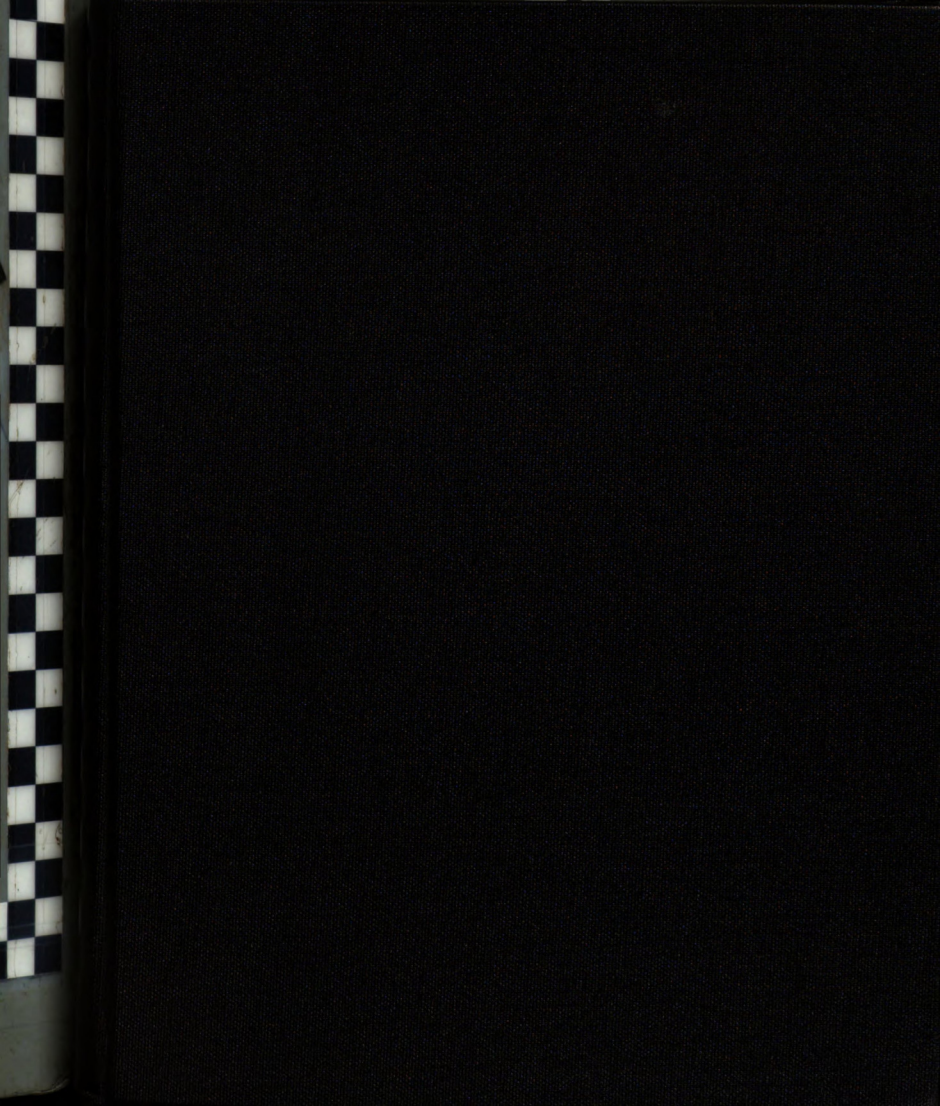




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MAKING POLITICAL CULTURE--THE CASE OF NANTONG, 1894-1930

By

Qin Shao

VOLUME I

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

MAKING POLITICAL CULTURE--THE CASE OF NANTONG, 1894-1930

BY

Qin Shao

Previous scholarship on state-society relationships in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has chiefly focused on social and institutional changes, and has often failed to appreciate fully either the multifaceted process through which local elites legitimated their authority or the enduring impact which the local self-government movement had on the history of modern China.

This dissertation adopts a mainly cultural approach to examine local self-government experience. Focusing on Nantong, a county in central China, and on the period from 1894 to 1930, this study explores the processes and methods involved in the making of a locally-centered political culture.

This study finds that although local self-government institutions were important to the establishment of elite power, the local political culture, which included new concepts, new symbols, new political instruments, and new rhetorical assumptions, was nevertheless essential in creating the image of elite authority at the expense of state power. The Nantong elite not only successfully developed a locally-oriented political, economic, and cultural system, but also

constantly searched for and invented new symbols and methods of publicity to shape and reinforce the rhetorical assumption that a purely self-governing county under the leadership of local elite could be and had been achieved regardless of the outside political situation. This political culture refashioned local politics, which was no longer practiced merely through vertical administrative lines but was redefined by social networks, mass media, spatial rearrangement, celebrity visitors, and many other new means. More importantly, the political culture, once formulated, became an ongoing force independent of institutional change and had enduring impact on subsequent history. This study suggests that local political culture, instead of institutions, was the true legacy of the local self-government movement, and that changes in state-society relationships of modern China should be viewed in light of this local-centered political culture.

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One

INTRODUCTION

The basic question this study asks is how, in the process of rapid change in state-society relationships in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a new local political culture was formulated to refashion local politics and endorse local elite authority at the expense of state power. This local political culture included new concepts, or existing concepts with new meanings, new symbols, new political instruments, and new rhetorical assumptions. The locus chosen for this study is Nantong, a county located between Shanghai and Nanjing, and the period of time under consideration is the thirty-odd years from 1894 to 1930.

1894 was a remarkable year for both China and Nantong. China was defeated in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, which evidenced the failure of the Self-Strengthening Movement and the hopelessness of the Qing government. Ironically, Zhang Jian, the driving force behind Nantong's extraordinary experiences in the following twenty-odd years, achieved his life-time dream of success in that year--he gained the jìnshì title, the highest in the examination system, at age forty-

two. However, he hesitated between continuing to serve the dynasty or building a realm of his own in Nantong, his home town. He eventually chose the latter course, though with reservations and setbacks. The local development in Nantong in the early twentieth century was thus partially rooted in the events which took place in 1894.

Zhang Jian died at age seventy-four in 1926, by which time the Nantong enterprises were declining. At the same time, the Guomindang (GMD--the Chinese Nationalist Party) was gaining control of Nantong, marking the end of one era and the beginning of another. This thirty-odd years, especially the period from 1894 to 1925 during which time the local political culture took shape, is the focus of this study.

The development of Nantong during this period was indeed nothing less than sensational. It had well designed and systematically planned public and social services. As a matter of fact, one could perhaps find in Nantong most social and public institutions existing in an American county today. For instance, Nantong established an almost universal educational system based on Western models, consisting of 370 primary schools, three colleges, six middle schools, two schools of special education, and four vocational schools. It had dozens of factories, producing cotton, oil, wine, flour, china, glass and many other goods. It also implemented hundreds of other projects, from utility and transportation companies to water

control projects, a library, a museum, a theater, parks, highways, hospitals, kindergartens, nursing homes, schools for nannies, a prostitutes' reform center, beggars' homes, and even environmental protection projects.

Behind these projects was a calculated and determined effort made by the local elites to establish Nantong as an independent local self-governing unit. The local-centered political culture the present study examines was bred in this process.

Scholarship

A study of Nantong's local political culture brings a new perspective to existing scholarship on the county and on Zhang Jian. Since the 1930s several biographies of Zhang Jian have been published in both mainland China and Taiwan, some of which are personal recollections by Zhang Jian's relatives, students, and friends; these works lack scholarly analysis (Zhang 1965 [1930]; Song 1963; Zhang 1986). Japanese historians have also done some research on Zhang Jian and Nantong, focusing either on Zhang's political position during the 1911 Revolution or on Nantong's economic development (Nakai 1976, 1983; Terahiro 1979; Hayashi 1981; Fujioka 1985).

Western scholarship on Zhang Jian and Nantong includes Samuel Chu's extended biography of Zhang Jian and the modern development of Nantong, and Marianne Bastid's study of

educational reform in Nantong. Both of these works were done in the 1960s (Chu 1965; Bastid 1988 [1968]). The most recent English work on Nantong is Kathy Walker's study of the political economy of Nantong cotton textiles (Walker 1986). Some of these works, such as the ones by Bastid and Walker, have touched upon the relationship between state and society, but none of them has either focused on the issue or examined it from the angle of local political culture. The present study therefore provides a new approach to the subject.

This study is also relevant to the topic of state-society relationships in late imperial and early Republican China, which has attracted much scholarly attention in recent years. Historians in the modern China field have focused on the patterns and roles of local elite activity, and on the relationship between state and society. The dominant approach has been social history, but the cultural aspects of Chinese local society have also begun to gain attention. For example, the "gentry," a social group central to local study, was initially defined as academic-degree holders and later as landowners. In this context, only material aspects were taken into consideration. Since the late 1970s, this term has been defined in a much broader sense which includes culture, lifestyle, public services, networks, local reputation and influence (Esherick & Rankin 1990).

Clearly, historians have begun to look beyond the social realm to the cultural domain. For instance, Prasenjit Duara introduced the concept of "cultural nexus" in his study of rural north China. He viewed the cultural nexus as essential to sustain traditional village life, and asserted that its collapse in the face of aggressive state penetration was responsible for the revolution of the 1940s (Duara 1988). Chinese popular culture has also attracted recent scholarly attention. Rituals, dramas, religions, folk tales, novels, social customs, and languages have all become legitimate research topics (Johnson 1985). The student protests of the 1980s have been studied in terms of political culture with a cultural emphasis (Wasserstrom & Perry 1992). My study of the political culture of local authority fits into this increasing scholarly interest in the cultural issues of Chinese society.

On the other hand, no work has yet adopted a mainly cultural approach to study the political culture of local society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This study therefore differentiates itself from some tendencies in the current scholarship on state-society relationships by focusing on political culture and by adopting a cultural approach. Much past research on this topic has emphasized material aspects of power, such as institutions, systems, organizations, and properties, which sometimes encounters difficulty in interpreting state-society relationships.

A case in point is the pattern of state-society relationships in modern China. Now most scholars agree that the state-society power balance gradually shifted in the latter's favor after the 1850s or so, and that this tendency continued until around the late 1920s, when the GMD began to bureaucratize local self-government organizations. However, scholars have differed about the direction of state-society relationships after the 1930s. By examining changes in the sub-county ward system and landownership, Philip Kuhn and Keith Schoppa concluded that the local elite problem was solved in the land reform of the 1950s (Kuhn 1976; Schoppa 1976). According to Kathryn Bernhardt's study, however, elite power had already eroded even before 1949 as a consequence of increased taxes from the state and lowered rent from the peasants (Bernhardt 1992). For Vivienne Shue, on the other hand, the post-revolutionary rural cadres as "China's latter-day local elites" firmly occupied the zones of local politics and limited central control of rural life after 1949 (Shue 1988, 80).

These studies give the impression that elite power only lay in institutions and properties, and that once concrete resources such as self-government organs, land, and income were gone, elite power consequently disappeared. The same assumption underlies an essay by Paul Cohen in which he established cycles of devolution and centralization of power which have repeated themselves in Chinese history in the past

century. According to Cohen, as far as the state-society relationship is concerned, nothing has changed in modern China (Cohen 1988).

Authority is by no means automatic. In most cases, especially in China, it is imposed. But institutionalized positions and properties are not the only forces capable of imposing power; cultures, ideas, and expectations all matter. We only need to mention the failure of President Yuan Shikai's and general Zhang Xun's attempts to restore the imperial system in the early Republic. These failures occurred partially because what they did was against the general public notion of political legitimacy. On the other hand, mental and cultural repertoires, once established, can sustain themselves independently from institutions.

In the case of elite power, the loss of local elites' organizations and material well-being does not necessarily mean the loss of cultural conceptions concerning local power and autonomy. By focusing on the development of a local political culture along with the establishment of elite domination in public service, local self-government institutions, and symbolic practice, the present study examines from a different angle the change in state-society relationships and its implications for the history of modern China.

Theme

The major theme of this study is the making of a local political culture--including concepts, symbols, assumptions, and political instruments--which contributed to the establishment of the political legitimacy and authority for local elites and to change in the practice of local politics. It examines elite activities in the arenas of public service, political movements, and symbolic practices to explore how, with the formulation of a locally-centered political culture, state authority was undermined and local communities such as Nantong tried to form independent identities.

Chinese society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provided favorable conditions for the development of such a locally-centered political culture. Of course, tensions between central government and local society had always existed in China, and Chinese history had developed through a mixture of integration and disintegration. Generally speaking, the main central-local issue in traditional China concerned the power balance between the state and local society, with the state typically holding the initiative except during times of dynastic decline. But even during periods of disintegration and peasant rebellion, the concept of a centralized imperial state was never threatened. Every time a dynasty was swept away, the age-old confidence that another dynasty would be built up on the ruins of the old

always restored the hope for a central state. What warriors fought for in periods of disintegration was nothing but central control.

The situation in the late nineteenth century, however, was very different. After the Taiping turmoil of the 1850s, state control gradually yielded to local initiatives (Wakeman & Grant 1976; Kuhn 1980; Rankin 1986; Esherick & Rankin 1990). In the meantime, China was threatened as never before by foreign forces which had not only overwhelming military strength, but also cultural advantage. Most important of all, what was at stake was not just the Manchu dynasty, but the entire imperial system, including the civil examination system. Consequently, Chinese civilization as a whole was questioned.

China was desperate at the crises and crying for change. The New Policies (Xinzheng) and especially the constitutional reform promulgated by the Qing court in its last decade of rule were supposed to help solve some of the problems and build a strong state. Unfortunately, the results of the reform were the opposite of what was officially intended. With the institutionalization of local self-government in the constitutional movement, local elites further expanded their influence and advanced their interests, while the central state hopelessly deteriorated.

Under these circumstances, state-society relationships and their concepts changed dramatically. There was an outward or upward extension of elite activism to the national level, as in the case of Zhejiang province (Rankin 1986). At the same time, elite power in some places expanded downward to focus on local affairs and on the quest for local autonomy, attempting to establish a solid political and social basis for local development.

This tendency prevailed after the 1911 Revolution. The frequent rotation of central administration and the political instability in the early years of the Republic period shattered the hope for a central government, encouraging the development of local, especially military, forces. As McCord explains, warlordism did not emerge merely because of a power vacuum left by the collapse of the Qing dynasty, but rather because of the failure of civil politics. The main problem during that period was a "crisis of authority"--the difficulty of defining which authority was legitimate (McCord 1993, 10, 310). As a result of the crisis, federalist ideas which had been advocated since the late nineteenth century became widely used in the early 1920s to reinforce provincial autonomy and local particularism. Slogans which reflected federalist ideas, such as "Suren zhisu" (Jiangsu people govern Jiangsu) and "Zheren zhizhe" (Zhejiang people govern Zhejiang), enjoyed currency. The federalist movement was doubtless rooted in the

crisis of central authority (Chesneaux 1969, 96-105; Waldon 1990; 1991; McCord 1993).

Local elites, however, did not just wait for the crisis of political legitimacy at the central level to vanish, or for themselves to be victimized by warlord conflict. On the contrary, when a centralized state appeared to be no longer possible, as seemed to be the case in the early years of the current century, local elites utilized the resources they had gained in the previous decades to secure a stronghold of their own--they established themselves as local authorities and created a political culture to legitimate their dominant position. In doing so, the crisis of central authority for them became not only distant and insignificant, but also something of which to take advantage.

It was under these circumstances--the decline and collapse of the Qing dynasty and the chaotic beginning of the Republic--that the local political culture the present study examines took distinct shape. However, it did not develop evenly throughout China. Rather, it was more obvious in some regions--such as Nantong--than in others, since the impact of national events on local society and local society itself varied from one place to another.

Generally speaking, commercially developed and politically active regions such as the Yangzi delta were more likely to form a local political culture challenging state authority. As

Rankin has pointed out, it was recognized in "key parts of China" that elite organizational capacity had become enlarged, that elites had become "politicized, nationally conscious, and distrustful of government," and that the failings of government had "fostered the view that social elites could do a better job of running local affairs harmoniously" (1986, 302, 303).

