarchy and of their rights and obligations to the lineage. Lineage institutions, such as ancestor worship, helped lineage members recognize this genealogical relationship.

Fei (1946) has argued that lineage was the creation of elites. It was the elites who had the resources to establish large corporate

property, build lineage halls, compile written genealogies, and host collective ancestral worship. The patrilineal ideology which emphasized lineage solidarity and one's obligation toward ancestors were, more often than not, imposed on the common people by the elites. And it was through the patrilineal ideology that put the elites, who organized and managed the lineage, on top of the common people. Those who did not follow the rules could be punished by the elites. If, however, there was no one with the resources to establish the lineage institutions, and, more importantly, no one able to impose the patrilineal values onto the common people, what kind of patrilineal kinship organization could be produced? As shown in the three previous chapters, Shuitou was in a power-dispersed structure in all the three periods in its recent history. No one in the village had the ability to effectively punish and reward other villagers. Did the power-dispersed structure of the Shuitou area, then, create a form of patrilineal kinship different from the dominant lineages found in southeast China?

This chapter is divided into five parts. From Part One to Part Four, each describes a theme which I believe to be characteristic of patrilineal kinship in Shuitou, and which put them in sharp contrast to the dominant lineages found in southeast China. Part One is about villagers' shallow genealogical knowledge. Usually villagers could only demonstrate genealogical relationship within three to four generations. Part Two shows that there was a gradation of patrilineal kin relations. Patrilineal kin who were more remote in their genealogical relationships had a greater decreased ritual importance. Part Three shows patrilineal value in Shuitou was weak. Part four demonstrates that a patrilineal group often lacked authority to regulate the behavior of its own members, or to protect its members when their interests have been violated. Part Five is the conclusion.

Shallow Genealogical Knowledge

Genealogical knowledge is an integral part in the definition of a patrilineal kin group. If a group of people could not tell how they were related genealogically, and organize their relationship according to genealogical principles, we would have a difficult time to claim that they were members of a kin group. Memory of genealogical knowledge was not by any means "natural." If there were no mechanisms to help people to remember genealogical relationship, it could easily be forgotten after several generations had gone by. In the dominant lineages of southeast China, the memory of genealogical relationship was kept alive through such institutional mechanism as written genealogy, collective ancestral worship, etc.. These institutions for helping agnates to relate genealogically with other members of the lineage were the basic symbols of a lineage. The creation of these institutions had to be supported by some wealthy members of a lineage. Why the wealthy members of a lineage were willing to spend effort on creating such institutions is an interesting question. But more importantly is why the common people were also interested in preserving genealogical knowledge. In the dominant lineages of southeast China, the common people's interest in genealogical knowledge might be their entitlements to tenant land on corporate lineage estates. In any case, the preservation of genealogical knowledge was not "natural." Certain institutions must in place to allow and to attract people to remember how they were related genealogically.

As shown in Chapter Two, there were many descent groups of the same surname in Shuitou. Members of the same descent group were either able to demonstrate their genealogical relations, or, at least, were certain they were descendants of a common ancestor. Generally, however,

villagers could not tell whether these descent groups of the same surname were related to a common ancestor. But if they resided in the same hamlet, there was a greater chance that they were indeed descendants of the same ancestor. In Shuitou, we find that the larger a surname, the more number of its decent group. The largest surnames in each of Shuitou's three hamlets included at least three descent groups. On the other hand, a smaller surname was often composed of one single descent group whose members could better describe their genealogical relationship.¹ While the smaller number in population was in essence more manageable, it was not surprising that smaller surnames have better knowledge about their genealogical relationship.

Why did the larger surnames have more obscured genealogical knowledge? The shallow genealogical knowledge among the larger surname reflected the fact that there has been little effort to organize patrilineal relationships, and there was no mechanism to help and attract descendants of a common ancestor to recognize their genealogical relationship. In the following, I show that the shallow genealogical knowledge was in fact manifested in villagers' categorization of patrilineal kin, and that the mechanisms which supposedly could promote genealogical knowledge and unity within patrilineal groups did not perform such functions.

Categorization of Patrilineal Kin

The shallow genealogical knowledge was in fact manifested in villagers' categorization of patrilineal kin. Villagers classified their patrilineal kin into three categories: (1) "members of same descent

¹ For example, the largest surname in the West hamlet in 1994 was Dong, with 131 people (72.78 percent of total population of the West hamlet) divided into three descent groups who could not relate each other genealogically. The second largest was Wu with 12 people, followed by Gong, with 9 people, and Xiao with 8 people. Each of these three surnames was composed of one descent groups. Thus, all the Wus (or the Gongs or the Xiaos) in the West hamlet were descendants of a common ancestor.

group" or *zi-ju-zen* (literally, those of the same ancestors); (2) "members of same extended family" or *zi-jia-zen* (literally, those of the same family); and (3) "members of same household" or *zi-jia-wu-li* (literally, those living under the same roof). When villagers used these terms, their boundaries for these terms were not exact. "members of same descent group" usually referred to people who shared a common ancestor but whose genealogical relationship could not be demonstrated. "members of same extended family" usually referred to people whose patrilineal genealogical relationship could be clearly demonstrated. Often they were related within three or four generations. "Members of same household" usually referred those who once lived in an undivided household and had belonged to the same economic and residential unit. This category usually included the descendants of one's grandfather. On a genealogical chart, these three categories were located in a hierarchical and incremental order. That is, "members of same descent group" contained "members of same extended family" but not vice versa; and "members of same extended family" contained "members of same household" but not vice versa. In daily usage, however, these three categories were mutually exclusive. A man's brother would only be referred to as a "member of same household" but not a "member of same extended family member" or a "member of same descent group".

Some villagers did not make a clear distinction between "member of same extended family" and "member of same household." While some insist there was difference between the two categories, others used them interchangeably and equated people who were related within three or four generations as those who once lived in an undivided economic and residential unit. One explanation for this interchangeability was that the two categories used different criteria to denote the same set of people. Demonstrable genealogical relationship was used for the category of "members of same extended family". Economic and residential unit was

used to determine "members of same household". Since the two kinship categories were measured by two sets of criteria, it was possible for the same set of agnates be referred by two categories. This overlap of kinship categories meant that one's ability to demonstrate genealogical knowledge often coincided and was restricted by the economic and residential unit. For descendants of a common ancestor, their genealogical relationship became vague once they ceased to live in an undivided economic and residential unit.

Spirit Tablets

In ancestor worship prior to 1949, ancestors were represented by spirit tablets,² which rested on a wooden board at least 2 meters above the ground. The board stretched east to west across the front room of a house, and backed on to a divide on the north side. The front room where the tablets were set up was called *jia-tong* or "family altar." Each tablet recorded the name, birthday, and death day of the deceased. According to villagers, however, the genealogical information about both the descendants and ascendants of the dead was not mentioned on the tablet. A spirit tablet only provided information about the deceased.

If the spirit tablet itself provided no information on genealogy, could the genealogical relationship be shown in its arrangement? In Shuitou, the placement of tablets on the wooden board was determined by the date of the death rather than genealogical relations. In a case where a man died at a young age, his tablet might be placed in between his parents and grandparents. Although the ordering of spirit tablets by the date of death was unanimously agreed, villagers reported different arrangements of the spirit tablets on the wooden board. Some said the

² All the spirit tablets were destroyed during the Great Leap Forward in 1958. In mid-1990s, spirit tablets have returned. After cremation, the family of the dead can purchase a small metal spirit tablet at the crematory. I have not yet observed, however, the reappearance of the "family altar."

tablets were divided by gender. Those of men were placed on east side and those of women on the west of the wooden board. Others reported that the tablets of a couple would be placed together, husband on east, wife on west. Still others said the first tablet rested on the center of the board, and the next dead placed behind it. I do not know whether these variations were real or resulted from obscured memory. If it is the former, the variations between families signal the lack of uniformity and commonly recognized standard in Shuitou regarding the final resting place of the dead. If it is the latter, it reveals the lack of attention to the spirit tablets. I think it could be both. Although it was located at the front room of a house, the wooden board was set high above one's head. Without standing on a chair or table, one could avoid eye contact with the tablets. People did not have the habit of climbing up and examining spirit tablets. All informants claimed that one should never touch the tablets for they were where the spirits rested. To touch the tablet is like waking the dead. The lack of attention to the deceased not only can be observed in the arrangement of the tablets, it can also be seen in the widespread dilapidation of the temporary shelter that housed the coffins (I will discuss it in the section on graves).

When a household divided and a new house was built, a wooden board could be erected in the new house. The spirit tablets of the first branching out generation could still be placed in the family altar of the old house where they were born. The next generation, however, had to place their tablets in their new family altar. Since one person could have only one tablet, brothers did not set up individual tablets for their parents in their respective family altars. Therefore, the genealogical relationship between two households could not be traced by examining and comparing the tablets each household had. Sometimes, a household division was not accompanied by building of a new house. In such a case, brothers shared a family altar. However, as population

increased, the building of a new house was inevitable. As the connection between households was lost over time, one could only depict the genealogical relationship of those living in the same "house". Thus, spirit tablets of dead ancestors did not provide a symbolic focus for patrilineal relationships.

Genealogical Records

No written genealogy existed in the village. Before 1949, however, villagers did have something similar to it. When people died, it was the local custom to summon monks to chant Buddhist script for three nights. After performing the ritual, the monks recorded the names of the deceased and his/her descendants who continued the descent line. Taking the information back to the temple, monks filed them in their "household registration". There were three Buddhist temples in the vicinity of Shuitou that performed this service. One monk I interviewed claimed that his temple had records of at least 2,000 households, covering three counties.

The purpose of recording the family genealogies of their "congregations" was ancestor worship. Ancestor worship was performed in the lunar new year, the winter solstice, and the Qing-ming festival in the third lunar month. At least 15 days before the Qing-ming festival, monks brought a yellow sheet of paper in exchange for donation. This yellow sheet of paper contained a partial listing the names of ancestors of a family copied from the temple's "household registration". The names usually included four generations above the oldest surviving household member. According to villagers, the dead whose names were written on the yellow paper were invited to a feast at Qing-ming. After the feast, villagers burned the yellow paper as if the ancestors had finished eating and returned to heaven. Villagers did not keep the yellow paper for a souvenir. The monks' genealogical records were also used to settle

inheritance disputes. If a man died without an heir, his property, according to the local custom of "designated inheritance" (discussed below), went to the closest patrilineal kin. When genealogical relationship was unclear, as was often the case, people could check with the monks' record to find out who was the nearest agnate.