The fact that no scholarly work has yet explored a local political culture in a particular locality during this period does not mean that such a political culture did not also exist in areas other than Nantong, especially within the Yangzi delta. Fuller generalization of regional patterns in the development of local political culture will require more micro-level studies of this topic in other areas of China. But the Nantong case can at least shed some light on the conditions under which a local political culture was likely to take shape within the specific environment of early twentieth century China.

Geographically, Nantong was close enough to the treaty ports of Shanghai and Nanjing to have easy access to current information and to take advantage of new developments; but it was also isolated enough to be spared from much of the destruction and interference brought by outside forces. The relative isolation and small size of the area were advantages allowing local elites to govern without encountering many

competitors and difficulties. Also Nantong was one of the first localities in China outside the treaty ports to establish modern industry, most notably the Dasheng Cotton Mill, in the late nineteenth century. The cotton mill and other local industrial undertakings financially enabled elites to develop the area on an unprecedented scale. What Nantong built in this period was not just some piecemeal projects, but a full range of social, economic, and cultural programs which constituted a solid basis for the elites to establish Nantong as their own realm.

Nantong also had Zhang Jian, a forceful person and calculating politician, who was convinced that local self-government was the hope for China and especially for Nantong, and who was determined to build in Nantong a model of such local self-governing units. Zhang Jian's network of contacts allowed him to reach the highest level of officials and a broad range of people who had power and influence. Yet he never lost touch with his Nantong base and always considered it his priority. In the constitutional movement, Zhang Jian moved both upward to promote reform at provincial and national levels and downward to take the opportunity to create more programs in Nantong. At the same time, there were other motivated local elites in Nantong who supported and worked with Zhang Jian to implement local programs. By the time of the 1911 Revolution, the local base in Nantong was strong

enough to be able to continue to expand through the next uncertain decade, during which time the locally-centered political culture also continued to evolve.

The relatively small size and isolated setting, the development of modern industry, and strong elite personalities were some factors involved in the development of Nantong's local political culture. But what were the more concrete contents of the local political culture? The Nantong case shows that one of the constituent parts of the political culture was the concept of independent local capability in providing public service. Chinese gentry had traditionally been active in public service, but in traditional China, public service was in fact a government domain and the magistrates were most responsible for initiating and administering public works. The function of gentry in this regard was to assist local officials, and public service was therefore an intermediate arena where the state and society met (Chang 1955; Hsiao 1960; Chu 1962; Watt 1972).

The traditional notion of public service changed in the period under consideration. Public service became an arena where state and society conflicted and diverged. The decline of the Qing left public works, including large water projects, in the hands of local elites. Moreover, in the case of Nantong, state assistance for local projects was hardly ever

available, and the elites had to take full responsibility for local service.

Scholars have studied how elite involvement in public service contributed to the expansion of elite power (Rankin 1986). What I wish to emphasize is the cultural implication of elite public functions, which created the belief in independent local elite capability without state assistance. In fact, Nantong elites highlighted their capacity by attacking the state for its inability to take care of local needs. In doing so, the elites not only revealed government failure in public service, but delegitimated state authority as a whole. On the other hand, what they gained was not only public recognition for their capability, but also the legitimate power to control the arena of public service without state interference. The emphasis on independent elite capability in public service was therefore a step toward local autonomy.

Local autonomy was indeed the key concept in the local political culture. Like the term local self-government, "local autonomy" can be an apolitical term, simply meaning local people govern local affairs, as in the Japanese model of local self-government (Gluck 1985, 192-200). Also, the term does not necessarily imply local confrontation with or separation from the central state. In fact, local autonomy can be a basis for a strong state. In Nantong the local self-government movement started in 1907 within the constitutional rhetoric--as an

attempt to establish local self-government as the basis for a constitutional government. Inspired by the Japanese model of local self-government, Zhang Jian developed the concept of "village-ism" (cunluo zhuyi) to emphasize that a strong nation depended on reforming the basic local units: families, villages, and counties.

But the concept of village-ism for Zhang Jian had a dual capability: it was a basis for local government and a strong nation under normal circumstances, but could become the conceptual foundation for a politically, economically, and culturally autonomous domain in times of political instability. Before 1911, the former aspect of village-ism was emphasized, while after that the latter aspect prevailed. While emphasizing "pure local self-governing" (chuncui zizhi), local elites implemented many programs to prepare Nantong to function as an autonomous unit. With the unfolding of warlordism in the mid-1910s, the concept of village-ism began to stress separating Nantong from the nation as a whole in order to protect the county from wars. The concept of local autonomy at this stage was much like separatism.

In order to maintain local autonomy and preserve the established local base, Nantong elites advertised the achievements of local self-government and created the image of a distinctly advanced Nantong under the local elite leadership. The belief in the achievements of local self-government,

closely linked with the concept of local autonomy, was therefore another constituent of the local political culture. This belief was constructed largely through symbolic practice and publicity. For instance, the appearance of Nantong city symbolized the new Nantong: new buildings, new roads, new markets, parks, and schools, which transformed the old Nantong into a modern city.

Nantong in the late 1910s and early 1920s gained considerable fame nationwide. It was labeled a "model county" in the 1920s. This "model county" was not only discussed in national elementary school textbooks and admired by the Chinese, but also attracted Japanese investors and American celebrities like John Dewey. In fact, both Chinese and foreign visitors came to Nantong on a daily basis beginning in the late 1910s. Celebrities, including professors, educators, and master actors, frequented Nantong, and national conferences were also held there. All of these activities brought media attention to the region and turned it into a theater where performance and effect were the main concerns. The purpose of the performance was to reinforce the concept of local self-government.

Along with the evolution of these concepts in arenas of public service, political movements, and symbolic practice, local politics was refashioned by new political means and instruments, new symbols, and new assumptions; these involved language, meetings, speeches, mass media, sporting events,

literature exchanges, school songs, banquets, birthday and other celebrations, ritual ceremonies, spatial engineering, changing concepts of time, social networks, institutions, organizations, and many other local events. They were all defining elements of the local political culture and they changed the way in which local politics was practiced.

For instance, language was used as an instrument to form a critical discourse which undermined state legitimacy and created a reality in which local elites were superior to the state in terms of moral standing and practical capability. Local politics was practiced through elite public institutions and political organizations. It was also shaped by mass media. Publishing houses, newspapers, books and other printed products served political interests by manipulating public opinion and creating positive images of the elites and their local undertakings.

Big gatherings of celebrities, visitors, public lectures and presentations, celebration of local festival-like events, new arrangements of time and space, theaters, advanced school systems, and the label "model county" became new symbols of Nantong. The concept of village-ism, on the other hand, represented a new rhetorical and political assumption that pure local self-governing, or local autonomy, could be achieved and could survive even within the destructive environment of warlordism, and that central government was

indeed not needed. Some elements of local political culture, such as social networks, were not new products of the time, but with the development of mass education and modern transportation and communication facilities, elite networks were dramatically expanded and their impact on local politics became more profound.

The elements mentioned above include those in social and political realms, such as networks and institutions, but most of them belong to the cultural domain. Of course, the term "culture" in this context no longer merely covers areas of art, literature, and music, but broadly refers to structures of meaning which define human experience, as Clifford Geertz held:

Culture, here, is not cults and customs, but the structures of meaning through which men give shape to their experience; and politics is not coups and constitutions, but one of the principal arenas in which such structures publicly unfold. The two being thus reframed, determining the connection between them becomes a practicable enterprise (1973, 312).

Here Geertz not only defines the concept of culture, but also the relationship between culture and politics; the two reframe and define each other. This relationship between culture and politics for Geertz is universal and the "enterprise" therefore can be studied in any "complexly organized society" (Geertz 1983, 144, 124). The Nantong experience provide a concrete case in which Geertz's insight is proved,

because Nantong local elites indeed defined their authority and advanced their claims within a cultural frame.

Therefore, while exploring the central-local relationship as it was conceived in a relatively different political culture formulated in the period under consideration, this study pays special attention to the roles cultural practices played in the change of local political culture and practice. By identifying changes in political culture, this study also tries to redefine the concept of change in modern Chinese history; it argues both that it is possible for the political culture to change while the social and economic structures remain intact, and also that it is possible for the changes in political culture to persist after the institutions associated with the changes in culture have disappeared. As Hunt's study of the French Revolution has proved, the social, political, and economic structure of French society remained the same after the Revolution, but the new political culture marked by concepts such as the republic and equality which developed in the Revolution had not only sustained itself but changed Western society forever (Hunt 1984). In light of this, the present study challenges the static approaches toward Chinese history shared by some scholars.

Approach

By considering political culture the making of concepts and ideas of political legitimacy and authority, this study employs a "neoculturalist perspective" (Wasserstrom & Perry 1992, 4), which is different from the older "political culture" approach used by political scientists Gabriel A. Almond, Sidney Verba, and Lucian W. Pye in the 1950s and 1960s (Almond & Verba 1965; Pye & Verba 1965). Using modernization theories, these political scientists integrated psychology and sociology with political science to emphasize political socialization and secularization. Political culture for them meant a set of beliefs, such as trust and distrust, hierarchy and equality, liberty and its converse coercion, and level of loyalty and commitment. Moreover, they felt these beliefs were shaped by social conditions and psychological elements and expressed by symbols, such as words.

The neoculturalist perspective differentiates itself from this traditional approach in three respects. First, it emphasizes the processes in and means by which the meanings of political cultures are constructed instead of treating them merely as a set of fixed notions. Second, the new approach pays a great deal of attention to language, ritual, and symbolism of all sorts. Third, "words" are conceived of as not just expressing or reflecting changes, but as themselves creating social changes and also changing themselves. To put

it in another way, the relationship between political culture and social structure is not that the latter determines the former, but that they are intertwined, "with no 'above' and 'below'" (Hunt 1984, 13). This is to say that in my study cultural aspects are not treated as secondary, but are given an importance equal to that given to social context.

I wish to clarify at the outset that I am not completely submerged in the current waves of the "linguistic turn" or "semiotic challenge" (Spiegel 1990, 59-60). I doubt whether any social changes or concepts can be understood only within language. I question a bit the idea that no reality exists outside language, and that social and political changes are always linguistically constituted, as Keith M. Baker, an advocate of the linguistic approach toward political culture, leads us to believe (Baker 1990, 8-9). Baker's approach, as Habermas once implied, embodies "the danger of an over-culturalized view of history" (Calhoun 1993, 465). Language, for example, has created "white" and "black" to label the colors we know as "white" and "black," and the color we now know as white could have been called black or red. But no matter how arbitrary a language is, it does not create the differences between the two colors as they exist. Indeed, linguistic determinism can be as damaging and dysfunctional as economic determinism when applied to the historical field.

It is not my intention, therefore, to fall into linguistic formalism. Nevertheless I find that some concepts and methodologies from linguists, cultural historians and anthropologists are very useful. The appreciation of symbolic power and rejection of causal explanations of history are absorbed in my study. Lynn Hunt's writing on the political culture of the French Revolution is frequently referred to in this work (Hunt 1984). The studies of symbolic power by Clifford Geertz, David Kertzer, Pierre Bourdieu, and Mona Ozouf are highly relevant to the analysis of symbolic practices in Nantong, such as festivals, ceremonies, conferences, celebrity visitors, public lectures, spatial engineering, and change in conceptions of time (Geertz 1973, 1983, Kertzer 1988; Bourdieu 1991, Ozouf 1988).

In addition, I take into consideration economic factors such as developments of towns and commerce, social phenomena such as social networks, and historical events such as the constitutional movement. Instead of asking which side, culture or economy, determines the other, I ask how they condition and shape each other and interweave with each other to constitute a reality as it is perceived. As a matter of fact, the age-old epistemological puzzle about the relationship between the object and subject will not be solved by establishing one side as predominant. It is the juncture, the constant dialogue

between the two, as Roger Chartier recognizes, which should be the focus of cultural history (Chartier 1988, 13).

The very core, or, to use Peter Burke's words, the "philosophical foundation" of cultural history, is cultural relativism--the idea that "reality is socially and culturally constituted" (Burke 1992, 3). History therefore is understood as an endless process of meaning construction and production. Instead of searching for objective facts in history, as in the Rankean tradition, historians now are inclined to unveil the process in and means by which certain perceptions and reality, or the "truth," to use Foucault's favorite term, are put together (Bernauer & Rasmussen 1991). The main question asked in a cultural study is "how it happened," a characteristically Foucaultian question, not "what" or "why," because "what" often directs our attention to consequences and "why" often leads to a causal explanation, while both so-called causes and results are only parts of a process. The tremendous recent interest historians and anthropologists have shown in subjects such as the history of mentality, language, and symbolism and the convergence between the two disciplines all indicate this new trend.

Obviously, cultural history takes cultural as well as social factors into consideration in the examination of reality construction. Therefore, when defining political culture as the focus of this work, I do not exclude economic

and social elements when they appear to be relevant. By the same token, when claiming to employ a cultural approach in the study, I absorb some analytical methods from social and economic approaches as well. This study examines how the interaction of various factors contributed to the making of a local political culture which legitimated elite power in Nantong.

The Theory of the Public Sphere

The other important theoretical issue with which this work is concerned is the concept of the public sphere, since it studies the local political culture in Nantong partially through the examination of elite activities in the public domain.

The concept of public sphere, developed by Jurgen Habermas, was based on early modern European experience. According to Habermas, the genesis of the European public sphere lay in the mercantilist phase of capitalism and the new commercial relationships which had come with it since the thirteenth century. He pointed out that with the development of towns and local markets and especially long-distance trade, which appeared first in the northern Italian city-states and then spread to western and northern Europe, a network of horizontal economic dependencies beyond the vertical relationships of administrative domination was formed. The mutual

dependence and shared interest in these economic activities connected the private people together and formed a "public"--a new sphere of civil society. A new bourgeois stratum arose in the process and became the central force in the public sphere, which preferred private initiative while the state attempted to control commercial-entrepreneurial activity through regulation. Therefore, as Habermas described, there was a tension between the state and the public sphere. The tension led the public to criticize and oppose the state based on reason through public institutions such as the salons, coffee houses, societies, and the press, which served as open forums for public discussion and participation (Habermas 1993, 14-20).

For Habermas, the press was another important element of the early capitalist commercial system and the European public sphere. Originating from handwritten newsletters in the mid-1600s, the press provided commercial and residual information about items such as prices, taxes, harvests, murders, and thunderstorms. While serving the needs of merchants and their long-distance trade, "the news itself became a commodity"--writers started to make profits by reporting and distributing news (Habermas 1993, 20-21). The last third of the seventeenth century, Habermas said, witnessed the beginning of public criticism of the authorities in journals and periodicals, which had first been devoted to literary and cultural criti-

cism. "Critical" for Habermas meant not only that the public directed their thought against the authorities, but also that it "provoked the critical judgement of a public making use of its reason" (Habermas 1993, 24). In the first half of the eighteenth century, Habermas believed that "in the guise of the so-called learned article, critical reasoning made its way into the daily press" (Habermas 1993, 25).

Habermas highly regarded the functions of this model of media. For him the periodical press at this stage provided a forum for open and free debates on public issues, served as an instrument for the public to contest state interference, forged a critical-rational-oriented public, and legitimated the public sphere as an authority before and through public opinion. All of these elements were important criteria of Habermas's model of the public sphere in early modern Europe. He argued that by stimulating critical debate the periodical press gradually dissolved the relationship between the state and society, and most important of all, had a transformative impact on the institutional form of modern states. For instance, freedom of expression was constitutionally guaranteed and the political participation of the public sphere was written in law (Thompson 1993, 177).

To summarize the above discussion, we need to quote Habermas's basic definition of the public sphere:

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor (1993, 27).

The concept of public sphere for Habermas thus consists of four basic related elements: the coming together of private people (not private people of any kind, but educated and propertied elites); their shared economic interest and their need to defend it; tension and conflict between the state and the public; and public participation in the form of open and free discussions in public institutions and press.

Does this theory bear any relevance to Chinese history in general and state-society relationships in particular? This has been a much-debated yet unresolved question in the field of modern China in recent years. The main problem at issue is whether or not Habermas's concept of public sphere is applicable to the China field. Those who doubt it emphasize that the theory was strictly based on early modern Western European experiences; that the public sphere enjoyed political autonomy and functioned as political opposition to the state; and that it went hand into hand with the development of a civil society. The so-called Chinese public sphere, they argue, depended on the state and had no political autonomy. In addition, they point out, the civil society and bourgeois class did not emerge in China. They thus see no usefulness for

this term in the study of China other than causing confusion (Huang 1993; Wakeman 1993).

Other scholars support the use of the term. Some of them stress the similarity between the Chinese term gong and the Western term "public" (Rowe 1990; Rankin 1990, 1993). They also pay close attention to elite public management and its political impact on local as well as national affairs (Rowe 1990; Rankin 1990, 1993; Strand 1990). Others equate Chinese history with the Western experience in terms of public sphere and civil society through reinterpretation of these concepts. For example, Richard Madsen tries to define the concept of public sphere broadly as "the rise and fall of democracy" (1993, 185). And for Heath Chamberlain, civil society is not necessarily independent of and against the state. He suggests that "the prospects for civil society in China are not entirely bleak" (1993, 213).

The larger question is whether any theory based on Western phenomena, and therefore not necessarily universal, can be applied to the study of non-Western experience. If the answer is no, we will encounter the problem Tonggi Lin raised in questioning Paul Cohen's China-centered approach, which is, the necessity of adopting only "culture-specific" and "custom-made" internal criteria to analyze Chinese phenomena (Lin 1986). We will then at once face the difficulty of understanding Chinese affairs in the context of world history. This

approach will also contradict the everyday practice of historical study. Marxism and Weber's theories, for instance, were based on Western experiences, but they have long been used by historians as well as scholars in other disciplines to characterize non-Western societies.

In light of this, it seems to be pointless to argue whether the theory should be applied to the China field. The question we should ask is rather how to treat and use the theory. Current scholarly readings in the China field on the concept of the public sphere suffer from over-emphasizing the public sphere as a full-blown, ready-made phenomenon, and overlooking its making, the processes, or, to use Habermas's term, "the basic blueprint" and the stages it went through (1993, 27).

For Habermas, the development of commodity exchange and social labor, the tension-charged field of state-society relations, the political self-understanding of the bourgeois class, and the process through which culture became a commodity, were all important elements in the making of the public sphere (1993, 29-30). When private people first gathered together to use their reason to discuss public issues in Germany in the early eighteenth century, according to Habermas, their activities existed, for instance, "largely behind closed doors" (1993, 35).

In other words, the public sphere in its early stage was formed in secret for the sake of self-protection from still-strong state forces. At this stage, the public sphere was internal and the use of reason was veiled and therefore revealed indirectly. Only gradually did it win out "against state-governed publicity" and become an external phenomenon (1993, 35). To apply Habermas's concept to Chinese history, we need to treat the public sphere as a process and identify its developmental stages.

We should also take a critical approach with regard to Habermas's theory instead of treating it as a fixed dogma. This is because, for one thing, while historians in the field of modern China argue whether Habermas's theory can be applied to Chinese history, scholars in other fields have started to reinvestigate and criticize Habermas's model itself. While recognizing the significant impact of Habermas's theory in understanding modern Western history and current developments in the Western world, scholars have questioned whether his model of public sphere was an idealized historical novelty, how the bourgeois public sphere was related to other social domains, whether there existed a printing culture different from what Habermas described, what women's roles were in the public sphere, and so forth (Calhoun 1993; Thompson 1993). This on-going debate on the issue should caution us against taking the theory as an absolute dogma.

For another thing, no theory should be treated as a dogma; theoretical frameworks should only be used as guidelines. Theories which are based on concrete historical circumstances contain certain specific features and elements. But at the same time, they all have some degree of flexibility and openness, and they can be interpreted, modified and developed in practice. In other words, any body of theory is unfinished and is developing, along with the development of human thinking and practices.

The present study takes a critical approach to test and explore Habermas's concept of the public sphere in the concrete setting of Nantong. It examines which aspects of this theory fit and which aspects do not fit developments in Nantong. In doing so, it is not necessary either to universalize Habermas's model or to Westernize Chinese experiences. By acknowledging the differences and similarities between the two, we can better understand the uniqueness of Chinese history and also enrich Habermas's theory.

At the same time, this study pays close attention to the making of the public sphere to explore the extent to which a public sphere did nor did not exist. For instance, Nantong in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did witness the coming together of local elites and their shared economic interest, which was often in conflict with that of the state. Does this mean there existed a public sphere similar to what

Habermas has described? On the other hand, the free press and salon-like public institutions were not marked features in Nantong serving as open forums for public discussion. Does this necessarily mean Nantong lacked public participation and critical discourse challenging state authority? These questions will be examined in the following chapters.

Chapter Two begins with an overview of Nantong, including the setting, the history and people, and economic and cultural changes during the period under consideration. The next chapter introduces the reader both to the changing social structure and roles of Nantong's late imperial-early Republican elites, and in particular to the life and family circumstances of Zhang Jian. The fourth and fifth chapters examine the changing notion of elite public service by comparing the traditional pattern of gentry public functions with the pattern of elite local service in the early twentieth century. They emphasize the making of the concept of independent local elite capability in contrast to the inability of the state, and public service as an active arena of local politics. Chapter Six takes the reader to the political domain: the development of the local self-government and constitutional movements in relation to the formulation of the concept of local autonomy and its changing direction. Chapter Seven explores the symbolic world of Nantong and how symbolic practice and publicity contributed to the maintenance of local

autonomy by advertising the success of local self-government in Nantong. An epilogue then sketches changes in the locality during the period from 1925 to 1930, since while this study covers the period from 1894 to 1930, the emphasis is nevertheless put on the period from 1894 to the mid-1920s, during which period the local political culture developed.

Two

NANTONG: AN OVERVIEW

This chapter introduces the general situation in Nantong. After a brief account of the setting, the history and people, it focuses on the modern institutions and services presented in Nantong, including factories, transportation and communication facilities, Western-style schools, and other public and social projects. The description indicates the degree of economic and social change the area had experienced during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and also provides background information useful in understanding the events detailed in the following chapters.

The Setting

Nantong is located on the north bank of the Yangzi near the river mouth, in the Yangzi alluvial delta. "Tong" literally means "open" or "through," a term which suggests the geographical features of this region. On its northeastern side, Nantong is connected with Liaodong, Korea and Japan across the Yellow Sea. The Yangzi River on the southwest provides access to Jiangnan, Huguang, Sichuan and the upper-Yangzi region. And the Grand Canal serves as a linkage between

Nantong and Shandong, Hebei and China's central plains. The principal outlets in the region are waterways. Over time the water-surrounded setting has brought both obstacles and advantages to the development of Nantong. Today, a 128-kilometer water route stretches between Nantong and Shanghai, the largest city of China, and a 264-kilometer waterway between Nantong and Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu province. Nantong's landscape also features five hills on the riverbank, among which Junshan (Army Hill) and Langshan (Wolf Hill) are most notable.

The History and People

The city of Nantong was developed from a patch of sandbar around the river mouth in approximately the fifth century, at which time it was named Hudouzhou. During the Tang dynasty, Hudouzhou was a salt-field and the home of exiled criminals who became salt makers. This little marsh in the early Tang was incorporated into the Changzhou area, which was governed by Jiangnan's Zhejiang West Dao. In the late Tang, Hudouzhou merged with the land on the north bank of the river and was named Jinghai. An administrative unit known as Jinghai Duzhenshi (Military Commission) was set up and the position was passed on within a family surnamed Yao in the following half century of disunity and warfare. The area was relatively peaceful compared to the constant warfare in the north, which destroyed the traditional economic center of China, and

eventually led to its permanent re-creation in the south. Salt works and agriculture developed and the city wall of Jinghai was built during this period.

In 958 the Latter Zhou Dynasty's army from the north occupied Jinghai and set up a formal administrative division, Tong-zhou--Tong prefecture--with Jinghai and Haimen as two subordinate counties. Jinghai as the prefectural capital was expanded. During the Song dynasty, Tongzhou was under the command of the Huainan Route (lu). In 1023 Tongzhou was renamed Chongchuan, because the name of the Empress' father happened to be tong and the use of this word therefore became a taboo. The famous resistance leader of the Southern Song, Yue Fei, once was the Tong-Tai regional general and organized an army to fight the Jin invaders. In the Yuan dynasty, Tongzhou belonged to Yangzhou Route, and to Yangzhou prefecture in the Ming.

The 277 years of the Ming dynasty was an important stage in Nantong history. Economically, cotton--the major and most well-known product of the region--and family cotton mills developed, and more towns came to exist. Politically, native scholars became high-ranking officials in the central government through the civil examination system. Culturally, wars during the late Yuan and early Ming pushed many people out of their homes south of the river. With the Yangzi as natural protection, those people resettled in the plains north of the

river for the sake of safety, bringing along with them the sophistication of Jiangnan culture.

In 1725, Tongzhou was raised to the administrative level of a zhili prefecture--directly under the command of Jiangsu Provincial Commission (Jiangsu buzheng shisi)--with two subordinate counties of Rugao and Taixing. After the 1911 Revolution, when the prefecture structure was abolished, Tongzhou became Nantong county and remained so into the 1930s (Su 1985, 2-28). This study of Nantong often touches on developments in Rugao, Haimen, and Taixing counties, especially in the period prior to 1912, since they had shared similar experiences. Together these four counties are referred to as the Nantong region.

Nantong county reported a population of 1,286,321 in 1909 (Fan 1922, 1. 14). Although social customs varied due to different geographical conditions, in general there were three types of people. Those who lived south of Huai river were called "sand people" (shamin), those living by the sea "coastal people" (haimin), and those living along the river "old bank people" (laoanmin). The old bank people, mainly peasants, were reputed to be honest and good at homemaking. They were easily satisfied but also short-sighted. Suffering from and struggling with the ever-present threat of floods and land erosion was part of their way of life. The sand people, making a living on the sea and river, were very violent and aggressive. They were said often to have fought and sued each

other for years until all their properties were lost, but to have had no regrets whatsoever. The coastal people were rich and self-sufficient because of the salt-making and fishing businesses. They were thought of as arrogant and closed-minded, for most of them never had to leave their boats in their entire lives (Fan 1922, 1. 10). All three types of people were by no means enterprising. Remote from political and cultural centers and isolated by the Yangzi, Nantong, except for its high quality of cotton, was otherwise obscure, and remained so until the late nineteenth century, specifically in 1894, which is when this investigation begins.

The Disadvantages of the Jiangbei Economy

In contrast to the economically prosperous and culturally sophisticated Jiangnan, Jiangbei (the region of Jiangsu Province north of the Yangzi River), where Nantong is located, has been portrayed as a poverty-stricken region since the nineteenth century. Honig points out two related events in the middle of the nineteenth century which contributed to the decline of Jiangbei:

First, the Grand Canal was replaced by sea transport, particularly for the shipment of grain from southern to northern China. Coastal ships, first used in the 1820s when Yellow River silting severely impeded the passage of boats through the Canal, became the major means of tribute grain transport in the 1840s....This meant that certain cities and towns in Subei lost their importance as transportation and commercial centers. It also meant that the government paid less attention to maintaining and repairing the dikes on waterways connecting with the Grand Canal, thereby leaving

parts of Subei vulnerable to unprecedented numbers of floods and natural disasters. ...Second, in 1853, the Yellow River shifted course: Rather than flowing into Hongze Lake and then across Subei to sea, it now ran northeast from Kaifeng and then crossing Shandong. The Hui river subsequently emptied into Hongze Lake with no further outlet, thereby becoming a source of treacherous flooding in Subei. From the mid-nineteenth century on, cycles of floods, famine, and poverty characterized large portions of Subei (Honig 1989, 254)

Such was the general situation of Jiangbei. Flooding was the main factor responsible for Jiangbei's poverty and instability even well before the nineteenth century. Lihe Zhen, for example, was a major town in Tongzhou from the late Tang dynasty to the late seventeenth century. It was a commercial center with several hundred residents. A big granary, a guard station, and several temples built in the Ming indicated the weight this town carried in local affairs. But in 1696 a terrible flood destroyed Lihe Zhen. An important town with eight hundred years of history thus became history itself (Cang 1983, 11-12). The Haimen county seat moved five times from the Yuan to Qing to escape the floods. In the process, the county map was dramatically redrawn. After another attack of flooding in the middle of the sixteenth century, seven li (each li included one hundred ten households) were transferred from Tongzhou to Haimen to keep it valid as a county-level administrative site. All the efforts to maintain Haimen as a county, however, were washed away in the two floods of 1691 and 1696. The county-level administration was finally abolished and Haimen became a xiang (village) (Si 1983, 3-4).

In the constant yet losing battles with the river, Jiangbei came to obtain a reputation as a producer of beggars. During the flood seasons thousands of homeless people in Jiangbei migrated elsewhere, especially to cities and towns in Jiangnan, carrying the image of Jiangbei's poverty and inferiority wherever they went. This process of emigration partially contributed to the formation of a lasting prejudice against Jiangbei people even in contemporary Shanghai and other Jiangnan cities (Faure 1976; Fei 1986; Honig 1989; Finnane 1993b). Frequent floods and loss of population indeed posed difficulties for economic development in Jiangbei. Rugao county, for example, still had no manufacturing base and modern banking system in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Commercial activities were underdeveloped, and the transportation and communication facilities in Rugao were also poor (Barkan 1983, 42-44, 46-50, 52).

Nantong Cotton

The Jiangbei economy as an entirety, however, was not completely bleak. The area along the north bank of the Yangzi was in general more developed than that closer to the Huai. Cotton was the most important product of the area, and was used for household handicraft production of cloth, which became the main traditional product in Taixing, Taxian, Nantong, Rugao, Dongtai and Qidong. Of all these areas, Nantong stood out as the most prominent from the early Qing,

and certainly more so after the 1890s, a fact which has caught scholarly attention. Huang, for instance, considers Nantong to have been one of the three major cities in the Yangzi delta (the other two were Shanghai and Wuxi); around the three cities the region's three economic regions were formed (1990, 119). According to Walker, the reasons she chose Nantong as the locus for her study of political economy were: Nantong became one of the first localities in China outside the treaty ports to establish modern industry; it emerged as one of China's major centers of rural cotton handicraft production; and it became a leading area of commercialized cotton farming (1986, 2). Finnane mentions Tongzhou as an exception in underdeveloped Jiangbei: "In Tongzhou...cotton and indigo were being produced for export during the eighteenth century and corresponding amounts of grain were being imported, very much as was the case across the river" (1993a, 125).¹ When Barkan did her research on Rugao, she frequently compared it with its "more influential neighbor" Nantong, and referred to Nantong as "the region's most important metropolis after Shanghai" (1983 13, 40). In her study of Subei's impoverishment and Shanghai people's prejudice against Subei people, Honig notices that "only the city of Nantong could boast a significant number of factory workers" (1989, 254).

¹ Caught up in Michael Hechter's theory of internal colonialism, Finnane's other article on Jiangbei's economic and political peripheralization in the late imperial period is suggestive, but arguable, because it focused on Yangzhou and salt trade only (Finnane 1993b, 211-234).

What was unique about Nantong was above all its famous cotton, which had such a great impact on Nantong's history that no study on Nantong could neglect it (Chu 1965, 17; Zhang 1986, 51; Bastid 1988, 29; Walker 1986, 1993: 355; Finnane 1993, 125). In the Report of Investigation into the Actual Situation of Villages in Nantong County of Jiangsu Province written by the Shanghai Research Bureau of the South Manchurian Railway, the first sentence under the subtitle "Nantong's Products" was that "This county has been known since ancient times as the Tongzhou cotton producing area" (1941, 8).

Songjiang was the first place in the Yangzi delta to plant cotton, as early as the Song and Yuan dynasties. And Nantong was the first region in Jiangbei to import cotton seeds and planting techniques from Jiangnan. The soil in Nantong, especially the areas near the sea and river, was sandy and rich in humus, both favorable conditions for cotton growth. Among Nantong's 127 agricultural products, cotton was a major crop along with soybeans and wheat (Fan 1922, 3. 1-5b). Since the Ming dynasty Nantong's cotton had enjoyed nationwide fame for its great fiber length and high-quality texture (Lin 1984, 5-7). The fame was treasured and the exceptional quality of Nantong cotton was maintained and developed over time. During the 1910s, Nantong experimented with different kinds of cotton. In ten years more than one hundred kinds of cotton, including some from abroad, were

tested and four were selected as the best, one of which was from America (Fan 1922, 3. 13b-15a).