The monks' maintenance of peasant genealogies was recorded in the 1734 edition of the Jiashan County Gazetteer. This practice also existed in Kaihsienkung in the 1930s. According to Fei Xiaotong (1939: 105), "genealogical records of the families are kept in different temples outside. Since the record keeper is rewarded by the family whose ancestor names are kept, the record book becomes in a way the personal property of the priest. Like other kinds of personal property, it can be bought and sold". Fei (1939: 84) also argues that the function of monk's genealogical record was "not for the purpose of recognizing living kindred but for keeping alive the memory of lineal ancestors to whom sacrifices should be offered. Siblings do not enter into the list of spirits. Spirits of ancestors farther back than five kinship grades are removed from the list to be worshipped."

The monk's genealogical record should not be mistaken for the written genealogies that existed in the New Territories. Even though they may appear similar, a written genealogy in the New Territories was a symbol of lineage unity while the monks' records in the rural Yangzi delta was not. In Shuitou, the only form of genealogical record was in the hands of outsiders. It was traded to the highest bidder and circulated beyond villagers' control. When sent to the villagers, the yellow paper included only lineal ancestors. Lateral kin were ignored. And each household had its own individual yellow sheet. After the Qingming feast, it was destroyed. The limited list of ancestors on the yellow paper could not contribute to genealogical knowledge in Shuitou,

and a monk's genealogical record could not help to bring unity within a descent group.

Gradation in Patrilineal Kin Relations

A dominant lineage in southeast China was like a pyramidal structure where patrilineal kin related to each other according to their distance to the ancestors at the apex. Genealogical relation was the basis of this pyramidal structure which determined the rights and duties of agnates within the lineage. For example, men of higher generations had more important roles in collective ancestral worship involving the whole lineage. The division of proceeds earned from the lineage corporate properties were distributed according to the branches of the lineage. But if genealogical knowledge was weak as in Shuitou, how did the patrilineal kinship play out? Patrilineal kinship in Shuitou was more like partially overlapping circles where each individual was the center. From each individual, kin relations spread outward with decreasing degree of importance. The most important unit for kin relations was one's own household, an economic and residential unit. The "extended family" played a less important role than one's own household. But still, we can find that members of the same "extended family" was ritually differentiated from members of the same "descent group." Often, the ritual importance of members of the same "descent group" was not much different from one's neighbors and friends. To connect these partially overlapping circles, a patrilineal kin group needed a strong material basis to finance the expensive lineage institutions and provide benefits that drew patrilineal kin together. It also needed a strong leader who could use the material basis to regulate agnates' behavior and prevent the pyramidal structure from falling apart. In Shuitou, both of these were lacking.

In the following, I show some of the customs which demonstrate the gradation of patrilineal relations. There was no collective ancestral worship involving the whole "descent group," or the "extended family." Ancestral worship was carried out only by individual households. In a funeral ceremony, the wearing of mourning dress clearly showed the decreased importance of patrilineal kin as one was farther removed from the dead in genealogical relationship. The "designated inheritance" showed that the closer the genealogical relationship to the dead, a person had a greater rights to claim a heirless person's property. Although the importance of agnates decreased when one was genealogically more remote, there was still a qualitative difference between members of a "descent group" and members of an "extended family." This qualitative difference was shown in the marriage range of villagers. The "extended family" was the exogamous unit and "descent group" was not.

Ancestor Worship

There was no collective ancestor worship in Shuitou. Villagers carried on their worship in their own houses. Regular ancestor worship was performed three times a year. Once a household was divided, each village family performed ancestor worship separately. This was especially the case when a father died and his sons divided the household. The ancestor worship was performed during any of the seven days before the lunar new year, the winter solstice, and the Qing-ming festival. In cases where brothers shared the same "family altar", given the number of days that worship could be carried on, conflicts in scheduling could be avoid since brothers could perform the ritual on different days without interfering with each other.

The most important element in ancestral worship was the feast. Food for the feast had to be prepared on one's own stove and could not be brought from outside. The kitchen stove was the most important symbol of

the household unit. The most important step in household division was the division of stove, after which, divided households managed their own cooking on their individual stoves. Since food for ancestor worship must be prepared on one's own stove, divided households were by nature also divided in ancestor worship. Nevertheless, a son who was newly separated from his father's household could still bring food to his father's house and join him in ancestral worship. But after several years or once the father had died, brothers conducted ancestor worship individually. Ancestor worship in Shuitou, therefore, did not serve as a means to bring patrilineally related families together. On the contrary, it symbolized the separation between them.

Funeral Ceremonies

Upon hearing the news of a death, all the patrilineal kin had to come and pay tribute to the dead. Not only relatives and friends but neighbors, even those who might just have had a quarrel with the family, had to attend the funeral ceremony. Thus, a funeral was not only a ritual for the patrilineal kin, but also involved different categories of people. In a funeral, three types of mourners could instantly be distinguished by their mourning dress: (1) people who had only a white cloth wrapped on the waist; (2) people who wore a white cap along with the waist wrap; and (3) people who wore linen head dresses in addition to the cap and the waist wrap. These three types of mourning dress represented degrees of "closeness" to the deceased.³ Mourners of the first type were most remote in "closeness", and their mourning dress was the "lightest". They included patrilineal kin of the same "descent group", friends, and neighbors, as well as members of the "extended family" who were of the same or higher generations to the deceased. Mourners wearing the second type were in the range of middle

"closeness". They included some members of the "extended family" (such as nephews and nieces), affines (but not always sons-in-law), maternal kin, and one's fictive children. Those who wore the third type were "closest" to the deceased. The sons and daughters of the deceased always wore the "heaviest" mourning dress. There were also some other people, such as grandsons and sons-in-law, who could either wear the mourning dress of the "heaviest" or the lesser degree.

According to local custom, grieving ceremonies should be organized by odd number (of people and things) while joyous moments were organized on even numbered ones. In a funeral, for example, those wearing the "heaviest" mourning dress, men and women, must be of an odd number. Among the male mourners, sons must wear the "heaviest" grade. If a person had an even number of sons, the eldest grandson would join in the group and put on the "heaviest" mourning dress. When the eldest grandson was added to the group, other grandsons might protest and they also would be recruited into the group. Sometimes, a genealogically more "remote" man might insist on wearing the "heaviest" dress to show his "closeness" toward the deceased, and he might be allowed to do so. If the number became even, however, another person had to be added to the group. Villagers had a ranking order as to who should be recruited first to achieve the odd number. The first choice was a grandson. Next was a son-in-law of the deceased. Third in rank was his fictive son. The fourth was a dead man's brother's son. The wearing of different mourning dress clearly shows that members of an "extended family" had higher ritual importance of members of a "descent group." But more interestingly, the dead man's brother's son was not only ranked next after the man's son-in-law, but also after his fictive son. This shows that villagers viewed patrilineal kin beyond immediate family to be far

³ This custom is still followed today.

less "close" than kin who "achieved" their position through marriage or fictional kin relations.

"Designated Inheritance"

The only time genealogical relationships arose the villagers' interests was when an inheritance was involved. If a man was heirless, his property would be inherited by the closest agnates of lower generation. This is called *li-zi* in Shuitou. In some literature, this is called "designated inheritance" (see Dennerline, 1986). Usually only after a heirless man comes to the end of his/her life would the "designated inheritance" process take place. Inheritance almost always included the house of the heir-less person whose spirit tablet would be part of it. By inheriting the house, the "designated heir" was bound to perform sacrificial ritual to the person who gave him property. At the funeral, he would perform as the deceased's son. A man who inherited the property of his heirless patrilineal kin was not eligible to compete with his brothers for family property in family division. However, becoming a "designated heir" did not alter his genealogical relationship to his father. There was no change of kin terminology or mourning dress to his parents. This was why when a man passed property by means of "designated inheritance", he was still described by villagers as *jui-si* or "heir-less".

"Designated inheritance" might give a false sense of patrilineal importance. If a man had no child or had only a daughter, he might choose to adopt a child, or adopt a married-in son-in-law for his daughter. However, the adopted child or the married-in son-in-law would deprive the closest agnates their rights to "designate inheritance." Prior to 1949, villagers said a family had ask permission from its closest agnates before adopting child or a married-in son-in-law. And the closest agnates often tried to stop the adoption process. The

efforts to keep outsiders (the adopted child and married-in son-in-law) from inheriting was not out of a sense of preserving the purity of "blood" in the patrilineal kin group but was aimed at increasing one's own family property at low cost. For a family whose son became "designated heir" of another family, there would be more property for other sons when that family later divided. Close agnates of the heirless person often fought among themselves about who was genealogically closer to the heirless person. Prior to 1994, conflicts over inheritance were resolved by consulting the monk's genealogical record. If disputes could not be solved, the property of the heirless person often would be divided into several parts for the eligible agnates.

Same Surname Marriage and Marriage between Patrilineal Kin

In southeast China, marriage between people of same surname was taboo. People with the same surname were believed to derive from a common ancestor. A marriage between people of the same surname is therefore incestuous. Based on the same logic, people of the same surname without demonstrable genealogical relation could form higher order lineages or surname associations. If people of the same surname were allowed to marry, principle of lineage exogamy would be defeated and no higher order lineage would be possible, since the exogamous unit was the basis for the formation of patrilineal lineage in southeast China.

However, this taboo was not in existence in Shuitou. Checking the names recorded in the 1895 edition of Jiashan County Gazetteer, I found several cases where a woman and her husband shared same surnames. Since people listed in the county gazetteer were often prominent members of society, there probably was no restriction on surname marriage for ordinary peasants in the countryside. Informants from Shanghai and the market town of Luxu also told me that people of same surname could marry

so long if they were not too closely related. Surname marriage, thus, was probably not prohibited in Yangzi delta as a whole.