Cotton Trade

Cotton contributed to Nantong's traditional handicraft weaving industry for centuries. According to Honig, approximately 80-90 percent of the women in the Nantong region wove cloth at home (Honig 1989, 259). In the early years, the cloth peasants made at home was named jiajibu--"home machine cloth,"--which was for the peasant's own use but not for circulation (Lin 1984, 152). This of course changed dramatically with the commercialization of cotton and cotton products. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, cotton played a significant role in Nantong's commercial activities at regional and interregional levels, and later in foreign trade as well.

In the late Ming, Tongzhou was still the only region in Jiangbei which grew cotton. Xu and Huai and other Jiangbei regions naturally became the market of Tongzhou cotton and cotton products. Through the Xu and Huai channel, Shandong imported cotton from Tongzhou. With the frequent migration of Shandong people to the northeast of China in the Qing, the three provinces of the northeast also opened up to Tongzhou cotton. Up to the early twentieth century, Tongzhou cotton steadily commanded the market within the Jiangbei region and was exported through long-distance trade as far as Shandong

and the northeastern provinces. A large quantity of cotton products was involved in this trade. The cotton cloth exported to the northeast in one year, for instance, could reach as many as 150,000 jian, each jian containing forty pi, and the total number was 60,000,000 pi. It took a person a whole day to produce one pi; therefore the cloth exported to the northeast in one year was worth 60,000,000 labor-days of work. All cotton and cotton products were packed in big cloth bags and transported to other regions by horse, donkey and boat (Lin 1984, 2-8).

After the opium wars, Tongzhou cotton became an important commodity in foreign trade as well. The American Civil War of 1864 boosted cotton prices significantly. Chinese cotton was in high demand and 390,000 dan were also exported to Europe yearly. The Japanese textile industry was booming during the Meiji period, importing from China 630,000 dan of raw cotton in 1909 alone. A significant portion of the exported Chinese cotton was from Tongzhou. With the end of World War I, Japan changed her strategy from importing raw materials from China to exporting capital to China, and many Japanese companies built textile mills in China, especially in cities of the Yangzi region. Tongzhou cotton, however, did not cease to be an important commodity. Japanese companies sent their agents to and set up stations in different towns of Nantong, purchasing Nantong cotton to supply those factories (Lin 1984, 9-10).

Industry

Modern industry developed rapidly in Nantong since 1895, as Table 1 shows. The Dasheng Cotton Mill initiated in 1895 was the first and by far the most important industrial undertaking in the locality. In 1895 China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War and the consequent Treaty of Shimonoseki opened the door for foreigners to build factories in China (Walker 1986, 36). Under increased pressure because of the crisis, the Qing court issued an edict to allow each province to establish chambers of commerce to promote private industrial and commercial activities. Zhang Zhidong, the High Commissioner for Military and Foreign Affairs in South China (Nanyang dachen), was the first one to respond to the edict by appointing Zhang Jian and two other zhuanjuangong named Lu and Ding to set up chambers of commerce and cotton mills in Tongzhou, Zhenjiang, and Suzhou in an attempt to compete with the increasing import of cotton goods in China; this then led to the development of the Dasheng cotton mill and to the involvement of Zhang Jian and other local merchants in it.

Initially Zhang Zhidong and his successor Liu Kunyi both supported the Dasheng project by providing government-granted monopoly rights and textile machines (Zhang 1986, 52-53). To eliminate potential rivals in raw materials and markets, Zhang Jian requested monopoly rights which guaranteed that no other cotton mill would be allowed to operate in the Nantong-Haimen region within ten years, and that if there were additional

cotton mills to be set up, they had to be applied for by Dasheng's director and to exist as Dasheng's branches. This kind of monopoly rights had been granted to other cotton mills in Shanghai and Zhenjiang prior to 1895 (NXZZH 1905, 1. 3a-3b; Feuerwerker 1958, 28-29, 210-211; Walker n.d., 12-14).

At the same time, Liu Kunyi also provided Zhang Jian with textile machines as an official investment in the Dasheng company, and these machines were worth a half million liang, which accounted for half of the total capital needed to start the enterprise. The other half was expected to be collected from private investors. Dasheng at this stage was a joint project of government and merchants (Guanshang heban). Later Dasheng became an enterprise with government supervision and merchant management (Guandu shangban), because the official share was reduced to a quarter million due to the fact that half of the textile machines which were supposed to be sent to Dasheng were needed by another cotton mill in Shanghai. The system of government supervision and merchant management was a common practice in the period from 1878 to 1894, when China's industry started to develop. It was characterized by official sponsorship of industrial enterprises and permitted considerable official control of the enterprises, which held local merchants back from investing in the Dasheng project. In 1897 Dasheng further changed to elite supervision and merchant management (Shenling shangban) in order to diminish the

official role and attract more private capital (Zhang 1986, 58-59).²

The first Dasheng Cotton Mill was built in 1898; the second and third Dasheng Cotton Mills were set up in 1907 and 1922 respectively (see Table 1). Utilizing local cotton and cheap labor, especially women who were skilled at cotton handicraft production, and the opportunity provided by the war in Europe, these cotton mills did extremely well until the mid-1920s (Walker 1986, 206-207). The cotton mills were financially responsible for the establishment of an almost complete local public service system, which will be discussed later. They also served as the core in terms of capital and management around which other Nantong industries were developed. The other factories and mills included in Table 2 were related to the Dasheng Cotton Mills in one way or another. As a matter of fact, in 1907 most of the local enterprises were incorporated into the Dasheng company.³

² For government involvement in China's early industrialization and the "Government supervision and merchant management" system, see Feuerwerker 1958, 8-22.

³ For an excellent account of the Dasheng Cotton Mill, its origin and development, see Chu 1965, 17-35; and for descriptions of other Nantong industries, also see Chu 1965, 36-42. Also see Walker 1986.

Table 1: Industrial Undertakings

<u>Date Founded</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Founder</u>
1898	Dasheng Cotton Mill	Zhang Jian
1903	Guangsheng Oil Pressing Mill	Zhang Jian
1904	Busheng Silkworm & Mulberry Company	4 persons
1905	Zisheng Ironworks	Zhang Jian
	Nisheng Wine Factory	Zhang Jian
	Brickyard	Zhang Jian
	Yaoxu Glass Factory	Zhang Jian
1907	2nd Dasheng Cotton Mill	Zhang Jian
?	Daxin Flour Mill	Xu Shiling
1909	Fuxin Flour Mill	Zhang Jian
1916	Dasheng Textile Company	Yu Popan
1917	Dada Rice Mill	30 people
1918	Tongming Electric Light Company	Zhang Jia
1920	Kanyuan Cotton Mill	
1921	Tongshui Match Company	Yang Deqing
1922	3rd Dasheng Cotton Mill	
1923	Chinese Film & Play Production Company	Zhang Jian

(Sources: NXZZH, 1905; NXZZH 1915; Fan 1922; Chen 1938; Zhang 1966; Liu 1967)⁴

⁴ Chen Hanzhen was the author of Rishi nianlai zhi Nantong (Nantong in the Past Two Decades). But the book remained as an anonymous work (Chu, 1965: 226) until 1988, when Mu Xuan, the former director of Nantong Museum, published an article to clarify the 60-year-old myth. According to Mu, the book was first published in installments in Tongtong ribao (Tongtong Daily) in 1930 as an anonymous work. In the 1960s, Mu discovered the manuscript of the book in small brush characters without author's name on it (the manuscript is now in the Nantong Museum). What was then known about the author was that he attended the Nantong Agricultural School in the 1920s. But the author was still unidentified. In 1987, Mu read an article memorializing Zhang Jian by Chen Hanzhen, a 91-year-old man living in Taiwan. In Chen's article, there was information about his experience as an agricultural student in Nantong in the 1920s, and the reason he wrote the book Rishi nianlai zhi Nantong. He was a great admirer of Zhang Jian's local activities. This anonymous work thus found its author. See Mu 1988.

Land Reclamation

Nantong's economic activities were also marked by salt production and fishing. But salt production and trade contributed neither to the well-being of the coastal people nor to the regional development due to the flawed system of the Lianghuai salt monopoly.⁵ To change this situation, and more importantly, to meet the Dasheng Mills' ever-growing demand for cotton, Zhang Jian initiated in 1901 the Nantong Haimen Reclamation Company (Tong Hai kenmu gongsi) to undertake the largest land conversion project ever in the region's history. Its purpose was to develop the salt land along the seacoast of Nantong and Haimen, a total of 120,000 mu (approximately 18,000 acres), into cotton fields (Chu 1965, 114-116), and to establish a "self-reliant" system in cotton production from planting to manufacturing (Walker 1986, 163; Huang 1990, 135). With the collapse of the Qing in 1911, state restriction on local projects further diminished, and fifteen other land reclamation companies were established and involved in the projects (Table 2).

The projects were expanded to other counties, such as Yancheng, Funing, and Dafeng. They to a great extent altered the landscape of the region, adding new cotton fields, new

⁵ According to Finnane, the system allowed a relatively small number of licenced merchants from outside Subei to control and make profits from the salt trade. She suggests that salt eroded Subei economy and contributed to the peripheralization of the region in the late Qing times (1993b, 220-221).

bridges (more than four hundreds), dikes, rivers, canals, sluice gates, culverts, ports, roads, buildings, villages and new residents and new occupations (Chu 1965, 117-123; Nakai 1976; Walker 1986, 165-169; Fei 1991, 26-40).⁶ Just as cotton and cotton products did, land reclamation also stimulated population migration, commercial activities, and the development of local markets and towns.

Table 2: Land Reclamation Projects

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Initiator</u>
1901	Tonghai Reclamation Company	Zhang Jian
1903	Lusi Salt Company	Zhang Jian
	Fishing Company	Zhang Jian
1913	Dayoujin Reclamation Company	Zhang Cha
1915	Dalai Reclamation Company	Zhang Cha
1916	Dagang Reclamation Company	Zhang Cha
1917	Dayu Reclamation Company	Zhang Cha
1917	Huacheng Reclamation Company	Zhang Jian & Feng Guozhang
1917	Xintong Reclamation Company	Wang Gengzai
1918	Dafeng Reclamation Company	Zhang Cha
1918	Dayou Reclamation Company	Zhang Xiaoro
1918	Fuyu Company	Zhang Jingxuan
1918	Hede Reclamation Company	Shu Xuyan & Tai Zizhong
1919	Tongxing Company	Han Fengchi
1919	Xinnan Company	Zhang Jian
1919	Tongji Reclamation Company	Zhang Cha
1919	Suiji Reclamation Company	Zhang Jian
1919	Tongsui Reclamation Company	Zhang Jian

(Source: Fei 1991, 29-40)

⁶ While the other authors mentioned the land reclamation movement, Nakai's book is devoted to the topic, including Zhang Jian's activities, the process of development, the relationships between land reclamation and salt production, and other aspects (1976)

Markets and Towns

The growth of markets, towns and cities in Nantong was indeed closely related to cotton and salt production, the land reclamation movement, and other economic activities. The Tongzhou zhili Prefecture Gazetteer of 1875 recorded nine towns considered of great importance in the region besides the prefectural seat of Tongzhou and the county seats of Taixing and Rugao (Ji 1875, preface). The nine towns were all located within Nantong county. In addition, there were nineteen smaller towns and thirty-eight ordinary markets in Nantong as of the 1870s. On an average there was a market within every ten-fifteen li. Some of the names of the markets, such as Zhaojiadian (Zhao shop) and Bianlimiao (Bianli temple) indicated that those markets were the center of rural economic and religious activities. Other names, such as Anleqiao (Anle bridge), Yunhekou (the mouth of the Grand Canal), and Xieyugang (Xieyu port) revealed the locations of those markets (Ji 1875, 1. 32-33). Those locations fitted well into the pattern of rural markets, which usually developed at various spots ten-fifteen li apart along vital traffic lines.

In the population and household survey of 1909, thirty-five cities and towns, including the county seat of Nantong, were mentioned (Fan 1922, 1. 11a-14a). Around 1920, Nantong county was divided into twenty-one districts. Among them three were urban districts (shigu), ten town districts (zhenqu) and eight rural districts (xianggu) (Fan 1922, 1. 3a-9a). What

distinguished city and town from village districts was population. Those with a population more than 40,000 were considered as city and town districts, and those with a population under 40,000 became village districts (Yan 1983, 36). The seat of each district as the administrative center was naturally a city or a town. In addition, each district included several other towns plus the surrounding rural areas with many rural markets. In total there were more than forty towns and cities in Nantong in the 1920s (Fan 1922, 1. 3a-9a).

Besides Nantong city, which historically was the region's administrative center, some of the traditional towns developed through salt works, such as Shigang, Jinsha, Yuxi, Yudong, and Lusi. These five towns were near the sea and residents built homes within the Fangong dike for protection. Outside the dike were the salt fields, and the people made a living as salt makers. Salt, one of the major sources of revenue, was traditionally under governmental control. There were administrative units set up in those fields in charge of salt production, distribution and transportation, spurring the development of the towns (Ji 1875, preface; Fan 1922, 1. 5).

Shigang, for instance, was already a famous salt town in the Song dynasty. The Ming government relocated the Lianghuai Salt Transportation Office (Lianghuai yanyuansi) from Tongzhou to Shigang in 1519, to administer ten salt fields in Tongzhou and Rugao. The Qing government set up the same office there. Docks, granaries, official buildings and other facilities were

gradually established from the Ming to Qing. Shigang was also well known for its many temples. It was said that it had seventy-two-and-a-half temples. During the miaohui (temple festival) seasons in May and June of the lunar year, thousands of people from neighboring towns and villages gathered in Shigang to participate in and celebrate the festivals (Sha 1983, 7-9). In the late Qing, with the coastline moving outward as a result of the accumulation of alluvial soil deposited by the sea, a great piece of land grew outside the Fangong dike. Shigang and the other four neighboring towns lost their important salt works, which were replaced by cotton fields. They still functioned as major towns in cotton production and in the land reclamation projects (Shi 1983, 4). In the early 1920s, Shigang district reported a population of 55,100, and had one higher and ten lower primary schools (Fan 1922, 1. 5b).

Exchange of cotton and handicraft cotton products was another path leading to the growth of Nantong's many towns, even including those within the Fangong dike. Erjia in Yuxi as a town was relatively young compared to Shigang. The earliest mention of the town's name was in the History of Lianghuai Salt Regulations of 1892. In the early Qing, twenty-odd families lived there as salt makers. When new land grew as the Yellow Sea moved eastward, more people migrated there and started bringing the land under cultivation. A small local market south of the Ban bridge appeared to handle purchases of

handicraft cloth. The Ding family then began a cloth shop and collected 400-500 pi of cloth daily. Later a rice shop was also opened. Because the salt canal was nearby, people from rice areas took boats to Erjia to sell rice and buy cloth, and people from cotton areas brought cotton and cloth in exchange for rice.

Erjia thus became a busy and prosperous market not only for handicraft cloth, but also for rice, and later for oil as well. Gradually, the small market grew into a town with thirty-odd rice shops and many cloth and oil shops. Spatial expansion was part of the process. The small market south of the Ban bridge expanded in all the directions and incorporated other small markets in the surrounding areas into its scope. In Erjia, some even made money not directly from selling rice but from storing rice for other riceshop owners. The Ding family owned both rice and cloth shops, hiring seven clerks and 200 workers. The Chen family cloth business engaged in long-distance trade by shipping Nantong local cloth to the northeastern region and bringing beans and bean-oilcakes back home to make money.

In the early twentieth century, when Zhang Jian and Zhang Cha were planning on building highways throughout the county, the Ding family persuaded the Zhangs to have a special branch reach Erjia, providing the town with modern transport facilities. Erjia became such an attractive place for business in the late nineteenth century that many merchants from outside

came to Erjia to open shops and handicraft industries. In the early 1910s, seventy percent of merchants in Erjia were from more than ten outside provinces and thirty different counties. Erjia owed its rapid development within less than three centuries to the cotton and handicraft cloth business (Ji & Wang 1985, 1-4; Wang 1988, 35).

Similar to Erjia, the history of towns like Jinsha, Xiting (also near the salt canal), Xingren (fifteen li east of Nantong city), Baipu, Pingchao and many others were closely associated with cotton and cotton products exchange, due either to their geographical convenience for transporting cotton or their rich growth in cotton. Baipu, for instance, located sixty li northwest of Nantong city and on the boundary of Nantong and Rugao counties, was the only way through which merchants from the north could enter Nantong. Because Rugao did not plant cotton until later yet the area around Baipu was well known for cotton, Baipu developed more than ten cloth shops and became a vital market town, supplying local cloth for merchants and travelers from the north (Lin 1984, 218).

Pingchao, thirty li northwest of Nantong city, cutting across the Grand Canal and connecting Baipu and Rugao in the north, and Jingjiang county in the west through the two ports of Xinsheng and Zhanghuang, served as an important land and water communication line between the north and south. Every year tens of thousands of people from Jingjiang also had to pass through Pingchao on pilgrimages to Langshan temple. Many

often bought a great deal of cloth in Pingchao on their way home. The Local cloth business had been well developed in Pingchao since the early Qing. There were more than thirty cloth shops, some of which had two-hundred-year histories. It was said that hundreds of boats parked in the canal daily, and the town was as busy at night as during the day (Ji 1875, preface; Lin 1984, 219). It is not surprising, therefore, to find in the Biographies of Pingchao Figures of Nantong County many families and persons there with merchant backgrounds (Shao 1920). In 1909, with a population of 32,765, Pingchao had one higher- and eight lower-primary schools (Fan 1922, 1. 8b-9a).

Some towns in Nantong were relatively young. They owed their inception directly to the development of local industrial and land reclamation projects in the early twentieth century. Tangzha, located near the Tong Yang canal northwest of Nantong city, had access to the Yangzi river through the Gangzha river and was also connected by highway networks to the Jiangbei region. The convenience of this land and water traffic attracted Zhang Jian to establish his first Dasheng Cotton Mill in Tangzha in 1898. In 1903, after a canal between Tangzha and Tiansheng port was connected, local shipping companies were established. Tangzha then witnessed the growth of many other industrial undertakings, such as cottonseed and soybean oil pressing mills, flour mills, iron mills, and paper mills, as well as the building of resident houses. Tangzha

thus became an industrial district, and in the 1920s it was one of the most important towns in Nantong, carrying much weight in local economic activities as well as public service work (Liu 1987, 13).

At the same time, Tangzha was known for its grain market after the Dasheng Cotton Mill was established there. Because of the existence of the cotton mill, the demand for raw materials increased, and more and more local people shifted from growing grain products to planting cotton. In turn, their needs for grain were met by importing rice from other regions. Many grain shops were located in Tangzha to make purchases from outside and distribute them to local markets and residents. Often thousands of boats loaded with grain parked on the river nearby. Tangzha as a commercial center was active in transporting and exchanging goods within the region and with outside regions (Jiang 1986, 212).

Sanyu as a town did not appear on Nantong's map until after 1912, when Zhang Jian and Zhang Cha started the Dayoujin Land Reclamation Company in Sanyu, originally a marsh outside the Fangong Dike. Besides converting this salt marsh into cotton fields, the company had plans to develop it into a town. The construction of the town went hand-in-hand with the land reclamation movement. After three years of effort, the town started to show its shape with streets, office buildings, town houses, markets and many shops. Merchants moved their businesses from other parts of Nantong to Sanyu to meet the

needs of this growing town and of its thousands of laborers. There were wine shops, stores for construction materials, seafood shops, seasoning shops, grocery stores, pharmacies, riceshops, clothshops, inns, iron shops, teahouses, and barbershops. In 1916, a small power station was set to supply power for lighting the company offices and for its cotton rolling mill. In 1918 the company established a primary school in town. Almost like magic, the salt marsh became a full-scale town within less than ten years. Many other towns shared the same experience with Sanyu (Jiang 1987, 1-5).

Financial and Communication Infrastructure

Through processes of commercial and industrial development occurring in many markets and towns, Nantong witnessed in the early twentieth century the establishment of some modern financial and communication infrastructure, such as a modern banking system, highways, and new transportation and communication facilities (see Table 3 and 4).

Of the county's nine financial institutions, the Nantong Stock Market lasted only a few months. The Nantong branches of various banks belonged to the banking chains of the treaty ports of the Yangzi valley, whose main offices were located in Shanghai (the Communication Bank, Shanghai Commercial Savings, and Jiangsu Bank) and Nanjing (the China Bank). Some of the branches, such as that of the Jincheng Bank and the Communication Bank, first operated through local gianzhuang (tradition-

al banks). Both outsiders and natives were involved in the management of these branches; for instance, the manager of the Nantong branch of Jiangsu Bank was a local cotton merchant Liu Yishan, and the China Bank appointed a person from Nanjing to take charge of its business in Nantong. All of these bank branches brought outside capital to Nantong (Miao 1987, 197-200).

Table 3: Financial Institutions

<u>Date</u>	<u>Institution</u>	<u>Founder</u>
1915	Nantong branch of Communications Bank	
1915	Nantong branch of China Bank	
1912	Nantong branch of Jiangsu Bank	
1918	Nantong branch of Shanghai Commercial Savings	
1920	Huaihai Industrial Bank	Zhang Xiaoro
	Haimen division of Huihai Bank	Zhang Jian
	Nantong Stock Market	Zhang Jian
1930	Nantong branch of Jincheng Bank	Fan Xuqing
	Nantong Huitong Bank	Min Zonghui

(Sources: Miao 1987, 197-201; Yang 1987, 8-9)

The other banks in Table 3 were established by local people and mainly based on local capital with some exceptions. For example, the Huaihai Industrial Bank had branches in Shanghai, Yangzhou, Suzhou, Zhenjiang, Haimen, and other parts of Jiangsu, dealing with business related to textile, salt, and land reclamation. In 1922 the Huaihai Industrial Bank's plans to issue respectively one million paper currency and industrial bonds were aborted due to the economic decline following the end of the European war. In 1931, worldwide

economic depression and flooding in the Jiangbei region bankrupted the Huihai Industrial Bank. The privately-owned Nantong Huitong Bank, on the other hand, successfully expanded within Nantong. To circulate and reinvest its profit, the Huitong Bank cooperated with the China Bank and the Shanghai Commercial Savings and also created three factories of its own. It survived the Depression and closed down with considerable profits left in 1938, before the Japanese invasion of Nantong (Miao 1987, 200-201).

In 1915 a suburban highway system was planned, five hundred li of highway was completed, and Nantong started to see cars in regular use. There were also highways built to connect Nantong city with the local industrial base in

Table 4: Transportation and Communication Facilities

<u>Date</u>	<u>Institution</u>	<u>Founder</u>
1903	Dada Inner River Small Steamship Co.	Zhang Jian
1908	Dada Outer River Steamship Company	Zhang Jian
1912	Nantong Roadwork Bureau	
	10+ Nantong Public Bus Company	
	Tongruhai Long Distance Bus Company	Zhang Jian
	16 commercial bus companies	
	3 private bus companies	
	35 private cars	
	3 2nd class post offices	
	3 3rd class post offices	
	100+ postal agencies	
	2 telegram companies	
	Nantong Dacong Telephone Company	
	Nantong Long-distance Telephone Company	

(Sources: NXZZH 1905; NXZZH 1915; Fan 1922; Chen 1938; Zhang 1966; Liu 1967)

Tangzha, with the Langshan scenic spot, with the Tiansheng ports, and also one highway between Tangzha and the port. In

1922 a countywide highway system, including a circum-city highway, was constructed. Some of these highways were among the first in Jiangsu province.

The communication and transportation links in Nantong and between Nantong and the outside world were further improved with the establishment of steamship companies, bus companies, and telephone and telegraph companies. The postal system, the telegraph companies, and the long-distance telephone company were sponsored by the government; the rest of the firms in Table 4 were all privately-owned companies. They together facilitated the economic and political development in Nantong.

Education

The local gazetteer of 1875 recorded seven academies (shuyuan), twenty-one village schools (shexue), and five charitable schools (yixue) in Tongzhou prefecture, which included the prefectural seat of Nantong and the two other counties Rugao and Taixing (Ji 1875, 5. 70-82). Nantong alone had three academies, twelve village schools, and four charitable schools (Ji 1875, 5. 70-74).⁷ Most of these schools were

⁷ Bastid also mentioned one "official school" (guanxue or ruxue) in Nantong (Bastid, 1988: 30). But this "official school" does not appear in the local gazetteer of 1875 she used as the source in making this statement (Ji, 1875: 5. 70). On pages 66-68 of this gazetteer, however, it does record a official examination hall (shiyuan) built in 1724 when Tongzhou was raised to the administrative level of a zhilizhou, a prefecture directly under the command of Jiangsu buzheng shisi. The establishment of this examination hall saved Tongzhou students a trip to Yangzhou for prefectural examination.

officially supervised and funded by wealthy gentry donations as well as local public resources.

In addition, there were quite a few private schools (sishu) in the region, though no sources provide us with the precise number. Before the Chongzheng Academy was established in 1724, all schools in Rugao were sishu, such as the Wang, Ding, Chen, and Xu academies, for since the Song dynasty, "the family itself became the private school" (jiazi weishu) (Ji 1875, 5. 76). Zhang Jian obtained his early education at private schools of this sort. When he was five years old, he entered a neighborhood school (linshu), learning from Mr. Qiu until age eleven. His father then invited Mr. Song as the family teacher for both Zhang Jian and his brother and cousins (Zhang Jian 1965, Chronological Table. 3-5). Basically, that was how the private schools operated. A clan or a family or several families together invited and supported a teacher. So the private schools were much like family schools.

Adding all the public and private schools and academies together, Nantong before 1900 was by no means notable for its educational achievement.⁸ Structural change came when the Tong-Hai Educational Bureau was established in 1904 (Table 5).⁹

⁸ According to Bastid, education in Nantong was "below average" by the standard of Jiangsu province before 1900 (1988, 33).

⁹ The five subordinate divisions of Tong-Hai then included Tongzhou, Taixing, Rugao, Jinghai rural area and Haimen ting (Zhang 1986, 145).

Table 5: Educational Projects

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Initiator</u>
1902	Nantong Normal School	Zhang Jian
1904	School Public Botanical Garden	Zhang Jian
1905	Female Work Training Center	Zhang Jian
	Workers Training School	
	Nantong Museum	Zhang Jian
1908	Women's Normal School	Zhang Jian
	Tong-High Wushu Public Middle School	Edu. Bur.
	English & Chemistry Vocational School	church
1910	School Forestry Nursery	Zhang Jian
1912	First Kindergarten	Zhang Jian
	Kindergarten Training Center	Zhang Jian
	Vagrant Workshop	city
	Business School	Chamber of Commerce
	Nantong Library	Zhang Jian
	Popular Education Society	?
1913	Nurse Training Center	Zhang Jian
	Nantong Medical College	Zhang Cha
	Tangzha Textile School	Zhang Jian
	kindergartens (2)	Zhang Jian
	Changle Women's School	Zhang Jian
1915	Nantong Textile College	Zhang Jian
	Jinsha Kindergarten	Sun
1918	Second Private Kindergarten	Yang
	School of the Blind and Dumb	Zhang Jian
	Acting School	Zhang Jian
	Nantong Agricultural College	Zhang Jian
1921	Third Private Kindergarten	Wu
	Women's Silkworm & Mulberry Learning Center	Zhang Jian
	Nantong Agricultural College	Zhang Jian
1923	Industrial & Commercial Continuation School	Zhang Jian

(Sources: NXZZH 1905; NXZZH 1915; Fan 1922; Chen 1938; Zhang 1965; Liu 1965)

The original plans of the Tong-Hai Educational Bureau were that Tongzhou alone would establish a normal school, an apprentice school, a silkworm and mulberry school, a dyeing and weaving school, a public museum, and an orphanage, and that the five divisions together would undertake the tasks of

creating a higher primary school and forty-seven lower primary schools (Zhang 1986, 145). Zhang Jian and Rugao elite Sha Yuanbing were in charge of the Bureau and these projects. From 1904 to 1906 thirty-nine lower primary schools were established under the supervision of the bureau (Fan 1922, 9. 4a-4b).

In 1905 the civil examination system was officially abolished, which further encouraged educational reform. In 1907 the "Educational Bureau" changed to an "Educational Association (jiaoyu hui).". In addition, the Exhortation Bureau and Educational Research Bureau were established. From 1908 to 1910 sixty-seven lower primary schools were completed. In 1911 Zhang Jian held a special meeting which decided that there should be a lower primary school set up every sixteen li, which came to a total of 332 schools. This project was expected to be accomplished within five years, and each town and rural district local self-government bureau was held responsible for seeing it through. Twenty-five lower primary schools were created in 1911.

In 1912 the Tong-Hai Educational Association was replaced by the Nantong County Educational Association because of the establishment of county administrations after 1911. Each town and rural area also set up its own educational bureau in 1912 and 1913 to administer local school projects.

As a result of these efforts, modern schools in Nantong became rapidly more institutionalized and widespread during

the period from 1904 to the 1920s (Table 5).¹⁰ Primary schools (more than 370) became available to people in every corner of the county. There were six secondary schools, including the Nantong Normal School, the Women's Normal School, and Business School. The Nantong Normal School was the first privately-sponsored normal school in China, and was responsible for the rapid development of primary schools in Nantong by training and providing teachers. Three colleges, the Nantong Textile College, Nantong Agricultural College, and Nantong Medical College, represented the development of higher education in Nantong. The Textile College was the only school specializing in the textile industry in China at that time. It was in high demand due to the lack of other such schools and the growing industrial development in this field in China (Chen 1938). People from other parts of China, even overseas Chinese and Koreans, wanted to go to this college (Jiang 1988, 35). In fact, the first generation of China's textile experts was produced in this college.

In addition, kindergartens, career training centers, such as the Women's Silkworm and Mulberry Learning Center, vocational schools, such as the English and Chemistry Vocational School, special education institutions, such as the School for the Blind and Dumb, and social educational institutions, such as the Nantong Library and the Nantong Museum, were all

¹⁰ Table 5 does not include primary schools created during this period due to their large numbers.

created one after another. There were also other school-related projects, such as the botanical garden (Table 5).

Public Works

In addition to education, Nantong's public projects included charity, road construction, water control, public safety, entertainment, and other arenas (see Table 6). Like other local communities in China, Nantong traditionally had charitable organizations to take care of the aged, the disabled, and the poor (see Chapter Three). In the early twentieth century, these organizations developed into a more systematic welfare system managed by local elites.

Considering Nantong's geographical surroundings, water control was one of the most important problems in local affairs. During the period covered in this study, a great deal of local energy and resources was devoted to building dikes and embankments, and to dealing with erosion and floods. The process in a sense shaped the local elite society and its relationships with the central government, as more detailed description of this topic will show later.

Table 6: Public Projects

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Initiator</u>
1896	Widow Society ¹¹	Zhang Jian
1897	Rugao Famine Relief Association	Zhang Jian

¹¹ The widow society was only for those widows whose husbands once held the degrees of juren, gongsheng, and shengyuan.

Table 6 (cont'd).

1898	Changle 28 <u>yu</u> village granary (<u>shecang</u>)	Zhang Jian
1904	New Orphanage	Zhang Jian
1905	road construction	
1908-		
1910	land survey	Zhang Jian
1912	Vagrant Workshop	City
	Lanshan Forestry Nursery	Zhang Jian
	Saltwork Police Training Center	Zhang Jian
	fix mountain road for the 3rd time	Zhang Jian
1913	Nantong County Hospital	Zhang Cha
	First public sports stadium	Zhang Jian
	Poor People's Workshops (3)	Zhang Jian
	Tangzha Park Hospital	Zhang Jian
	First Old People's Home	Zhang Jian
	roads & bridges	Merchant
		Ass.
	roads & 3 bridges	Zhang Jian
	1432 trees	Zhang Cha
	stone dikes	
1914	Prostitute Reform Bureau	Police
	Righteous Cemetery	Zhang yang
	Junshan Meteorological Observatory Station	Zhang Jian
1915	county highways	Zhang Jian
1917	Tiansheng Orchard	Zhang Jian
	Beggar's Home	Zhang Jian
		Zhang Cha
	the Disabled's Home	Zhang Jian
	Christian Hospital	church
	School of the Blind and Dumb	Zhang Jian
1919	Traffic Police Department	
	design Jianshan forestry area	Zhang Jian
	2 small and 1 big dikes	Zhang Jian
1920	Gengsu Theater	Zhang Jian
1921	Old People's Home	Zhang Cha
1923	3rd Old People's Home	Zhang Jian
	second public sports stadium	teachers & students
		Zhang Jian
	Southern Park	
1924	Northern Park	
1925	Central Park	
?	Western Park	
?	Eastern Park	
?	Tangza Park	

(Sources: NXZZH 1905; NXZZH 1915; Fan 1922; Chen 1938; Zhang 1965; Liu 1965)

One of the most popular entertaining activities among the local people was Chinese drama performance. Before 1919, Nantong had an old theater located on the western side of the city near the tourist attraction of Langshan scenic spot, and famous actors as well as itinerant entertainers came to perform during slack seasons of farming. In 1919 a modern theater named Gengsu (change of customs) was built in downtown Nantong and an acting school, the only such school in China, was created. Master actors such as Mei Lanfang and Ouyang Yuqian performed traditional as well as modern drama in Nantong, raising the high tide of cultural life in Nantong.