In Shuitou, only those agnates related within three generations were not allowed to marry. In other words, if people were members of the same "extended family", marriage was tabooed. This demonstrated the importance of "extended family" in Shuitou's patrilineal kinship. The principle in defining an "extended family" was very different from that of defining a lineage. In a lineage, members defined relationships between each other through a common ancestor. No matter how many generations had passed, all the descendants of a common ancestor were members of a lineage. But the boundary of "extended family" was defined by each individual and changed from one generation to the next. The agnates who fell within the range of three generations were different between a grandfather and his grandson. Although there was some overlap between a grandfather's "family" and that of the grandson, they were not exactly the same. A villager's kinship world stemmed from him/herself and stretched outward. Each individual had his/her own kinship sphere that did not totally overlap with anyone else. An individual was the center of kin relations. Everything started from "me" rather than a distant ancestor. This kindred model was in sharp contrast to lineages found in southeast China where everyone was put into a genealogical hierarchy and counted his relationship to the ancestor at the apex.

Weak Patrilineal Values

As the importance of patrilineal kinship decreased as agnates became more distant genealogically, we can also find there was little patrilineal value in embracing the whole descent group. Weakness of patrilineal value could be seen in the large number of married-in sons-

in-law, and villagers' negligence toward the graves of distant ancestors.

Married-in Son-in-law

In a society with strong patrilineal value, a man losing his membership in his own patrilineal lineage by marrying into his wife's lineage as a married-in son-in-law was shameful. By adopting into his wife's family, the man no longer worship his own ancestors but worship ancestors of his wife's. In Taiwan, Gallin (1966: 156) finds that the married-in son-in-law was looked down upon by other villagers in Hsin Hsing as an incomplete person who found it hard to win respect from others. This moral stigma showed villagers' attitude toward a man who violated the value of patrilineality. Did this moral stigma also occur in Shuitou?

In Shuitou, married-in son-in-law was quite common. Of the 742 marriage cases in my record, there have been 83 cases of married-in sons-in-law. One reason to have a marry-in son-in-law was to continue the line of descent. If one has only daughter(s) but no son, the usual way was to get a marry-in son-in-law for the daughter. The offspring thus produced would continue the family line. There were two types of marry-in son-in-law in Shuitou: (1) *zhuo-nui-shui* or "adopted son-in-law" and (2) *lian-tou-gua* or "hanging on two posts". In the first type, according to villagers, the bride and groom theoretically exchanged their genders. A man was taken in as the wife, and the woman became his husband. Although less elaborate, the marriage ceremony was basically the same as a "normal" marriage. After marriage, the man still did man's work and woman did woman's work. He lived in his father-in-law's house, and was totally incorporated into his family. He lost all his rights to his father's property, but acquired rights to his father-in-law's. His spirit tablet would be set in his father-in-law's "family altar" rather

than that of his natal family. Before 1949, an "adopted son-in-law" had to change his surname to that of his wife's, just as a woman adopted her husband's surname and placed it before her maiden name. After 1949, this change was not necessary. But a married woman also did not have to change to her husband's surname. All their children inherited their mother's surname, mother's father's property, and continued the mother's father's descent line. They also referred to their father's kin with maternal kin terms, and to their mother's kin by paternal kin terms.⁴

A man "hanging on two posts" was only partially incorporated into his wife's family. He retained his father's surname, and still had rights to his father's property while acquiring those of his father-in-law's. The man was not treated as a wife. According to a negotiated process before the marriage, some of his children would take their mother's surname and the rest took their father's. Those who took their father's name inherited their paternal grandfather's property while those took their mother's name inherited their maternal grandfather's property. But all property was under the control of the father.

Although both methods are customarily recognized as ways to continue descent line, there was no "hanging on two posts" prior to 1949 in Shuitou and only 2 cases after 1949. For the father-in-law, we may assume that it was better to have a totally incorporated "adopted son-in-law" than a partially incorporated "hanging on two posts". Since he would give all his property away anyway, the father-in-law might as well choose the form that was less complicated and that which also gave him more authority. But why did neither the married-in son-in-law nor his patrilineal kin insist on the "hanging on two posts"? The

⁴ However, this is not always strictly followed. To their mothers' kin's annoyance, some of the fathers' kin might still try to use patrilineal kin terms to refer them. Using different terminology by the two sides is a tug of war meant to win over the children's allegiance. It is also a war between the social practice (marry-in son-in-law) and deep rooted cultural belief (descent passed through male line).

father-in-law's insistence was one factor. Further analysis shows that the natal family of the "adopted son-in-law" might also like to see him totally incorporated into another family. An "adopted son-in-law" usually came from a poor family. For the brothers of the "adopted son-in-law", his marrying out eliminated competition for inheritance. For the parents, they might also think it a good way to increase the property share of their remaining sons. And it was advantageous for the marry-out son who could enjoy a better life by becoming an heir to a more well-to-do family. But did the parents, or their patrilineal kin, think the "adopted son-in-law" has injured patrilineal integrity? Was there a sense of guilt toward their ancestors when they sent a son as an "adopted son-in-law"? If there was, I would presume they would insist on "hanging on two posts" which at least preserved some dignity for the patrilineal descent group. The two forms of "marry-in son-in-law" could be seen as a choice between economic well-being and the ideals of patrilineality. Since there were 81 cases of "adopted son-in-law" and 2 cases of the "hanging on two posts," it was obvious that the ideal of patrilineality was on the losing side by a great margin.

The lack of patrilineal ideals did not mean villagers preferred to be an "adopted son-in-law", however. It was common for villagers to take pity on or make fun of them. Being an "adopted son-in-law" showed that a man was poor and that his family could not give him a proper marriage; he had to marry-out to "steal" another family's fortune. An "adopted son-in-law" was usually badly treated by his wife's family. The parents-in-law, worried that the "adopted son-in-law" might not take care of them in old age. They often suspect the loyalty of their "adopted son-in-law". They trusted their daughter more than her husband to provide for them in old age. Thus it became a necessity to ensure that an "adopted son-in-law" would obey their daughter. To treat him badly was then a preventive measure to ensure the authority of their daughter over

the "adopted son-in-law". Its purpose was to force the "adopted son-in-law" to totally submit to their daughter. The parents-in-law would brainwash the adopted son-in-law the first day he entered the family. They often stigmatized him as a thief who would steal their family property. They would make him feel worthless and crush his spirit so that he would not resist domination by the wife. Sometimes, the daughter was a willing accomplice in the process. Out of loyalty toward her parents, she will join them in making the husband a pushover.

Yet, I never heard villagers accusing a man of being disloyal to his own patrilineal group when he married out. In the villager's judgment, being an "adopted son-in-law" was more of an economic than an ethical matter. Because this was not an ethical issue, villagers did not seem to mind that their village Communist Party Secretary, Xiao Hu, was an "adopted son-in-law". An "adopted son-in-law's" lower social status was caused by economic hardship. If he could get rich, he could still be respected in the community. But, of course, the village Party Secretary was not proud of his status as an "adopted son-in-law."

Burying Ancestors

Earth burial was the primary way to dispose of the dead before 1949.⁵ After the funeral ceremony, the grieving family usually built an above-ground shelter to temporarily house the dead. This was done within three days of the death. After being stored in the temporary shelter for several years, during which time the flesh decayed, the bones of the dead would be picked up and put into a pot to be buried in a permanent grave. Not all families, however, could afford a permanent grave. If a family did not have a piece of land to which it had both topsoil and

⁵ In the 1990s, a body is cremated within three days. The county operated a crematory where all bodies are to be cremated. After cremation, the ashes, contained in a box, are given to the deceased's family. Usually the eldest son takes the ashes to his home. After about three years, the ashes are buried in the village cemetery.

subsoil ownership rights and which could be set aside for non-productive purpose and if it did not have the money to build a permanent grave, the remains of the dead had to stay in the temporary shelter. Temporary shelter often fell into ruin after several years. If descendants were not able to find a permanent place for the dead, they had either to repair the shelter regularly or allow the remains of the dead to be exposed to the natural elements. It was not uncommon for ancestors of several generations past not to be properly buried in permanent graves. As time passed, the number of temporary shelters grew, the money and time needed to repair them increased, distant ancestors were forgotten, and more and more shelters were left unattended. Land trading has been heavy since the Qing. If the land where a temporary shelter was located changed hands, and descendants were not able to build a permanent grave for the dead, the remains would be left in the hands of strangers. Since temporary shelter were built above ground and definitely an obstacle to cultivation, they would be flattened and the remains of the dead were often thrown away. Villagers said that before 1949, the land surrounding Shuitou was dotted with temporary shelters and permanent graves. Because of the need for smooth large-scale farming in the Great Leap Forward of 1958, all of them were erased from the face of the earth and the bones were deeply buried. Since the county crematory was completed in the 1970s, all remains have to be cremated and earth burial has been forbidden.

According to the 1895 edition of the Jiashan County Gazetteer (98-101), the human remains from un-attended temporary shelters were already a problem in the mid-Ming. One magistrate discovered that poor peasants had to burn their ancestor's bones because they had no means to give them proper burial. He urged the wealthy to donate land as permanent resting place for the dead. The problem persisted into the Qing and in the 1890s, another magistrate also urged gentry to donate land for the

displaced remains of the dead. This land was called *yi-zhong* or "charity graveyard". The magistrate promised that the land used for a charity graveyard would be exempted from tax. Money was raised from gentry to buy the pot for the unclaimed bones. In each sectors (*qu*) of the county,⁶ workers were hired by the county government to take charge of locating scattered bones and to move them to the charity graveyard. The magistrate urged the gentry of each sector to volunteer to oversee the process by promising that they would be rewarded by a plaque from the county government describing their charitable deeds. The magistrate further ordered that peasants who could not build temporary shelters in cement and brick to bury their dead immediately in the "charitable graveyard". They were not allowed to build temporary shelters to house the dead because such housing increased the chance that the bones of the dead would be left unattended. The order did not seem to have a lasting effect, however, because, before 1949, Shuitou was still dotted with temporary shelters built in clay and straw. Burying one's own ancestor was supposed to be a family's private business. But because people was not able to take full responsibility for their ancestors' remains, the state and urban elites had to step in. While elites were probably willing to show their generosity by offering charitable graves, the magistrate's edict of not allowing peasants to build temporary shelters was obviously ignored. In any case, the lack of attention toward one's own ancestors was in itself a sign of weak patrilineal value.

Lack of Authority of the Patrilineal Group

In Shuitou, there was a lack of any formal and permanent patrilineal group that could regulate relationship between agnates or protect

⁶ *Qu* was an administrative unit below the county level and above the canton level.

agnates from outside encroachment. In Part Four, I will discuss practices in Shuitou which demonstrated this point. The "property grabbing" showed how agnates could try to drive out competitors in order to inherit a person's property. The "adopted husband" was a mechanism for a widow to fight back the "property grabbing" practice of her dead husband's agnates. "The wife abduction" showed the weakness of patrilineal group in protecting its members from violating their interest.

"Property Grabbing" and the "Adopted Husband"

"Designated inheritance" provided a way to expand one's family fortune at no cost. Villagers fought against anyone who obstructed achievement this goal. Thus, a man without male heir would be encouraged by his closest patrilineal kin not to adopt a child or have an "adopted son-in-law". While an adopted child would be more easily integrated into a family simply because he/she had been there for a longer time, an "adopted son-in-law" was not so lucky. The closest patrilineal kin of his father-in-law would try to drive him away in order to get the family property. This practice is called *duo-jia-shi* or "property grabbing". "Property grabbing" based on "designated inheritance" also occurred among urban elites. Possibly because there were more fortune at stake, "property grabbing" was more intense among urban elites. Because of this, elite families in the market towns did not practice "adopted son-in-law" or adoption. If someone had no male descendants, his property had to be passed to the next closest patrilineal kin as "designated inheritance" prescribed.

Not only an "adopted son-in-law", but a widow might also face same kind of hostility from her dead husband's patrilineal kin. Usually, if a widow was young and childless, she would go back to her natal family and remarry rather than stay in this unfriendly environment. Even if the

widow had children, her dead husband's family might try to throw her out. If the relationship between a daughter-in-law and her parents-in-law was not good, she might be forced out not only by her dead husband's brothers but his parents as well. Usually, the children of a widow followed their mother. If the mother was driven away, so were her children. If one of the children was a male, the likelihood his grandparents would throw him and his mother out of the family was small. However, if the grandparents were dead, and his uncles did not like the boy, they might still try to drive the mother and child away.

If the widow did not want to remarry, she might take in a *zuan-fu-jin* or "adopted husband". The function of an "adopted husband" was to protect the mother and her children from "property grabbing" by her dead husband's closest patrilineal kin. The "adopted husband's" reward was to enjoy his wife's late husband's property. The most important criterion for choosing an "adopted husband" was whether or not he was strong enough to farm the land and take care of the family. He had to change his surname and so lost his previous identity. His status was somewhat like an "adopted son-in-law," only much worse. Unlike the case of an "adopted son-in-law", no "proper" marriage ceremony was held. His patrilineal kin were not considered as affines as was the case for an "adopted son-in-law". When he entered the family, everything was done in secret. His ritual status in the family was equivalent to that of a concubine.

The woman who took in an "adopted husband" acted in defiance of her late husband's patrilineal kin. She demonstrated that she could do well without them. By taking in an "adopted husband", she muddled the family descent line. If she produced a son with the "adopted husband", the son would share the same right as his half brothers. If he was the only son, he inherited everything from his mother's first husband. Because of

that, family property could fall into the hands of an outsider totally unrelated to the family in blood.

Levirate or "Taking Older Brother's Widow" and "Wife Abduction"

There is one way to circumvent the pressure forced upon a widow by her dead husband's patrilineal kin. If she remarried to her husband's younger brother, she could stay in the family where she and her children would be taken care of by her dead husband's brother. In levirate marriage, there would be no outsider competing for a family's fortune and the costs of the marriage ceremony would be less because the bride price had already been paid. While *su-jei-sou* or "taking older brother's widow" was in villager's cultural idiom, I could find only one case.

Besides this case, there was also one attempt of levirate in the West hamlet. Dong Da died in the late 1940s and he was survived by his wife. His brother Dong Er wanted to marry his widowed sister-in-law but she was unwilling. What happened next was that the Dong widow was "abducted" by another villager, Chao Shu, of the same hamlet who "forced" her to marry him.

Prior to 1949, young people were engaged at quite an early age, especially among the well-to-do village families. Between an engagement and an actual marriage, however a family's fortune could change. If a man was not able to pay for the marriage expenses, a marriage would be postponed indefinitely. One way to overcome this was to forego a proper marriage ceremony. *Chiang-chin* or "wife abduction" was one way to circumvent the heavy marriage expense. Lowering a bride price made a family less respectable. Thus, if bride's family was willing to forgo her bride price, they might as well have their daughter "abducted" rather than taking the unseemly bride price. Often a woman's family collaborated in a "wife abduction."

However, in Chao Shu's case, the abduction was not used to circumvent marriage expense but rather to avoid objections from the widow's brothers-in-law. The Dong widow probably knew beforehand that she would be "abducted". Assisted by friends, Chao Shu kidnapped her while she was washing clothes. Carrying the woman on his shoulder, he ran and hid her for a few days until everything quieted down. When he and she came out of hiding, the villagers had to acknowledge their marriage status. This action was not condoned by the Dong brothers but they could do nothing. Although the Dongs were members of the largest surname group in the West hamlet, the patrilineal kin of the Dong brothers were either indifferent toward this incident or just were not able to help them. Lacking support from their patrilineal kin, the Dong brothers had to accept the fact grudgingly.

What is also interesting is that the abductor, Chao Shu, was an "adopted son-in-law" whose wife had died. The connection between Chao Shu and the Chao family was through his wife. After the wife's death, the connection was damaged. Chao's "wife abduction" further deteriorated their relationship. Chao Shu's father-in-law, Chao Chin, had three daughters and a son. The son was young when his daughters reached the age for marriage. In the 1940s, the mortality rate was high and it was not unusual for a man to adopt a son-in-law even though he had a younger son, and Chao Chin arranged for his first two daughters to take "adopted sons-in-laws". Chao Shu married the first daughter of Chao Chin and produced a daughter. The second daughter had three sons. Producing male heirs for her father gave the second daughter a sense of superiority. After the death of her elder sister, the second daughter figured Chao Shu had no right to her father's property. This feeling intensified after Chao Shu married the Dong widow. She started her "property grabbing" process by moving furniture from her elder sister's house to her own. Her action angered Chao Shu. In a direct confrontation, Chao

Shu slapped the woman's face, and their relationship was totally broken. But the second daughter still could not throw Chao Shu out because no one in the Chao surname group was willing to back her up.

Chao Shu was known for his strong personality. When he decided to do something, he was not afraid of what other people think. His "wife abduction" and his fighting back against the "property grabbing" of his sister-in-law demonstrated his prowess. Chao Shu was successful, however, only because there was no one in either the Dong or the Chao surname groups to oppose him. Both surname groups were not organized as solidarities to protect the interests of their own members. They let Chao Shu, an "adopted son-in-law" from another village, get away because they could do nothing to punish him.

Conclusions

I do not argue that patrilineal kinship was not important in Shuitou. What I do stress is that there was an agnatic gradation in patrilineal kinship and all agnates were not alike. Shuitou villagers divided their patrilineal kin into three categories: "members of same household", "members of same extended family", and "members of same descent group." Each of the three categories of patrilineal kin had different importance toward a villager. Social interaction was most intense between "members of same household." The importance of patrilineal kin decreased among "members of same extended family", and "members of same descent group" were little different from one's friends and neighbors. For distant agnates related beyond four or five generations, genealogical relationships became un-recognizable, and they became strangers (in terms of patrilineal kinship) even though they share the same surname. Because sharing of a same surname did not by itself constitute an agnatic unit, people of the same surname, but did

not belong the "same descent group", could marry each other. Based on this agnatic gradation, we cannot say patrilineal kinship as an unit was important or unimportant to villagers. It was important for "members of same household" but relative unimportant to "members of same descent group."

The importance of "members of same household" could be seen in the forming of factions during the collective period where the "household" were viewed as a default unit. During the collective period, those "households" with large number of people could often support their own members to be elected as production team leaders, and often these leaders occupied the office longer than leaders from smaller "households." But even among "members of same household", relations might not always being strong. For example, when the six families opposed the building of the new school in 1994 described in Chapter Five, some of them had close agnates living in the same production team but did not joint them in the protest. Gong Jin's brother, Gong Yin, who lived in the second row of houses behind that of Gong Jin's, was supporting his brother-in-law, Xiao Hu - the party secretary, in opposition to his own brother. Gong Yin, who operated a button processing factory, relied on Xiao Hu to market his buttons. He probably thought that supporting his brother-in-law was more financially rewarding than supporting his own brother. Besides, building of the new school in front of his brother's house only affected his brother, not him. Ye, the truck driver, also had a brother lived in the second row of houses behind that of Ye's. The brother did not joint the protest because he was a plaster and would be hired to build the new school. Just as Gong Jin and Ye opposed the building of the new school out of their own interests (the school would block the southern wind and they had to cultivate fields further from their homes), their own brothers did not support them out of self interests.

In discussing wu-fu (the five grades of mourning dress), Freedman (1958) also discovered an agnatic gradation in the patrilineal kinship within the strong lineages of southeast China. However, compared with Shuitou, the centrifugal force of agnatic gradation in southeast China was stopped by the centripetal force of lineage organization. A strong lineage with large corporate property could attract men of common descent to live together. Since one's lineage membership determined one's right to proceeds of corporate property and rights to tenant lineage land, genealogical relationship, which defines one's lineage membership, became important. Lineage halls, written genealogies, collective ancestor worships were mechanisms to show one's genealogical relation with the common ancestor and express one's membership. Leaders of the strong lineages could punish their agnates who violated lineage rules and reward those followed them by retaining or releasing rights to lineage property. And the lineage leaders could organize their lineage members into a tight group and dominate the smaller satellite lineages.