Mass Media

The establishment of the Nantong Normal School and other schools led to the need for school textbooks. They were usually produced at the local level, as it was too inconvenient and time-consuming either to use traditional wood-block printing technology or to rely on outside publishing houses to supply local schoolbooks. Under these circumstances Zhang Jian suggested the establishment of a publishing house in Nantong.

Funds for the project were raised from private sources, including Zhang Jian and his brother Zhang Cha. Later the original five contributors issued stock to collect more money. In 1903 the publishing house was completed in a beautiful setting--the Western Garden, Nantong's earliest park and a gathering point of local men of letters--and Zhang Jian named

it "Hanmolin" (Fan 1922, 6: 3b). It was one of the earliest publishing houses in China. The well-known Shanghai Commercial Press (Shangwu Yinshu Guan) was created only six years earlier and the China Bookstore (Zhonghua shuju) nine years later than the Hanmolin Publishing House (Liu 1990, 18).

There were sixty-six clauses in the Hanmolin Publishing House Regulations, covering matters such as the rights and responsibilities of the stock holders, accounting, marketing, and managing systems, personnel, wage standards, fire prevention policies, technological requirements, customer relations, and many other details. These regulations show that the publishing house didn't function merely as the producer and supplier of school books, but also printed and sold other books as well. It had marketing offices in both Shanghai and Nantong. An advertisement in the Tong-Hai Xinbao (Tong-Hai New Newspaper) indicated that people could also put their books in the Hanmolin Publishing House for sale (20 March 1913).¹² The publishing house was recorded in the 1905 Documents of the Establishment of Tongzhou Industries (NXZZH 1905, 11: 1-10).

¹² It advertised a book Gongmin bidu yanshuo baihua (Vernacular Speech: A Mandatory Reader for Citizens). The advertisement first stated how important popular education was at the present time, and then went on to introduce the book as "detailed in matters of local self-government, council elections, citizens' rights and responsibilities, and budget planning." Most of all, the author said, "It was all in vernacular and everyone could read it. Every family should have this book at home; it is better than listening to other speakers." Finally, the advertisement said that the book was available for sale in the Hanmolin Publishing House (Tong-Hai New Newspaper, 20 March, 1913: 2).

While still printing textbooks, the Hanmolin Publishing House was soon incorporated into the local self-government movement and was used to print books on local activities and also to engage in the newspaper and magazine business. During the period from 1907 to 1919 ten newspapers appeared in the Nantong region, among which eight were in Nantong (as for the other two, one was Gongyanbao, created in Hanmen in 1912, and the other was Gaomingbao, started in 1913 in Rugao). The eight Nantong newspapers included Xingbao (Star Newspaper), Tongbao (Tong Newspaper), Tong-tongbao (Tong-tong Newspaper), Tonghai xinbao (Tong-Hai New Newspaper), Xintongbao (New Tong Newspaper), Nantongbao (Nantong Newspaper), Gongyuan ribao (Park Daily), and Zilang shengbao (Zilang Sound Newspaper) (Guan 1983, 11-25; Cai 1992, 216). Among these newspapers, Xintongbao and Zilang shengbao were short-lived; Gongyuan ribao in the beginning was published as a program of the small theater in the Western Park (Guan 1983, 11, 13, 17, 25, 31, 34-35). The five remaining newspapers played important roles in building elite power and shaping public opinion in the local community. We will discuss them later in detail.

Summary

Nantong in the early twentieth century had obviously undergone many changes. The expansion of commercial activities and markets and towns, the development of modern industrial, communications and financial sectors, the establishment of

Western schools and mass media, and the expansion of public work all had profound impact on the locality. For the purposes of this study, we can emphasize changes in two important aspects: the nature of the Nantong economy, and the components of local elite society.

The local economic horizon was greatly enlarged as the exchange of commodities expanded from local market to regional and interregional levels. More importantly, the development of modern factories, banks, and overseas cotton trade connected Nantong with international markets, contributing to the development of new-style capitalistic economic relationships in the region. Like the early modern European experience Habermas describes, a horizontal commercial relationship among the merchants was built, which differed from the vertical control of official administration on the one hand, and on the other hand, was more powerful than traditional merchant relationships dominated by personal and guild connections. For instance, World War I and the Great Depression both had a decisive impact on Nantong economy because of its linkages with the international and regional markets, and this impact was beyond the scope of both state and guilds. The development of this horizontal relationship indicated the existence of a common economic interest shared by private people outside the official orbit. Local effort to protect this interest often led to local-central tension and conflict. The tension and conflict between the state and the local community was one of

the vital factors which shaped the local-centered political culture.

At the same time, the abolition of the civil examination system forced the old gentry class to change and contributed to the rise of new segments in the elite society, a topic we will discuss in the following chapter. On the other hand, the developments of Western-style schools, mass media, modern transportation and communications facilities not only produced a relatively well-educated populace and new professionals, but also changed the framework as well as the contents of local politics. These new elements were closely associated with the making of the local political culture.

Three

LOCAL ELITE SOCIETY

The unprecedented economic and social changes in the late imperial period, especially during the last years of the Qing dynasty, diversified Chinese society as well as the traditional gentry group. While the old gentry class had to redefine its position in the society, new social groups, such as industrialists, merchants, and professionals, rose to social prominence.

Following a brief discussion of the definition of gentry and an account of Tongzhou elite society prior to 1895, this chapter focuses on the social landscape of Nantong after 1895: the various segments of local elites, their social resources and spans of influence, and the forces behind their changing roles and relationships. I use occupational categories, such as scholars and merchants, to discuss the elite so that we can see the impact of social change on each group and on the changing relationships among the groups. For instance, the boundaries between scholars and merchants became blurred in the period under investigation. Some scholars engaged in industrial and commercial activities and some merchants shared scholar-elites' domination of the locality.

Due to the large number of local elites in Nantong, we can only examine the circumstances of a small sample to outline the basic changes that local elite society was undergoing.¹ The description of Zhang Jian and his family which is included in this sample serves as both an example and a special case of elites in Nantong. The relationships between the Nantong elite society and the state is examined in the last part of the chapter.

The Definition of Gentry

Traditional China was ruled by one group known as the "gentry" (shenshi). Scholars have used the term in various ways. Generally speaking, scholars used to define the term by the single criterion of the civil examination degrees, but now they take other factors, such as wealth and local reputation, into consideration as well (Esherick & Rankin 1990).

For instance, Min considered that all shenshi were products of the traditional civil examination system. In other words, the term shenshi for Min refers to academic degree-holders and their immediate families. There were, however, three levels of degree-holders in the civil examination system. Those who passed the national exams gained the title

¹ The 1922 Illustrated Gazetteer of Nantong County mentioned more than one-hundred-fifty elites who were prominent at the county level. There existed elites below the county level and also those who were establishing themselves as elite managers for public institutions and projects, not all of which the Gazetteer covered.

jinshi, those who passed the provincial exams the title juren, and those who passed the prefectural exams the title shengyuan. Jinshi and juren degree-holders were directly qualified for official posts, but shengyuan were not. Min suggested using the term shen to refer to those who held jinshi and juren titles which directly connected them to officialdom and using shi to refer to the shengyuan, who were at the lowest end of the examination system. The difference between the shen and shi groups for Min was that the former were official gentry and the latter were scholar gentry (Min 1989, 25-26).

Eastman also used the term shenshi to refer to traditional degree-holders. Like Min and other scholars such as Chang, Eastman divided the shenshi into upper and lower groups on the grounds that the upper gentry had bureaucratic ranks and the lower gentry did not. In addition, Eastman found a third stratum in China's ruling class: the nontitled local elites or "non-gentry," as he called them, who enjoyed local prominence and authority as a result of their "wealth, age, wisdom, or some other attributes of status and leadership." This stratum basically consisted of landlords. Although recognizing their leadership role in local society, Eastman nevertheless separated these non-degree-holders out of the shenshi group (1988, 192-93).

Wakeman, however, went beyond the degree-holding criterion with regard to the definition of gentry, or shenshi. He

used the term shen to refer to the degree-holders and shi to the nontitled landlords. In other words, the term shenshi, or gentry, to Wakeman included both those with degrees and those without. Wakeman further pointed out that the shen was a "status group" and the shi appeared to be a "class, identified with the landlords" (1975, 25).

I use the term gentry in this study according to Wakeman's definition, referring to both degree-holders and landlords or local influential men without degrees, because this definition is more inclusive and fits better into the picture of local society, where the line between degree-holders and influential non-degree-holders was not always clear, and where both types of people were often called local gentry (difang shenshi or difang renshi) (Zhang Jian 1965).

In addition, Wakeman's definition of gentry illustrates a tendency in the China field to broaden the criterion of "gentry," especially its modern counterpart "elite," which has been used more broadly to describe people whose importance might stem from their local influence, lifestyles, networks, and local reputation, wealth, and other criteria in addition to or instead of degrees. Scholars in the China field are inclined to draw a time line, such as 1905 or 1911, after which the use of the term gentry is inappropriate (Esherick & Rankin 1990, 5-12). We will also examine if this time line is useful in the case of Nantong.

At the same time, the distinction Eastman and other scholars have made between the upper gentry who held official posts and the lower gentry who were not connected with officialdom is useful in recognizing the different segments of the shen (the scholar) group and is therefore adopted in this study. In other words, I use "upper gentry" to refer to scholars who held jinshi and juren degrees and official positions and "lower gentry" to refer to scholars who had only shengyuan degree without official titles.

Local Elite Society Prior to 1895

There was no lack of deep-rooted scholar-official families which produced generation after generation of degree holders and high-ranking officials in Tongzhou. For instance, the Yao family of Nantong was a well-known surname (xing) which produced some powerful officials. While most houses had only two doors, the Yaos had six doors to indicate their distinctive status (Xing 1992, 149). During the mid-eighteenth century, the Li family enjoyed local fame in Tongzhou. Father and son in the family passed the jinshi examinations in the same year, 1738. The Li family set up four masts in front of their house--a popular indication of the jinshi degree at that time. Later the Gu family also had many degree holders and they occupied various official positions for generations. In 1883, three people of two generations in the Gu family gained the jinshi title. At that time horizontal door boards had

replaced masts to indicate the glory of the jinshi degree. To indicate how prestigious the Gu family was, the horizontally-inscribed board on their door read: "Father and Son, and Uncle and Nephew in the Same ke" (fuzi shuzhi tongke) (Guan 1985, 160-161). The Fans, another Tongzhou elite family, were reputed for their literary talent, enjoying the fame of having produced "Ten Generations of Poets" (shidai shiren) (Guan 1985, 102).

These families, needless to say, formed broad elite networks and had a great impact on local affairs. Before modern development began in 1895, Tongzhou's power was shared mainly by prefect Wang Shutang and four city directors (chengdong) named Gu, Li, Zhang (not related to Zhang Jian), and Xu. They all resided in Tongzhou city and were either jinshi or juren degree holders. There were many other directors (dongshi) in the rural areas who were in charge of specific matters, such as school properties, charitable institutions, and the five mountains in Tongzhou. The four city directors, however, were the most powerful ones, for they were appointed to the position directly by the prefect and had immediate access to the prefect's office. The prefect consulted them on important local matters and depended on them to control the area. The most powerful directors were called "Hong-dong" (hong literally means "hot" or "red"; here it means "hot," in a figurative sense indicating power and importance), because the prefect trusted them most and they

could do whatever they wanted in the locality (Guan 1985, 137-141).

Scholars

The Lower Layer

By scholars I mean traditional degree holders and students trained at traditional schools. The social changes occurring in early twentieth century China had different impacts on the higher and lower layers of the scholar group. The ways in which they responded and adjusted to these changes also varied. Generally speaking, the lower layer of scholars experienced some degree of difficulty but had a relatively smooth transition, mainly due to the modern educational reform which accommodated and absorbed this group. For instance, shengyuan, the lowest layer of the degree hierarchy, were a marginal group between elite and peasant in rural China. Shengyuan shared the same socioeconomic background with many non-elites, and their influence in most cases was limited to the area within and near their hometown. Unqualified for official positions, their learning in Chinese classics and their academic degrees (relatively low and lacking in prestige as they might be) were often the only valuable resources they possessed. They therefore often worked as teachers at village and private schools, which could utilize their knowledge on the one hand, and distinguish them from the commoners on the other (Averill n.d., 22; Eastman 1988, 193; Min 1989, 47-48).

In Nantong, private schools survived well into the twentieth century and such shengyuan teachers encountered little change. When educational reform began in the early 1910s, the Tong-Hai Educational Bureau complained that it often had to compete with the private schools for student enrollment, since the new schools cost twice as much as the private schools (Fan 1922, 9. 3b). But the sweeping educational reforms of the 1910s soon eliminated many of the private schools in Nantong. In the name of checking the qualification of teachers, the Educational Bureau required in 1908 and 1909 that all private school teachers take certain courses and examinations. Those who failed were banned from teaching again (Fan 1922, 9. 4b). According to the 1926 Yearbook of Nantong Education, private schools were actually ordered to close down after 1908 when the teachers had to take courses and examinations. Those who did well in the process were offered teaching positions at modern primary schools (NXJH 1926, 3).

This did not put an end to the history of private schools in Nantong, but in general concluded the career of shengyuan as private school teachers. When mass education became available in the twentieth century, private schools existed as a luxury for and symbol of wealthy families, who could hire the best teachers available. Zhang Jian, while promoting public schools, had a private school at home for his own children. He invited Japanese female professors to teach music

and painting lessons at the Zhang Family School (Zhang Jian 1965, 1558, 1624).

From teaching at traditional village and private schools to making a living at modern primary schools, shengyuan experienced a relatively smooth transition, though it was imposed on them. At least for a time, their social status and roles in the local society remained almost intact. They still belonged to the lowest layer of the educational system, and their learning in Chinese language and classics was still useful and needed in the new schools, especially when the educational reform was experiencing a shortage of teachers in the beginning. In fact, before the modern school system could produce enough graduates to meet the great need for teachers with the rapid development of primary schools, the new school system utilized scholars and students trained in the traditional examination system, such as shengyuan (xiuca) and jiansheng, to be primary school teachers by providing them with partial or formal training.² The Nantong Normal School, for instance, admitted jiansheng or xiuca holders only in the beginning in the hope of speeding the teacher-training process (Sun 1991, 6).

While the majority of the "static" and "immobile" (Min 1989, xiii, 44) lower layer of scholars remained at the lower

² Jiansheng was a student title of the Imperial College, which could be obtained by purchase or imperial favor. The holder had the same privileges as a shengyuan and was permitted to take the juren (provincial) examinations (Bastid 1988, 184).

levels of the teaching profession, some individuals moved beyond and considerably improved their social status with the opportunities presented to them by social changes. Shen Xiejun, a shengyuan and a school teacher in Haimen, became a cotton merchant and later one of the original investors and administrators of Dasheng. Yu Chen, a local xiuca, became a professional educator. I will discuss Shen and Yu again under other categories, since the new social identities which they had obtained outweighed the old ones.

The Upper Layer with Official Titles

For the upper layer of Nantong scholars, most of whom were juren and jinshi degree holders and retired officials with elite family backgrounds, social upheaval at the turn of this century seemingly threatened more severe consequences than it did to the lower level scholars, partially because as already-established elites they either had more to lose or more to gain in the process of change, depending on how well they could adjust to the new social environment, and also on how aggressively other local forces could advance themselves.