In southeast China, the centripetal force of lineage organization, I argue, was based on a power-concentrated structure. But in Shuitou where a power-dispersed structure existed in all three periods of its recent history, the centripetal force did not exist. What we observed in Shuitou is that no one was able to organize patrilineal kin relations. There was no written genealogy nor collective estate owned by a "descent group." Ancestral worship was held in individual households. There was no common ancestral worship. Although collective activities involving all members of a "descent group" could be found in funeral ceremonies, they were not really aimed at promoting group solidarity. The large number of "adopted sons-in-law" shows that villagers did not pay particular attention to patrilineality. "Adopted son-in-law", for the villagers, was an economic rather than a moral issue. Only when patrilineality involved economic interest did it became important. This

was seen in the case of "designated inheritance," which gave patrilineal kin the right to inherit property from an heirless person. "Designated inheritance" also opened the opportunity for people to "grab property" from their closest patrilineal kin. However, there were mechanisms to deter this "property grabbing" practice. The "adopted husband" was an excellent case that showed how a widow could fight against the preying eyes of her dead husband's patrilineal kin by adopting a total stranger into her family. This case also showed the weak patrilineal ties among patrilineal kin and how this weakness undermined their ability to challenge the widow. Chao Shu's "wife abduction" and conflict with her sister-in-law showed that patrilineal kin were not organized to protect their own interests. Without support from their agnates, both the Dong brothers and the Chao Shu's sister-in-law could do nothing to him. Chao Shu's actions were definitely heterodox by village standards. But no one in the village intervened. Villagers were not willing to interfere with other's business, as long as their own interest was not jeopardized.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: POWER REVISITED

One goal of this study is to provide a comparative framework in which to examine the differences between communities in the ability of local elites to dominate commoners. I became interested in this topic when comparing the relationship between gentry-landlords and peasants in the Pearl River delta with those in the Yangzi delta. The literature on these two regions shows that the relationships between gentry-landlords and peasants before the Communist Revolution were highly stratified. There was a high rate of land tenancy, often above 50 percent, in both regions. Both had developed high levels of commercialization of agriculture, and the gentry-landlords in both regions created lineages with large amounts of corporate property and lineage institutions, such as written genealogies, lineage halls, collective ancestor worship. Anthropologists often classify human societies into centralized societies (states and chiefdoms) and uncentralized egalitarian societies (tribes and bands). In a centralized and stratified society, scholars assume that one group of people (elite) could dominate others (commoners). If we accept the assumption that elites could dominate commoners in a stratified society, then the gentry-landlords in both the Pearl River delta and the Yangzi delta should be able to control peasants. But historical events have shown that while the gentry-landlords in the Pearl River delta could indeed effectively control and dominate peasants, this was not the case in the Yangzi delta.

In the Pearl River delta, landlord-gentry could mobilize peasants (often through lineage organizations) to oppose outsiders. For example,

in 1840s, the gentry-landlords organized peasants (mostly their lineage members) in opposing the British troops trying to enter Canton (see Wakeman 1966). In 1911, they led peasants in occupying Canton when the Republican Revolution broke out (see Hsieh 1978). The ability of gentry-landlords' to mobilize their lineage members could also be seen in the lineage feuds (see Rubie Watson 1990). In addition, James Watson (1977) found there were no incidences of peasant rebellion against landlord-gentry in the Pearl River delta. In the Yangzi delta, however, during the Taiping rebellion of the mid-1850s, the gentry-landlords could not mobilize peasants to oppose the Taiping Army, and were killed in large numbers (Jiashan County Gazetteer 1892). There are also many incidents of peasant rebellions against gentry-landlords in the Yangzi delta. Because gentry-landlords could not mobilize peasants to defend their lives and property, they had to seek protection from social unrest in market towns.

Why did the events in the Pearl River delta support the assumption of the elite's domination of commoners in a stratified society but those in the Yangzi delta did not? Under what conditions does stratification between elite and commoners translate into a relationship of domination? How can we examine this difference from a micro level of local communities? To address these issues, I have defined power as the ability to punish and reward. Based on the elite's ability to punish and reward commoners through economic means, I have distinguished two forms of power structure: power-concentrated structure and power-dispersed structure. With this principle of punishment and reward I analyze the relationship between elites and commoners in the three periods of Shuitou's history: the gentry-landlords and peasants in the small peasant economy of the pre-1949 period; the production team leaders and team members in the collective economy between 1950 and 1983, and the factory owners and workers in market economy of the post-1984 period.

First, I briefly reiterate the causes of the power-dispersed structure in the three periods. Then I demonstrate how the distinction between power-concentrated and power-dispersed structures can help in re-examining Chinese society. Finally, I make some suggestions for future research.

Power-dispersed Structure in Shuitou

Although the social contexts of the three periods under examination were very different, they shared a similar power structure in the Yangzi delta, namely a power-dispersed structure in which elites could not punish and reward commoners at will.

The Small Peasant Economy of the Pre-1949 Period

My argument that Shuitou had a power-dispersed structure prior to 1949 is based on two levels of analysis. First, the absentee landlords in the market towns could not control peasants in the countryside. A power-dispersed structure was created between absentee landlords and villagers. Second, in the village, where economic stratification was low, there was no one who could punish and reward another villager. A power-dispersed structure was created between peasants in the village. The creation of the two levels of power-dispersed structure was related to the absentee landlordism that became the norm in the Yangzi delta beginning in the eighteenth century. The power-dispersed structure between absentee landlords and peasants can be attributed to three factors. First, as landlords left the countryside to live in market towns, the relationship between absentee landlords and peasants became impersonal. Often landlords did not know the peasants, and peasants did not know the landlords. There was a lack of *guan-xi* (personal relationship) or *gan-qing* (personal feelings) between absentee landlords

and peasants. Second, for the absentee landlords, land became an investment. In the commercialization of land, land holdings became fragmented. Seldom did one landlord own a large track of land on which everyone in a village must depend. Often peasants in a village rented land from various landlords living in different market towns. That is, no peasant depended upon a particular landlord for economic survival. Third, the land tenure in the rural Yangzi delta was based on the "one field, two owners" system. Both the landlords (the subsoil holders) and the peasants (the topsoil holders) could sell, mortgage, or lease their rights without interference from the other party. Thus, even though the absentee landlords were nominally owners of the land and paid taxes to the government, they could not evict the topsoil owners at will. This effectively deprived landlords' of any ability to punish and reward peasants.

The landlords' lack of control over peasants led to wide-spread peasant rent riots against absentee landlords when absentee landlords refused to lower rent or neglected the needs of peasants, such as the case of repairing the embankment of polder fields described in Chapter Three. The rent riots arose not from the attempt to raise rents but more commonly arose when absentee landlords were reluctant to share losses with peasants by reducing the established rent rates when harvests were poor. Since the absentee landlords could not handle the situation, local government was involved to resolve rent dispute by setting rent ceilings. For the local government, if landlords could not receive their rents, the government could not receive the taxes. Through government intervention in setting rent ceilings, rent in the early twentieth century was actually lower than that of the nineteenth century. Facing the assertive peasants whom they could not control, landlords set up various charitable institutions to appease the peasants. Without the ability to control peasants, the countryside became unsafe for rich

landlords. This, in turn, promoted the migration of landlords to market towns where absentee landlords and urban elites could band together to hire mercenaries to protect them. As the *nouveau riche* in the countryside, such as Dong Yi in Shuitou, moved to market towns, villages in the countryside became less stratified, and the power-dispersed structure between landlords and peasants intensified.

The major factor creating a power-dispersed structure among peasants in the countryside was a low level of stratification after the landlords had left for market towns. Most peasants in villages were more or less in similar social and economic status. The differences in wealth were often reflections of the stage of development of family cycle. A family with more adult laborers was in better shape than one that had to feed many old and young. In Shuitou, except for the special case of Dong Yi, there was no residential landlord on whom other villagers must depend for land. Even if there were residential landlords, however, the "one field, two owners" system could deprive the residential landlords of the possibility of evicting their peasant-tenants. Without anyone who could effectively punish and reward others, a power-dispersed structure developed among peasants in the countryside.

The effects of this power-dispersed structure in the countryside can be observed in several circumstances. In Shuitou, the official village head had to be rotated among better-off villagers because no one wanted the job. An official village head had to assist local government to collect taxes and arrest peasants who defaulted on rent. Since no one in the village had an upper hand on anyone else, the official village head had no way to enforce his commands. A person in an official position could not accumulate prestige but only gain resentment from villagers. Also, there was no other formal organization that offered leadership to the villagers. Chinese rural society is viewed as kin-based, but patrilineal kinship was weak in Shuitou. Patrilineal kin relations were

important only for agnates related within three or four generations. Beyond that range, not only did the relations become loose, but often agnates would not even know they were actually descendants of a common ancestor. To organize a lineage, there must be someone with enough wealth to support the building of ancestral hall, compile written genealogies, and host joint ancestor worship, but no such person existed in Shuitou. Even if there had been such a wealthy person to finance lineage institutions, he must have ability to punish and reward his agnates in order to uphold patrilineal ideals in his own lineage. The high rate of married-in sons-in-law and the widow's "adopted husband" as a measure to fight against the "property grabbing" of her dead husband's kin described in Chapter 6 showed that patrilineal groups in Shuitou were weak and no lineages developed in the village. Without strong organization among peasants, the leadership in the rent riots prevalent in the Yangzi delta was often ad hoc and task oriented. Once their aim of rent reduction was achieved, the peasants disbanded and went back to their everyday lives. Even though rent riots were many, no permanent organizations developed from them.

The Collective Economy From 1950 To 1983

My analysis of the power structure in the collective period is concentrated on the production team. The reason for choosing the relationship between production team cadres and team members as the main focus for that period is that the production team was the unit of ownership and distribution that monopolized the resources that peasants depended on. My argument that the relationship between team cadres and team members was in a power-dispersed structure is based on three factors. First, permanent membership of team members in a production team did not allow team cadres to "hire" or "fire" team members. Although a production team was an economic unit, it could not act like a

modern corporation, managing its work force to meet the demands of the market. Permanent membership meant that the production team had to support its members. In a sense, a production team was like a welfare state. A team leader could not punish and reward his team members by releasing or retaining their basic ration. Second, in Shuitou, team cadres were elected by team members every year. The most important post in a production team was team leader who managed the distribution of work and rations. If team members were not satisfied with a team leader, he could be voted out of office. Satisfying team members was a difficult task. A production team was situated in an "encapsulated" environment. All the members had to share the fruits produced by the team. If one person got more, other members must get less. A person's welfare was seen as negatively related to other people's welfare. The "image of the limited good" was intense in a production team. Severe competition between team members over the distribution of a team's resources created a centrifugal force that divided team members. To compete for resources, team members divided into factions. A candidate for official post often needed the support of a faction in a production team. While competition between team members was intense, they must also cooperate for the common good. If a harmonious working relation among team members could not be maintained, agriculture production might decrease and everyone on the team would suffer. Thus, there was an awareness among team members that they were all in the same boat. This created a centripetal force that bond team members together. A candidate for team leader had to get factional support to get elected, but once elected, he must play down the factionalism in the team and try to promote team unity at the risk of alienating his factional support. Therefore, a team leader was walking the tightrope between the centrifugal and centripetal forces created by the "encapsulated" environment. If the distribution of resources was not viewed as fair, if a team leader blatantly gave favor

to some and discriminated others, conflicts would erupt, production could run low, and he could be voted out of office the next year. Third, the distribution system in the production team was regulated by the state and constrained by the "encapsulated" environment. The distribution of work and work points had to satisfy team members. A preferred or detested job often had to be rotated among team members or decided by drawing lots. The work point system changed several times. While the impetus for the changes was mainly political struggle in the highest levels of government, at the local level whether a work point system could maintain harmony between team members was the main concern. In the distribution of rations, the local government set the basic level of consumption for each individual based on age, gender, and labor power. Every team member knew his/her basic level of ration, and a team leader could not manipulate the rationing system.

A production team as an economic unit was similar to the traditional Chinese family in which members of the family worked together for the common welfare. In a traditional family, conflicts often erupted over the fairness of the distribution of resources. If the conflict grew intense, the head of the family might decide to divide the family into smaller units. In a production team, however, the division of a team into smaller units was not an option. Unlike a traditional family, which diffused conflict by family division, a production team diffused conflict by changing its team leader. Between 1970 and 1983, there was a high turnover rate among team leaders in Shuitou. The longest tenure of any team leader was four years. On average, a team leader could hold on his office for two or three years. Under the collective system, a team leader could not use his office to punish and reward team members by distributing resources at will because his position was not secured. If we define power as the ability to punish and reward, a team leader did

not have power. On the contrary, it was team members who punished and rewarded a team leader by keeping him or voting him out of office.

The Market Economy in the Post-1984 Period

After the de-collectivization in 1984, each peasant household became an economic unit and the "encapsulated" environment disappeared. In the post-collective period, Shuitou developed a prospering button industry. Contributing to the power-dispersed structure in the village was the fact that no one person in the village controlled the job opportunities and marketing channels in the button business. The burgeoning button industry created a shortage of labor as exemplified by the introduction of migrant workers. Button factory owners could lay off their workers, but the opportunity to work in a factory was not considered a reward by the workers, and being laid off was not a punishment since villagers could easily find a job in one of the 39 button processing factories in the village. Thus there was a power-dispersed structure between factory owners and workers. A button processing factory performed put-out jobs for button salespersons, but there were about 25 salespersons in the village, and if a factory owner was willing, he could become a salesperson. There were many garment factories in the coastal provinces, and no single salesperson or garment factory controlled the marketing channel. With a handsome kickback, there was always opportunity to find a garment factory to buy ones buttons. A power-dispersed structure also existed between button salesperson and factory owner. The button blank factory in the village provided credit to salespersons. A salesperson need not pay cash for the blank buttons until he receives payment from garment factory. The blank factory, however, had no advantage over the salespersons who bought buttons from it. There were two blank factories in Shuitou, and more than 10 in Yaoshui township. All the blank factories were competing for orders from salespersons, so the blank

factory were eager to give salespersons credit. Salespersons, in fact, were giving favors to a blank factory by borrowing from it. On the other hand, a blank factory did not depend on a single salesperson for orders. The owners of blank factories were themselves successful salespersons. A power-dispersed structure existed between sales persons and blank factories. This dispersal of power existed not only in the button industry, but also in agriculture, the transportation business, cement board manufacturing, and other economic activities; there was no one in the village who controlled the life line of another. The relationships among all village households could be said to be imbedded in a power-dispersed structure.

The effect of the power-dispersed structure was that no one in the village ceded to the demand of another. In the case of the building of a new school, I have shown that the party secretary, Xiao Hu, had great difficulty in persuading six households to accept the new school site. Although the land for the new village school belonged to the village, the six households objected to the building of the school because it would block the southern wind from entering their houses. They tried to obstruct the school project by not participating in the land distribution for the "professional grain producing household" program. The party secretary, who held the highest office in the village, an owner of a blank factory, a successful salesperson, and one of the wealthiest man in the village could not command these six families who did not depend him for living. In two incidents of open confrontation, the party secretary was not only verbally abused but also physically attacked by members of the six families. Although Shuitou experienced a higher level of economic stratification than previously, the party secretary could not use his wealth nor his official post to punish and reward the recalcitrant villagers.

Power-Concentrated and Power-Dispersed Structures in Chinese Society

What is accomplished by distinguishing power-concentrated and power-dispersed structures? How can it further our understanding of Chinese societies. I try to analyze and critique some of arguments about Chinese society in each of the three periods.

The Small Peasant Economy of the Pre-1949 Period

Fei Xiaotong and Maurice Freedman presented very different images of Chinese society. Fei (1946) argued that gentry-landlords in China lived in a separate social and cultural environment from that of peasants. Lineage was a mechanism for gentry-landlords to uphold their high social and cultural status; peasants had no use for lineage organization. For Fei, a single-surname village in rural China is probably best interpreted as a local organization rather than a kinship organization. Freedman (1958, 1966), on the other hand, emphasized the interaction between gentry-landlords and peasants. Gentry-landlords and peasants could be analyzed in a single framework, namely, lineage organization (also see Skinner 1979). In other words, while Fei Xiaotong proposed a dichotomy between gentry-landlords and peasants, Freedman believed such dichotomy did not exist. Is this difference between Fei and Freedman simply contrary view points of a same phenomena or were they looking at different phenomenon? I believe the answer is in the latter. In the power-dispersed structure of the Yangzi delta, gentry-landlords could not control and organize peasants, and they were forced to seek protection in market towns. There was little interaction between absentee landlords who lived in market towns and peasants in the countryside. While gentry-landlords in market towns did set up lineages with corporate property, lineage halls, and written genealogies,

peasants in the countryside had no resources to create lineages nor the ability to organize agnates into strong groups. On the other hand, in the power-concentrated structure of the Pearl River delta, lineage managers could punish and reward their agnates through land tenure, and organize them into a strong force in lineage feuds, opposing the British troops in the mid-nineteenth century and opposing the Qing government in 1911. Distinguishing power-concentrated and power-dispersed structures helps us analyze the different social structures of these two regions and solve the controversies between Fei and Freedman.

Freedman's lineage theory was a paradigm for analyzing Chinese rural social society. He proposed a developmental typology of Chinese lineage from type A lineage to type Z lineage with a type A lineage having the simplest form of lineage institutions and being the weakest in relation to other lineages and the type Z lineage being the most complex and having the ability to dominate other lineages. There are two related arguments in Freedman's lineage typology: (1) the complexity of lineage institutions and power of a lineage in local politics are co-variants; and (2) a developmental process from a simple and weak lineage (type A lineage) to a complex and strong lineage (type Z lineage). We can critique these two arguments based on my distinction between the two forms of power structures.

Freedman's correlation of the complexity of lineage institutions and a lineage's power in local politics is applicable to the Pearl River delta where a power-concentrated structure existed. In the power-dispersed structure of the Yangzi delta, the complexity of lineage institutions and lineage's power were not co-variants. While the gentry-landlords in the Yangzi delta market towns created lineages with complex institutions, they could hardly use their lineages as mechanisms to dominate peasants (if we see peasants' descent groups as type A lineages). Whether an organization could dominate local politics, in my

view, depends on whether it could punish and reward other people, not simply on the amount of lineage property, or existence of lineage halls, or written genealogies, or collective ancestor worship. If we base the typology of Chinese lineages simply on the complexity of lineage institutions, as Wolf (1990) and Goody (1990) have done, we would then lump the type Z lineage of the Pearl River delta together with the lineages in the market towns of the Yangzi delta. This would ignore their different roles in local politics. There is no point in arguing that these lineages are the same simply because they all have complex lineage institutions. The tendency to link the complexity of lineage institutions and the lineage's power in local politics is evident among historians (e.g., Kuhn 1970:77-82; Schoppa 1982: 48-52). We must first find out what kind of power structure a lineage is situated in, then find out whether it could serve as a mechanism for local domination.

In Freedman's lineage typology, the development of Chinese lineages from type A to type Z is based on internal stratification within a lineage. When some lineage members became wealthy, they donated property to lineages, created complex lineage institutions, and led their poorer agnates in dominating weaker lineages that were internally less stratified. This continuum scale of Chinese lineage development implies a "natural" process in correspondence to the internal economic stratification among lineage members. In the Yangzi delta, however, when a man became rich he would simply migrate to market towns and leave his agnates in the countryside. Internal stratification led to migration rather than to organizing local lineages encompassing peasant agnates. As Fei (1946) would argue, lineage was for the gentry-landlords and not for the peasants. More importantly, there was no strong lineage of Freedman's Z type in the power-dispersed structure of the Yangzi delta. Freedman's type Z lineages was embedded in a power-concentrated structure. There was nothing "natural" about a peasant descent group

developing into a type Z lineage because the power-concentrated structure was not "natural" in the area. Only in power-concentrated local societies can we find the possibility of a type A lineage developing into a type Z lineage.¹

The Collective Economy From 1950 To 1983

One critique (at least from the far right) of the welfare state is that since the state guarantees the basic living standard of the people, some will be lazy and lack motivation to work. What this critique implies is that the survival pressure in everyday life is itself a kind of punishment and reward, and a welfare state eliminates such pressure. I have no intention of arguing whether the welfare state or its critique is right or wrong. What interests me is that in a socialist state, such as China, which is the epitome the welfare state, western scholars often ignore the debate about the merits (or demerits) of the welfare state in their own society, and portrait the Chinese socialist state as totalitarian. Why is a welfare state in the west criticized as eliminating the pressure for survival, but a welfare state in China is treated as a mechanism for oppression? Is this a way of "exoticizing" China and portraying it as the "other" in opposition to the "freedom" of the west?