One segment of this elite group, mainly official-gentry, faded away in the first decade of this century in terms of their social influence and community leadership roles. Notable in this segment were some of the most powerful elites who existed prior to 1895, such as the Gu family and the four city directors. One fact which indicated their decline was that

none of them was included in the new county administration after the 1911 Revolution (Guan 1981, 65-73). The two jìnshì of the Gu family, Gu Zengxuan and Gu Zengmu, engaged in scholarly writing after returning to Nantong from their official posts in Shanxi and Zhejiang, respectively (Fan 1922, 19. 3b-4a). Their work was well respected, but confining themselves to their studies detached them from current events and reduced their local visibility. As for the four city directors, they still served as local consultants for prefect Wang Shutang before 1911, but their influence was diminishing because of the rise of new local powerholders, such as Zhang Jian, as we will see soon. Among the four directors, Xu and Zhang built some new-style primary schools (Fan 1922, 19. 10b).

For these established elites, undertaking individual school projects might help them maintain their local status to a degree, but such activities did not necessarily help expand the reach of their influence. Compared to the prestige they had enjoyed before, and to the influence the new merchant/elite group was gaining, elites such as the Gus and the city directors were in decline, and they were no longer the dominant force in the locality.

Some retired or returned officials with jìnshì and juren titles in Nantong remained active by not only engaging in local public and political affairs, but also being associated with the new leading powers in the community. For instance,

Sun Jinchen, once a Qing provincial official in Sichuan, promoted education in Jinsha district of Nantong. In the ten years after the 1911 Revolution, he managed to add thirty lower primary schools to Jinsha, including one girls' school. He encouraged private effort to build schools and helped Gu Hongkai and Sun Lifu (Sun Jinchen's brother) with their schools. In 1922 the Jinsha Vocational School was established because of Sun's support (Ji 1988, 167-168). These activities led to his appointment as the director of the county Educational Association in the 1910s and to his ties with Zhang Jian (Fan 1922, 9. 4b). After the 1911 Revolution, Sun Jinchen organized the Jinsha Local Self-government Office (zizhi gongsuo) and was its director.

Another jinshi degree holder, Sun Baoshu, was the Minister of Revenue in late Qing. He retired to Nantong and helped establish the countywide school system. Sun Baoshu was elected to be the head of the Civil Administration Office (Minzhengzhang, equivalent to county magistrate) after the 1911 Revolution and died in 1913 (Fan 1922, 19. 8a). Both Sun Jinchen and Sun Baoshu retained their leadership roles in the locality.

The Upper Layer without Official Titles

The other segment of the upper layer of local elites in Nantong consisted of scholars without official titles. Unlike the shengyuan who also did not have official titles, this

upper layer of elites had social resources--including elite family backgrounds, economic wealth, personal talents, local reputations, and scholarly networks--which they shared with the upper layer elites who had official titles, but this group of scholars failed, often more than once, in the highest level examinations and never had official careers. Most of them had juren degrees, which should have qualified them for some kind of official posts, but they were either unwilling to take a position they did not like or felt unqualified for the position they expected.

Most of them thus became disillusioned with the examination system and the Qing court as well. As Ichisada Miyazaki has pointed out, the Qing civil examination system alienated many intellectuals, because the imperial system could not absorb so many degree holders, and as a consequence the examinations were highly competitive (Miyazaki 1981). Many scholars spent all their lives trying to climb the examination ladder, only to find they were still at the bottom when it was often too late to shift their life routes.

The mental and physical damage the civil examination system did to those scholars was beyond description. Zhang Jian spent twenty-six years pursuing a jinshi title. When he failed again at age thirty-nine, he was so disappointed that he threw away the set of examination instruments he had used for years and decided to give up (Zhang 1986, 19). He eventually tried again and won, but many were not so lucky. These

frustrated intellectuals therefore became critical of the Qing court on the one hand, and grouped themselves to take initiatives in social, especially educational, reform on the other.

For instance, Zhou Jialu, a renowned Tongzhou scholar whose writings consisted of thirteen books in a total of 120 volumes, took provincial examinations seven times, but always failed because he got sick every time in the middle of the examinations (Fan 1922, 19. 5a; Gu 1989, 68). Zhou wrote Zhang Jian to comfort him whenever the latter failed to pass an examination. Zhou simply suggested that it was not worth trying since the Qing was so hopeless and the examination system was so corrupt, and that there were ways other than passing the examinations to serve the country (Zhang 1986, 19). In 1892, Zhou Jialu and Liu Yishan initiated Nantong's first Western-style primary school in Chuan Gang town (Song 1991, 35).

Fan Dangshi, a juren degree holder, was born into a highly recognized elite family which produced many literary talents and gained the fame of "a family with ten generations of poets" (shidai shiren) (Ren 1988, 18).³ Fan Dangshi and his two brothers all had literary reputations and they together were known as "Tongzhou's Three Fans" (Tongzhou san Fan). Fan Kai, the author of the 1922 Illustrated Gazetteer of Nantong County, was one of them (Fan 1922, 19. 17a-17b), but Fan

³ Fan Zeng, a famous contemporary artist and professor of Nankai University, is also from the Nantong Fan family. Fan Zeng in 1991 went to Paris in exile.

Dangshi was the most prominent among the Fan brothers. It was said that he was an accomplished poet and enjoyed a considerable literary reputation. He was regarded as a representative of the later Tongcheng literary school in Jiangsu. Fan's friends included some very talented young fellows in Haimen, Rugao, Taixing and Nantong, including Zhou Jialu and Zhang Jian, and also powerful merchants such as Liu Yishan. Fan remained in the academic world and helped his teacher named Zhang write the Hubei tongzhi (Hubei Gazetteer). Through teacher Zhang, Fan became Li Hongzhang's family teacher for four years.

During the chaotic years after 1895, Fan left Li and taught at several academies. He returned to Nantong around 1900 and became a firm supporter of the local educational reform movement. Fan Dangshi himself was a victim of the civil examination system. Despite his literary accomplishment and reputation, he failed the jinshi examination nine times. At the age of thirty-five, he was determined not to take any more examinations, though some of his friends and even Li Hongzhang persuaded him to try again. It was certainly not difficult for him to see the point of reforming the educational system.

In the early stage of Nantong's educational reform, Fan Dangshi wrote articles and essays to criticize the traditional educational system and to advocate the new one. With his own experience and his reputation in the community, his writings were often appealing and convincing. At the same time, he

traveled to other parts of Jiangsu to learn how to create new-style schools. He also participated in making school regulations. As a consequence of the combined effort of Fan Dangshi, Zhang Jian and other elites, a Tongzhou Higher Primary School and a Public Middle School, two of the earliest modern schools in Nantong city, came into being around 1904 (Li 1989, 30). In fact, Fan Dangshi's whole family was very much involved in the educational reform. His wife was the principal of the Nantong Women's Normal School for two decades, and his son once held the position of director of the Nantong Educational Association (Li 1998, 30).

Compared with official elites such as the Gus, the influence of scholar elites such as Fan Dangshi was definitely on the rise. Reform for the latter was a course long overdue, and it provided opportunities for them to release the frustration accumulated under the examination system. They had the motivation, drive, and resources to take the initiative in the reform currents, and in doing so, they tied themselves to other reform-oriented elites and became part of the leading force in Nantong.

Apparently, in the case of Nantong "gentry" and "elite" coexisted in the early twentieth century. The term "gentry" is still appropriate to refer to official gentry such as the Gu family and the shengyuan degree holders; though they belonged to different layers of the gentry class, their social status was nevertheless still largely determined by their initial

social resource--the degrees--without much new development. Social change at the turn of this century had not yet fatally weakened them, and they still received their due respect, but they did not have much to gain, because they were either forced to change, as in the case of many shengyuan, or detached from influence on current events, as in the case of the Gu family.

Scholars such as Fan Dangshi, on the other hand, are better described by the term "elite," because, as positive forces for change, their involvement in reform programs and with reform-oriented elites earned them new social resources in addition to their examination degrees. They became local activists and assumed leadership positions in the community. In fact, some segments of other social groups, such as rural elites, professionals, and merchants, also rose to local prominence and became new elites through their connection with modern establishments, such as schools and factories. The proper label for such elites is an arguable issue (Esherick 1976; Bergere 1983; Walker 1986; Min 1989). I shall use the vague but simple term "new elite" to describe them at this point and will analyze their characteristics later when I discuss Zhang Jian, a typical case of the new elite.

Professionals

In the early twentieth century Nantong's social landscape also featured trained specialists such as educators, profes-

sors, journalists, and architects. They were either trained abroad or in Nantong schools, and some of them were hired from outside the Nantong region. The main resource they possessed was specialized knowledge, which was much needed in the process of local development. These professionals often had connections with other members of local elite society, thus extending the reach of their influence beyond their own professions.

The Nantong Normal School originally had foreign teachers, but language difficulties kept them from achieving teaching excellence. In 1903 the school decided to train Chinese teachers by selecting students to study abroad, in Japan and America. Around 1910 they returned to Nantong to serve their hometown. There were ten of them teaching at Nantong schools with specialties in education, business, textiles, agriculture, medical science, dyeing and other fields in addition to their ability to teach foreign languages (Chen 1991, 38-39). Yu Chen was one of them.

A local xiucai, Yu Chen gave up his hopes for the traditional examination system in the last years of the Qing dynasty and entered the Nantong Normal School in 1902. Soon he was singled out as one of the most promising students and sent to Japan in 1907. Upon his return in 1910, he was offered the position as the director of the General Affairs Section at the Normal School. In 1911 he was elected to be the General Director of the Nantong Educational Association while main-

taining his position at the Normal School. It was he who suggested universalizing primary education in the county by setting up one lower primary school every sixteen li, a proposal which was implemented later. From 1927 on he became the president of the Normal school and held other positions until 1949 (Cao 1987, 82-87). From student to president of the prestigious Normal School and recognized scholar and educator, Yu Chen became a member of the highly visible local elite group, participating in decision-making processes and having an impact on county affairs.

In contrast to Yu Chen, Sun Zhixia, a Nantong native architect, was trained in Nantong. In fact, he was one of the very best products the Nantong school system came to offer in the early twentieth century. At a time when only those who had xiuca and jiansheng titles were qualified for admittance to the Nantong Normal School, Zhang Jian broke the rules to admit Sun Zhixia because of his knowledge in mathematics and surveying, which he had learned at a private school and from a Japanese teacher.

In 1906 Sun Zhixia was among the first group to study in the newly-established Surveying and Civil Engineering Department. Upon his graduation in 1909, Zhang Jian recommended him to work for Liangjiang zhongdu Duan Fang on designing and building the office of the provincial Consultative Bureau in Nanjing. During that time he was sent to Japan to examine the architecture of the Japanese Diet building. In late 1909 Sun

Zhixia completed this project at age twenty-seven. The Provincial Consultative Bureau was headed by Zhang Jian and was very influential at one point in the constitutionalist movement, as we shall see shortly. Consequently, the success of this construction work brought Sun Zhixia much fame. Later Sun was a major player in Nantong's spatial rearrangement. His landmark works included the Nantong Museum, the city clock tower, the Yulong Bridge, the Nantong Club, and the Office of the General Chamber of Commerce, and he also designed Zhang Jian's private villas, the Gengsu Theater, the Acting School and many others. We will learn more about these works and their significance later (Sun 1991, 6-8).

Yu Qisheng of Haimen had a rare talent for the English language, which he learned in a missionary school in Haimen. In 1899 Zhang Jian was looking for someone to go to Britain to purchase textile machines. Through a priest Yu came to work for Zhang Jian. In 1906 and 1913 Yu Qisheng took two business trips to England. He did an excellent job in completing his mission, and his nearly perfect English and his knowledge of the textile industry won him respect among the arrogant British business circles. Yu Qisheng was invited to join the London General Chamber of Commerce and became its first Chinese member. Later he managed the Dasheng Machine Company in Shanghai and dealt with Shanghai bankers on Dasheng's behalf. Yu Qisheng also represented Zhang Jian to receive and

organize foreign textile experts to visit the Dasheng Cotton Mills.

Yu Qisheng was also active in providing public service. From 1921 on, Yu created one complete primary and five lower primary schools in his home town. He also set up an old people's home there. Later in Shanghai he sponsored a hospital. In 1922 200 people died when a ship sank in Baoshan. Yu Qisheng paid for all the funeral costs. From 1924-1926, Yu Qisheng helped build eleven stone bridges and three cement bridges in Haimen (Lu 1991, 39).

The establishment of the Hanmolin Publishing House and newspapers brought to Nantong a group of publishers and journalists from outside Nantong. Some of them stayed in Nantong for more than ten years and were involved in local politics. They therefore became part of the local elite society in Nantong. For instance, Zhu Zhongyuan, a publisher who had contacts with the media in Shanghai, Nanjing, and other cities, was from Jiangxi province. He was hired to be the chief editor of the Hanmolin Publishing House in 1903 and later also a local newspaper editor until 1913. The publishing house and the newspaper both served as instruments to promote the local self-government movement and the new elite group in Nantong. Zhu and his assistants named Li, Jie, Xi, and Chen were all politically active in local affairs, and they were considered the younger group of Tongzhou elites who followed Zhang Jian (Guan 1983, 12).

Bao Siyu was another man of letters who became a newspaper manager in Nantong. He used to work for one of Zhang Jian's companies. After Zhang Jian's death, the inner circle of the Zhang family was unstable. Zhang's son Xiaoruo's intention to take over his father's enterprise and status often put him in conflict with his uncle Zhang Cha's interest. Bao Siyu did not get along with Zhang Cha. He wished to work for Zhang Xiaoruo, but believed that he would lose face if he asked Zhang Xiaoruo for a job since he was older than Xiaoruo. So he decided to create a newspaper as his resource and develop his influence, in hopes that someday Zhang Xiaoruo would come to him with a job offer. Bao also used the Hanmolin Publishing House to print the newspaper. His brothers-in-law Sun Zicai and Yu Huiru, both of whom once worked for Shanghai-based newspapers, helped Bao run Tongtong ribao. The newspaper once exposed a case of corruption in the Nantong county Educational Association and led to the dismissal of one of its directors. It ceased publication after the Japanese invasion in 1938 and Bao Siyu defected to the Japanese army (Guan 1983, 14-17).

The professionals like Yu Chen, Sun Zhixia, Yu Qisheng, Zhu Zhongyuan, and Bao Siyu obviously shared pieces of the action in the community by being associated with other local elites and engaging in educational, business, and media activities. Some of them, such as Yu Chen and Sun Zhixia, benefited from educational reforms, which not only provided

them with updated education, but also created needs for their knowledge and opportunities for their development. The importance of public opinion and media in social and political arenas at the turn of this century gave rise to other new professionals. Editors, publishers, newspaper managers, and journalists used their professions as resources either to serve certain segments of local elites, as Zhu Zhongyuan did, or directly to establish themselves as local prominent members, as Bao Siyu did. In either case they could exercise influence on local affairs. They were indeed part of the new elite group.

Rural Elites

Local leaders in rural Nantong were also affected by the social changes in the late Qing. They were mainly the shi part of the gentry group in Wakeman's definition, those who did not have examination degrees. The main reasons they were considered part of the leading group in rural areas were their landed wealth and the local influence which their landlord status generated.

In the early twentieth century, most of the prominent rural leaders in Nantong became involved in the creation of new-style primary schools, since these schools usually required only limited funds and labor. For instance, Qu Xiaoting, a landlord of Yangjiagan, sponsored a lower primary school in 1913. It only had two classes and sixty-seventy

students in the beginning. But the school buildings included two classrooms, an office, two jie of teachers' dormitories, a kitchen and a bathroom (Lu 1988, 52). The Yuxi area had no higher primary school up to 1920. The graduates from the local lower primary schools had to travel to other areas to finish their primary education. Yuxi people, led by an old gentry named Zhu Puquan, discussed the matter and decided to set up a complete primary school in Yuxi. They together worked out details about the location, financial resources, and construction of the school buildings. This project was completed in 1921 (Cao 1992, 238-239). These elites often became principals of the schools they established. By controlling the schools and school properties, these people were able to maintain their status as village leaders and to be recognized as local elites, but the reach of their influence usually did not go beyond village or district level.