There were many different levels of relationship in the Chinese social state, and whether the Chinese socialist state was oppressive must be examined from these different levels. My study of Shuitou's collective period centered on the relationship between village peasants and Communist party cadres. My findings and interpretation of the

¹ I do not argue that a power-concentrated structure would result in strong lineages as discovered in the Pearl River delta. It is not necessary to have a strong leader of a power-concentrated structure to create a lineage. However, what I do insist is that a strong lineage can only exist in a power-concentrated structure. A weak leader in a power-dispersed structure cannot organize his agnates into a strong lineage.

collective system in Shuitou is in sharp contrast to that of the clientelist theorists (Walder 1986; Oi 1989; Yan 1995; Nee 1989, 1991; Wank 1995; Siu 1988). They see the distributive economy of the collective system as creating a clientelist relationship between party cadres (the distributors) and commoners (recipients of the distributed resources). In ascribing power to cadres of a collective, this clientelist theory is based on the two facts of the collective system: monopolization of resources and dependency of commoners on the monopolized resources. The clientelist theory argues that cadres who manage the monopolized resources could use them to punish and reward commoners who depend on the resources. According to proponents of the clientelist theory, cadres controlled the doors to promotion, party membership, opportunities to join the People's Liberation Army, housing allotment, quality of rations and jobs assignments. I agree with the clientelist theorists that the resources were monopolized by the collective unit, and I also agree that common people depended upon the monopolized resources for their living. What I do not agree with in the clientelist theory is the evaluation of the cadres' ability to punish and reward commoners. Indeed, a person who sought to join the communist party or the army needed local cadres' guarantees of the person's political reliability. But these kinds of opportunities for self-advancement were far and between. A cadre could hardly use them as means to punish and reward the majority of peasants. A team leader could manipulate only very limited differences in the distribution of work and rations, such as giving better quality grain to those he favored. The differences that a team leader could manipulate were limited and the basic regulations regarding their distribution could not be violated. More importantly, any differential treatment toward team members could cause conflicts in a team, which was harmful to the working relations. To use one's authority to distribute resources differently was checked

by democratic voting, and a leader who blatantly favored others would be voted out of office. Team members' dependency on the collective unit for the monopolized resources did not guarantee cadres who managed the resources the ability to punish and reward. The problem with the clientelist theory is that it assumes there were no regulations in the distribution of resources and that cadres could do whatever they wanted.

Market Economy in the Post-1984 Period

Scholars have debated the effects of the market economy on the power of cadres. The debate is a continuation of the clientelist theory of the collective period. Under the collective system, all the means of production were monopolized by the production team. The clientelist theory argues that team cadres were able to dominate peasants because of their dependency on the controlled resources. If the means of production was no longer monopolized by collective unit after the de-collectivization of 1984, scholars ask whether this domination has remained intact. Some argue that the market reform has eroded cadres' authority (Nee 1989; Yan 1995); others find that party cadres still have a firm grip over the people (Oi 1989, Wank 1995). Although I do not agree with clientelist theory's interpretation of the collective system, the question of whether cadres can dominate commoners under the market economy is an interesting one.

Whether cadres, or any other types of elites, are able to dominate commoners in the market economy has to do with local social structure and different economic models. In rural China, two models of rural industrial development have appeared since 1984: the Wenzhou (a district in Zhejiang province) model and the Sunan (literally southern Jiangsu province) model (Philip Huang 1990). In Wenzhou, where the Wenzhou model originated, the development of rural industries was mainly based on private initiatives. One or several families invested their money in a

small scale workshop manufacturing small commodities such as plastic bags, sweaters, and buttons. What was particular about the Wenzhou model was that often a large number of village households were involved in the same kind of small commodity manufacturing, and an army of salespersons went all over the country to seek cheap raw materials and buyers for the factories at home. Although each transaction was usually small, collectively they added up. As the salespersons built up networks of information, they had a better grasp of what the market needed. Since the factories at home were small in scale and modest in investment, they could easily adapt to the manufacturing of another kind of merchandise. The grasp of what the market needed through extensive networks and the ability of the factories to shift from manufacturing one kind of merchandise to another contributed to the success of the Wenzhou model. The development of the button industry in Shuitou was mainly based on the Wenzhou model.

In the Sunan model, rural industry was mainly developed by collective units. With existing capital and backing of village government, the collective-owned enterprises could become involved in larger scale industries. Their development was often assisted by creating alliances with state factories in cities. In such alliances, a state factory provided technology and marketing channels and a village collective factory provided the land, factory workshop, and cheap labor. As the state factories assigned put-out jobs to collective factories in the villages, the state factory did not need to provide housing, pensions, and welfare programs to village workers. This arrangement was beneficial for the state factories by reducing its manufacturing costs. The village collective factories benefited from the alliance with state factories by gaining needed technology, marketing channels, and providing job opportunities for surplus labor that could not be absorbed by the agriculture sector.

If the collective enterprise of the Sunan model was more like the regular army with heavy investment and formalized structure, the private enterprise of the Wenzhou model was more like guerrilla warfare. Under the Sunan model, the management of the collective enterprise was more centralized. The management in the Wenzhou model was de-centralized. In the Sunan model, the cadres, who were often the managers of the collective enterprises, enjoyed great authority in determining the hiring and disciplining of the workers (Samuel Ho 1994: 100). If the village collective factory was the only outlet for off-farm jobs, and factory jobs were more remunerative than farming, a village cadre-manager could use his position to punish and reward villagers effectively. But in a Wenzhou model, where each small factory had its own marketing channel and was not dependent upon the cadres, power of cadre might be greatly reduced. Therefore, the Wenzhou model was more conducive to a power-dispersed structure, as happened in Shuitou; and the Sunan model was more conducive to a power-concentrated structure.

The power-concentrated structure of the Sunan model is exemplified in a well publicized case in the village of Daqiuzhuang near Tianjin in north China. Prior to Deng Xiaoping's reform of 1983, Daqiuzhuang was a poor village occupying less than 7 square kilometers of saline land. But in ten years from 1983 to 1993, Daqiuzhuang became the wealthiest village in China. It was hailed as the "first village in China" and served as the showcase for the achievement of the reform policy. The wealth of Daqiuzhuang was the work of its party secretary, Yu Zuo-ming. He first established a collective-owned scrap metal shop. With business shrewdness, Yu was able to use the opportunity of the market economy and bring great wealth to the village. In the early 1990s, there were nearly 200 collective enterprises all under the general management of the village party secretary. Although there was less than 5,000 native villagers, the enterprises hired more than 25,000 workers from outside.

One incident in 1992, however, brought down Yu and the fame of Daqiuzhuang. In December of 1992, an outside accountant was killed by the village security force (some said Yu's son was the murderer) on the suspicion of embezzlement of company funds. Several days after the murder, Tianjin police sent in six plain clothes agents to the village to investigate the case, but under the direction of Yu, the policemen were enclosed by the village security force for one day and later sent out. There was no further action from the Tianjin government for two months. In February of 1993, the Tianjin police department sent a message to Yu that it would dispatch 400 police to Daqiuzhuang to investigate the murder case. Yu objected to the proposal. In the afternoon of the same day, 1,700 police encircled the village and demanded entrance. Villagers and outside workers, numbering about 30,000, blocked the village entrance with cars and armed themselves with clubs, stopping the police from entering. The standoff lasted 3 days. Finally, Yu caved in and was taken away (Lu 1993; Sha 1993).

What is interesting in the Daqiuzhuang case is the extent of the authority of a cadre-manager in a market economy. The village security force set its own kangaroo court and killed the accountant suspected in embezzlement. Without sending for the proper authorities, the village security force not only ignored the police but also trapped them for a day before letting them go. The standoff between 30,000 villagers and outside workers against 1,700 police was most extraordinary. All these actions on the part of villagers must have been under the direction of Yu Zuo-ming. The similarity between Yu's Daqiuzhuang and the dominant lineages of southeast China, which could mobilize agnates to openly confront the local government, is obvious. As a matter of fact, Yu was accused of creating a "personal empire." On the other hand, Yu Zuo-ming's authority was in sharp contrast to that of Xiao Hu, the party secretary of Shuitou, who was not able to persuade his own villagers on

the issue of a new school site and was even verbally abused and physically attacked by them.

How can we account the similarity between Daqiuzhuang and the dominant lineages of southeast China and the striking contrast between Yu Zuo-ming and Xiao Hu? Yu's authority was not only from his official post as village party secretary but, more importantly, his clout as the general manager of the 200 collective enterprises in Daqiuzhuang. Through his control of the village enterprises, Yu was able to determine the working opportunities of both villagers and outside workers. Thus, Yu could create clientelist relationships with villagers and workers and make them indebted to him. I cannot tell whether the villagers and workers voluntarily took up arms and confronted the 1,700 Tianjin policemen who tried to arrest Yu, but if Yu could use the village security force to kill a man, he should have no problem intimidating villagers and outside workers into following his orders. I do not know whether Yu was a man of justice in wielding his power, but he could definitely punish and reward villagers and workers. In other words, Daqiuzhuang was in a power-concentrated structure.

In view of what happened in Shuitou and Daqiuzhuang, I believe there is no categorical answer to the question of cadre domination under the market economy. Whether a cadre can dominate a local population is more related to the particular power structure of a local community than to the market economy itself. Both Shuitou and Daqiuzhuang had developed rural industries and prospered under the market economy. On the one hand, the decentralized button industry in Shuitou created a power-dispersed structure where Xiao Hu, the party secretary, not only could not control the villagers but had been attacked by them. The centralized collective enterprises in Daqiuzhuang, on the other hand, created a power-concentrated structure where Yu Zuo-ming could intimidate the local population and mobilize them to confront the government forces. I

do not argue that the Wenzhou model of rural industrialization would create a power-dispersed structure or the Sunan model created a power-concentrated structure. But the two models of rural industrialization have great potential for developing into the opposite types of power structures.

Suggestions for Further Study

With the possible exception of the collective period during which the government imposed a uniform system in the countryside, both the power-concentrated structure (type Z lineages in the Pearl River delta of the pre-1949 period and Daqiuizhuang of the post-1984 period) and power-dispersed structure (Shuitou in both pre-1949 and post-1984 periods) existed in different rural communities in China. We cannot extrapolate data from one community to explain another community without considering the possibility of different power structures. For example, scholars often contrast north China and south China based on ecological differences: north China had dry farming and little land tenancy and south China mainly grew rice and had high tenancy rates. As I tried to show in this study, however, while both the Yangzi delta and southeast China are part of the south China area, their local communities prior to 1949 had quite different power structures. On the one hand, China, or south China, is not a monolithic block without local variations. On the other hand, it is cliché to say that every community is different. The power-concentrated and power-dispersed structures, therefore, are meant to put local variations into two contrasting frameworks that could help us make comparisons.

For further study, one interesting topic is the cultural origin of Chinese lineages. As I have shown, the strong type Z lineages in the Pearl River delta and the lineages of urban elites in the Yangzi delta

were functionally different in terms of controlling local peasants. From a functionalist point of view, an institution is not defined by its "essence" but its function or relationship with other social factors. But why did the lineages of these two regions have different functions and develop similar institutions? Chun (1996) has argued that Chinese lineages should be interpreted in terms of their historical development and interaction with the Neo-Confucian ideology rather than their functions. Paradoxically, although my analysis of the lineage is mainly a structural-functionalist one, my finding may bear out Chun's argument. If lineages in the Pearl River delta and the Yangzi delta had different functions but similar institutions, then the lineage institutions could not be explained in terms of their social function. Why Chinese developed their lineages in the first place must indeed be found in historical and cultural reasons.

There are reports of lineages re-emerging in southeast China after the 1984 reform. Are these re-emerging lineages in southeast China more like the strong type Z lineages of the Pearl River delta or similar to the urban lineages in the Yangzi delta of the pre-1949 period? Also, can we relate the re-emerging lineages to the type of rural industrialization? I suspect if a lineage developed under a Wenzhou model of rural industrialization, it is probably situated in a power-dispersed structure and the lineage would be more similar to the urban Yangzi delta lineage. If a lineage is developed in a community of the Sunan model of rural industrialization, it would probably be situated in a power-concentrated structure and more like a type Z lineage of the Pearl River delta. These are questions for further empirical studies.

Another interesting topic related to my findings and worth further research is peasant rebellion. Based on the two types of power structure and whether rebellion was caused by survival for basic subsistence, we may distinguish four types of rebellion. We can find examples of each

type of rebellion in Chinese history. The rent resistance in the Yangzi delta was situated in a power-dispersed structure. What is interesting is that the peasants were not resisting absentee landlords because the landlords increased rents but because they refused to lower rents. When natural disasters struck, peasants would force their absentee landlords to share the losses. As shown in Chapter Three, however, some peasants refused to pay the pre-determined rents not because draught or heavy rainfall really caused losses in the harvest, but used the abnormality in weather as an excuse to demand that landlords lower rents. Since the absentee landlords in the Yangzi delta had no power in the power-dispersed structure, peasants were not afraid of them. Rent resistance in the Yangzi delta could be explained as peasants' attempts to increase the share of the harvest. The rent resistance riots were less because the peasants had nothing to eat than because they wanted to preserve their living standard.

Under a power-dispersed structure, we can also find peasant rebellions emerging out of subsistence issues. An example of this form of peasant rebellion is the rebellion of the Nien. The Nien was a categorical term for the bandits in north China in the mid-nineteenth century. Perry (1980) argues that the rise of Nien could be attributed to ecological factors in the northern Anhui and southern Henan and Hebei. In those poor regions where the Nien bandits were active, the low level of agricultural surplus precluded class differentiation in the countryside. No elites wanted to be overlords in a region where there was nothing to gain. Peasants in a village were more or less equal in status. When the harvest was bad and peasants could not survive on the meager returns from the land, banditry became a strategy for survival. Looting of the more prosperous areas was the only means that peasants in a state of starvation had to maintain their lives.

We can also find peasant rebellion under a power-concentrated structure. For example, the gentry-led lineage militia in the Pearl River delta described above attacked the British troops trying to enter Canton in 1840s and attacked the Qing government in 1911. The peasants who followed the gentry were not facing subsistence difficulties but were organized by the powerful elites. The elite-led peasant rebellion under a power-concentrated structure can also be seen in the Red Spears Society in the 1930s. Perry (1980) finds that the Red Spears was mostly organized by landlords to cope with widespread banditry. Later, in the face of numerous surtaxes that the warlords exacted from the peasants, the elite-led Red Spears fought against the state to protect their own interests and the interests of the peasants. Cheneaux (1971) also finds the Red Spears did not fight against gentry and landlords. In fact, in the Red Spear rebellion, the gentry-landlords mobilized peasants for the defense of their local domains, and at the same time, made certain that the peasants did not organize along class lines to challenge the gentry's wealth and power.

Under a power-concentrated structure, elites could punish and reward peasants effectively. That means elites could be much more oppressive than elites in a power-dispersed structure. The oppression could lead peasants to attack elites in retribution if the peasants faced difficulty in subsistence. This was clearly seen in the north China in the 1920s. Although tenancy rate was low during the Qing dynasty in the north China, according to Philip Huang (1985), the tenancy rate increased when cash crops became widespread in 1920s. Peasants in north China, then, not only depended more on landlords for land than in the previous period, but the credit elites provided to peasants to invest in cash crop farming or deal with natural disasters also increased the peasants' level of dependency. Thaxton (1983) finds that, traditionally landlords had tried to maintain a minimum subsistence level for the

peasants by offering necessary farm tools to tenants who then, in turn, shared crops with the landlords. But after 1920s, land tenure was contracted on a yearly basis instead of the usual 3 or 5 year basis and landlords often replaced the original tenants, once they had improved land productivity, and rented the land to the highest bidder in the second year. Landlords were no longer willing to share risks with tenants, and share cropping was replaced by fixed rent. After various droughts, flooding, increasing taxation by warlords, and the falling price of the cash crop in the 1930s' world recession, the livelihood in north China dropped significantly. This put peasants more at the mercy of the landlords. The landlords' oppression of peasants was clear in Thaxton's finding that "Droit du seigneur, the feudal landlord privilege of deflowering tenant bride, was revived in parts of the border region [between Shandong, Hebei, Henan, and Shanxi provinces], and tenants who openly decried it were driven from their villages" (1983: 84). The revolts against evil landlords was peasants' only resort to regain their basic level of subsistence. And it was in this region that the Chinese Communists first gained their foothold and developed their theory of peasant revolution.

Table 7.1 Four types of rebellion

	Power-dispersed structure	Power-concentrated structure
Not related to basic subsistence	Rent resistance in the Yangzi delta.	Lineage militia against local government in the Pear River delta. The Red Spear Society in the 1930s
Related to basic subsistence	The Nien rebellion in the mid-19th century.	The Communist-led peasant rebellion in the border region between Shandong, Hebei, Henan, and Shanxi provinces of north China in the 1930s and 1940s.

The four types of peasant rebellion (shown in Table 7.1) described above are based on the local power structure and whether there was subsistence

crisis. I agree with Eric Wolf (1969) that peasants are not revolutionaries by nature but try to maintain their traditional way of life. I also agree with James Scott (1976) that peasants revolt when their basic subsistence has been threatened. But I contend that, in addition to the question of subsistence, the power structure of a local community also greatly affects the form that peasant resistance takes. And it may be the power structure, rather than issue of subsistence, that is more related to the question of whether or not a peasant rebellion can grow into a revolution. It seems to me the power-concentrated structure is more conducive to revolution than is peasant rebellion born in the power-dispersed structure. The Chinese Revolution of 1911 was supported by gentry-led militia in attacking local Qing government. The Communist Revolution in 1949 sprang from the border region between Shandong, Hebei, Henan, and Shanxi provinces where elites had oppressed peasants to an unbearable degree. Whether this hypothesis is correct needs further study. .

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APPENDIX

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GLOSSARY OF CHINESE WORDS AND NAMES

<i>chiang-chin</i>	搶親	wife abduction
<i>chuchi she</i>	初級社	the elementary-stage cooperative
<i>da zhu</i>	大租	big rent (rent paid to topsoil owner by who lease the topsoil)
<i>gan-qing</i>	感情	personal feelings
<i>gaochi she</i>	高級社	the advanced-stage cooperative
<i>gong liang</i>	公糧	state grain
<i>guan-xi</i>	關係	personal relationship
<i>huzu zu</i>	互助組	the mutual-aid group
<i>jia-tong</i>	家堂	family altar
<i>jin</i>	斤	a weigh unit (one jin equals about 0.5 kilogram)
<i>jong lian da hu</i>	種糧大戶	professional grain producing household
<i>jui-si</i>	絕嗣	heir-less
<i>juren</i>	舉人	holder of the provincial degree in the civil service examination
<i>li-zi</i>	立自	designated inheritance
<i>lian-tou-gua</i>	兩頭掛	hanging on two posts
<i>lao ban</i>	老闆	owner of an enterprise
<i>laoye</i>	老爺	gods

<i>mu</i>	畝	unit of land (one mu is about 1/6 of an acre)
<i>qing-ming</i>	清明	a day for ancestor worship (around the fourth or fifth of April)
<i>qu</i>	區	sectors (an administrative unit)
<i>shi</i>	石	a weigh unit (one shi equals about 80 kilogram)
<i>shi fu</i>	師傅	a professional of a trade
<i>shizu</i>	實租	inelastic fixed rent
<i>su-jei-sou</i>	叔接嫂	taking older brother's widow
<i>Sunan model</i>	蘇南模式	a model of rural development based on collective units
<i>tiandi</i>	田底	sub-soil right in the one field two owners land system
<i>tianmian</i>	田面	topsoil right in the one field two owners land system
<i>Wenzhou model</i>	溫州模式	a model of rural development based on private enterprises
<i>wu-fu</i>	五服	the five grades of mourning dress
<i>wupo</i>	巫婆	witch
<i>xian qian kan</i>	向錢看	judging everything by money
<i>xiang</i>	鄉	township
<i>xingzheng cu</i>	行政村	administrative village
<i>xien</i>	縣	county
<i>xio zhu</i>	小租	small rent (rent paid by topsoil owner to sub-soil owner)
<i>yi-zhong</i>	義塚	charity graveyard
<i>yu</i>	圩	polder field

<i>zhuo-mui-shui</i>	做女婿	adopted son-in-law
<i>zi-jia-wu-li</i>	自家屋裡	members of same household
<i>zi-jia-zen</i>	自家人	members of same extended family
<i>zi-ju-zen</i>	自族人	members of same descent group
<i>ziran cu</i>	自然村	natural village (hamlet)
<i>zuan-fu-jin</i>	轉夫進	adopted husband

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