Chen Chen, however, proved himself to be exceptional in the rural elite group. In the late Qing period, Chen Chen was a jiazhang of a village in Shigang district. Like many rural jiazhang, he owned some land and did not necessarily have education or influence beyond his village, but he was ambitious and knew how to grasp opportunity when it was presented to him. First he established some connections with county-level elites such as Liu Yishan, Zhang Jian, and Zhang Cha through the Erosion Protection Society. He headed the group of the people's representatives who sent several petitions to the

government with requests for funds for water control projects. Later he became the assistant director of the Erosion Protection Society, managing local water control projects. Chen thus earned himself a second-class elite status in the county by participating in these activities and being a manager for public projects. He also established connections with other local prominent elites.

Chen Chen now wanted to establish a base of his own. The opportunity came in 1913, when Chen persuaded Liu Yishan to support his plans for creating a telephone company. At that time, Zhang Cha wanted to get rid of ten telephones which he had installed during his tenure as the General Commander of the Revolutionary Army and Government in 1912. In 1913, this office was abolished and Zhang Cha refused to give these telephones to the county magistrate's office. When Chen Chen, through Liu Yishan, came up with the idea of establishing a telephone company, Zhang Cha accepted it. Chen Chen thus became the director of the telephone company and had his own economic base.

He then moved on to build his political influence as well. In 1912, Chen Chen, together with persons named Lin, Liu, and Zhang, created a newspaper--the Tong-Hai Xinbao. Chen and Lin lived in Nantong and Liu and Zhang were Haimen residents. That was why the newspaper was named "Tong-Hai." There were two reasons for Chen to create the Tong-Hai xinbao with two of his Haimen friends--to show Zhang Cha that he did

not intend to compete with Zhang's Tongbao in the Nantong area, and also to escape Zhang Cha's interference with the newspaper. The purpose of founding the newspaper was clearly stated in the first issue:

The establishment of the Republic should be first attributed to the power and influence of newspapers. In the future it will also depend on newspapers to check local politics and reform social customs. That is why Chen, Lin, Liu, and Lin wanted to found Tong-Hai xinbao. So the newspaper is not just for communicating information between the two places [Nantong and Haimen] (Xi 1913, 1).

Obviously, Chen Chen was very much aware of the functions of the newspaper and intended to use it to play a role in local political, social, and cultural life. In the beginning the Tong-Hai xinbao did not do well. Considering the influence Zhang Cha and his newspaper had in Nantong, it was understandable that the circulation of Tong-Hai xinbao was not great. It in fact was forced to close down for a short period of time because of financial difficulty.

But the newspaper lasted sixteen years and it became quite popular even among the upper-level elites during the May Fourth and May Thirtieth Movements. Unlike the newspapers controlled by the Zhangs, which discouraged local people's involvement in these movements, Chen's Tong-Hai xinbao allocated a great deal of space to report these events outside Nantong and also student activities in Nantong. It sympathized with the students' point of view. Moreover, the newspaper exposed and attacked the Nantong Chamber of Commerce for not

sincerely participating in and supporting the boycotts of foreign goods.

These opinions on the one hand reflected the editors' political attitude. The chief editor Liu Wei had been educated in the Chinese tradition but had traveled to Beijing and other places, and he was influenced by current new ideas. On the other hand, the different approach Tong-Hai xinbao took in these movements also mirrored the subtle power relationship between Chen Chen and the Zhang brothers. While trying not to break with the Zhangs openly, Chen Chen nevertheless attempted to establish a political identity of his own. The Tong-Hai xinbao carried his voice and made his image (Guan 1983, 17-23). From ordinary jiazhang to county-level public institution manager and to newspaper owner, Chen Chen's success was due to his abilities to search for new resources which raised his status to be a member of the new elite group in Nantong.

Merchants

One of the most visible changes in the local elite society of early twentieth century Nantong was the rise of merchants as leaders in county affairs, public service, political organizations, and of course economic activities. Nantong was not unique in this regard. Scholars have recognized the growing power of Chinese merchants during this period (Bergere 1983; Eastman 1988, 194-197). According to Bergere, the merchant class was "one of the largest ruling

groups" and, allied to the gentry, it "represented the dominant elite" in China in the 1920s (1983, 730-731). By examining some sample merchants from Nantong, it is possible to see the different segments of the merchants, their roles in the locality, and the resources they possessed which allowed them to become part of the ruling group.

From Scholar to Merchant

Shen Xiejun, one of the six original promoters of the Dasheng Cotton Mill, was a shengyuan degree holder and at first a rural school teacher in Haimen. Apparently he established a reputation as fair and sincere, and helped solve local disputes. In the 1880s when the heavy li levy (lijuan) badly hurt the cotton business, and this in turn affected peasants and their handicraft industry, Shen was encouraged by local merchants and people to send a petition to the government, asking for the reduction of the li levy. The local officials denied Shen's petition and considered him an enemy. Shen sent another petition and was turned down again. When his relationship with the officials deteriorated, he came to Zhang Jian for support. Zhang saw clearly how the levy had a negative impact on local development. With his prestigious status, Zhang supported Shen, and in conjunction with other merchants they launched a battle with the government that lasted for ten years. As a result, the li levy was finally reduced (Fan 1922, 19. 16a-16b).

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In the process Shen became a merchant and himself engaged in the cloth business as well. He enjoyed high reputation among local merchants because of his contribution to the reduction of the li levy. When Zhang Jian started his first industrial adventure in 1895, he invited Shen to be his partner, not only because of his success as a merchant, but also because of his connection with the local merchant group. Zhang needed local merchants' capital support to fund Dasheng. The merchants at first doubted whether or not Zhang as a scholar knew anything about business, but they trusted Shen and gradually came to join the enterprise (Fan 1922, 17. 16b).

Shen Xiejun, after linking his business interests with Dasheng, firmly supported the project, especially during its difficult four-year preparatory stage. Zhang Jian attributed the success of Dasheng to Shen and highly praised his personal integrity (Fan 1922, 17. 16b). Shen was later one of the chief administrators of Dasheng and commanded wide respect. Without direct involvement in the local political organization and administration, Shen Xiejun as a Dasheng stock holder and also its administrator was nevertheless a leading elite of Nantong.

It was said that the Dasheng stock holders were more powerful than the county magistrate in the 1910s and 1920s. Because local development depended on Dasheng for funds, the majority stock holders of Dasheng decided what projects should and should not be undertaken. (Guan 1985, 118). Projects such as the Nantong Normal School and the Hanmolin Publishing House

were all discussed and decided on at the Dasheng Directorate meetings (NXZZH 1915). Shen Xiejun was a key figure in the decision-making process. In addition, he also established private schools in his hometown in 1906 and was respected for his moral standing (Fan 1922, 19. 16b; Jia & Yan 1988, 133).

Holding both a traditional academic degree and a responsible position in a modern factory, Shen Xiejun blurred the line between the scholar elite and the merchant groups. His original social resources were his academic degree and local reputation, and the reach of his influence was limited to his village. Later his resources expanded to include business experiences, ties with merchants and Zhang Jian, and position in the Dasheng. Together these resources transformed him from a popular school teacher to a wealthy and prestigious local elite.

Born Merchants

Liu Yishan represented another segment of Nantong merchants whose initial resources included material wealth and who was directly involved in local administrative affairs. Liu, one of Fan Dangshi's students and close friends, and later also a friend of Zhang Jian and Zhang Cha, was born in a merchant family and became one of the wealthiest merchants in Nantong. Originally a cotton merchant, he was very familiar with the inner circles of the cotton business and merchants in Nantong (Guan 1991, 4). He was also one of the six original

contributors to the Dasheng Cotton Mill in 1895. Liu Yishan's experience and influence in business circles qualified him to be the assistant director of the General Chamber of Commerce in 1902 and its first financial director after the 1911 Revolution, in which capacity he worked directly with Zhang Cha and Zhang Jian. Liu was also the director of the Nantong branch of the Jiangsu Bank. He actively participated in Nantong's public service and contributed to the founding of Nantong's commercial school and banking school, and Nantong's first modern primary school (Fan 1989, 8; Song 1991, 35). His visibility extended to the provincial level when he was elected to be one of the five provincial council members from Nantong in 1912.

Liu Yishan's family ties were by no means limited to Nantong. His eldest son Liu Guangqian was sponsored by Sun Yat-sen for the Tongmenghui (Alliance League) membership in Paris where Liu was a doctoral student in law. Liu Guangqian served the Republican government as a diplomat and his career took him to Japan and other parts of the world. In the 1920s Liu Guangqian returned to China and dealt with diplomatic issues in Xiamen. His career and writings earned him much respect (Ling 1992, 114-115; Gu1988, 146-147).

Liu Yishan's other son Liu Shuhe, a graduate of Beijing University and Columbia University, was a famous man of letters. He visited Europe and became one of the editors of Modern Review (Xiandai Pinglun) after his return to Beijing in

the early 1920s. Liu Shuhe's friends included Xu Zhimo, Yu Dafu, Huang Yuan, Chen Yuan and many other celebrated writers of the May Fourth era (Ling 1992, 115-118). The people the Lius associated with lent more prestige to the family and the Lius were looked up to by others in the community.

It is therefore not surprising that Liu Yishan had many friends and could exert his influence beyond local and business arenas. Once when Zhang Jian had some conflict of interest with Zheng Mengpu, the author of the popular novel Niehaihua, over the matter of Zhang Xiaoruo's political career, Zhang Jian came to Liu Yishan for help and Liu mediated the matter. His death was even related to his socializing activities. It was said that Liu Yishan and another elite named Liang attended a banquet and Liu died of eating poisonous globefish (Cao & Lin 1981, 146; Guan 1991, 4; Ling 1992, 114).

From a wealthy merchant to one of the most notable elites in Nantong, Liu Yishan successfully capitalized on his financial power and business influence to make a gain in political domain. Social change had provided great opportunities for him to expand the reach of his influence.

Some merchants and businessmen below the county level also increased their visibility in the locality by involving themselves in local enterprises. Zhang Shangli (not a relative of Zhang Jian) was a rich shopowner in Zhang Zhishan town, where he managed both cloth and grain businesses. After he

died, his two sons, Zhang Wangshan and Wangming, inherited and expanded his business. In the 1920s, Zhang Wangsan was the Dasheng Mills' marketing director in Haimen. He was a skilled manager and had a close relationship with Zhang Jian. After purchasing more land and building new houses in Zhang Zhisan town, he opened the Tongshengfu Cotton Print Firm (Tongshengfu huabuzhuan), and also engaged in the silkworm business. Zhang Wangsan had a home telephone and two privately-owned cars. His brother Zhang Wangming once was a member of the Jiangsu Provincial Council. In 1918, he was in charge of highway construction for the town (Lu & Gao 1985, 3-4).

The Chamber of Commerce

These merchants often exercised their power through the Tong-Chong-Hai General Chamber of Commerce (Tong-Chong-Hai zong shanghui, a powerful regional merchant organization founded in 1902 by Zhang Cha, Liu Yishan, and Shen Xiejun (Fan 1922, 6. 6b). The establishment of chambers of commerce was encouraged by the government as an effort to promote economic activities and to extend contact with and control over business communities. The first decade of this century witnessed a mushrooming growth of chambers of commerce in China (Eastman 1988, 196; Bergere 1983, 730). Contrary to the government's intention, these chambers of commerce gradually achieved considerable autonomy and acted in the interests of their members (Eastman 1988, 196-97; Walker 1986, 52-53)

Like its counterparts in other areas, the general chamber of commerce in Nantong was able to generate great financial resources and dominate industrial and commercial activities in the region. In addition, it played an indispensable part in local development, such as the creation of schools, transportation facilities, new police forces, and land reclamation companies (Fan 1922, 6. 7a). In the process, the general chamber of commerce assumed administrative functions and established its political authority as well. During the 1911 Revolution, the office of the head of the county civil administration was set up within the office building of the chamber of commerce. Both Zhang Cha and Liu Yishan held key positions in the new county administration (Fan 1922, 6. 7a; Walker 1986, 306-320, 331-340).

With their leadership roles in the locality and their close relationships with the modern sector of the economy, Liu Yishan, Shen Xiejun, and other active merchants in Nantong were definitely members of the new elite group. Their social positions as merchants, industrialists, elites, scholars, politicians, and civic leaders indicated the pluralistic and diverse nature of the Chinese elite society in the early twentieth century. To better understand this group, we now go to meet Zhang Jian, who, perhaps more than anyone else in Nantong, represented and typified the complexity of the local elite society.

Zhang Jian and His Family

Prominent among Nantong's elite was Zhang Jian, a motive force behind Nantong's eventful years under consideration here. Since his life story has been detailed in every study of Nantong, we will here focus on his rise to power in Nantong and sketch his status to shed light on the characteristics of the segment of local elites he represented in Nantong.⁴

Family Background

Compared with other deeply-rooted local elite families in Tongzhou, Zhang Jian's family was disadvantaged. When Zhang Jian was born in 1853, the family lived in Changle, a market town in the subprefecture of Haimen, far from Nantong (then called Tongzhou), the political and cultural center in the region. The fifty mu of land Zhang Jian's father owned qualified him as a rich peasant but not a landlord by any means. The Zhang family worked in the field and hired some hands to help during harvest, but did not lend land to anyone.

The family had never produced any officials prior to Zhang Jian's generation. As a matter of fact, no one in the family had ever taken the district examinations, which, according to the regulations, ruled out Zhang Jian's candidacy for the examinations. For Zhang Jian to qualify for the district examinations, he needed a personal guarantee from a

⁴ About Zhang Jian's life and career in English, see Chu 1965 and Bastid 1988, 19-28; in Chinese, see Song 1963; Liu 1965; Zhang 1966; and Zhang 1986.

scholar of his own clan and the collective guarantee of the linsheng of his district. The family finally found these guarantees for Zhang Jian but suffered much frustration, humiliation, and financial loss (Bastid 1988, 19-20; Chu 1965, 9). Obviously, the society did not facilitate the rise of an ordinary peasant family like the Zhangs. Zhang Jian's family moved to Xiting, a village in northern Nantong, shortly after Zhang Jian's birth. When Zhang Jian visited Changle between ages fourteen and eighteen, he found no one in the town who really remembered anything about his grandfather (Zhang 1921, 58).

Zhang Jian before 1895

Zhang Jian spent his early life preparing for the civil service examination and gained the jinshi title at forty-one years of age, after which he was appointed to the prestigious Hanlin Academy. In the process, he participated in some important events of the time, including the Korean crisis of 1882, and made the acquaintance of a number of major figures on the national political stage then and later, such as the Guangxu Emperor's minister Weng Tonghe, the Liangjiang governors-general Liu Guangyi and Zhang Zhidong, both of whom became Zhang Jian's patrons, and the young and ambitious Yuan Shikai. Outside Nantong, Zhang Jian had established himself as an important scholar and an experienced politician.

In 1895, China was defeated in the Sino-Japanese War. At the same time, the conflict between the Empress Dowager Cixi and Emperor Guangxu gradually came into the open, dividing the rest of the central officials into two or more factions. The High Commissioner for Military and Foreign Affairs in North China (Beiyang dachen) Li Hongzhang, for example, was with the Empress, and minister Weng Tonghe was on the Emperor's side. Factionalism at the highest governmental level further consumed the limited energy of the Qing court in the face of foreign threats, greatly disappointing officials like Zhang who really hoped to make a change. All of these events happened in coincidence with the death of Zhang's father in 1894. Zhang therefore resigned his post in the Hanlin Academy, and returned to Nantong for the required three years of mourning. It was at this point that Zhang Jian, because of Zhang Zhidong's instruction, took over the Dasheng project and became involved in Nantong local affairs (Zhang 1965, 1-66; Zhang 1986, 12-13, Chu 1965, 14-16, Terahiro 1979, 73-75; Fujioka 1985, 7-50).

Obstacles to Zhang Jian's Local Development

The power circles in Tongzhou, however, considered Zhang Jian an outsider in 1894. The facts that he did not reside in Tongzhou city (the political center of the region), that his family did not have elite roots or ties in Tongzhou, and that for twenty years he had served politicians outside Tongzhou

were all hindrances to his local development. Zhang Jian's brother Zhang Cha, once a county magistrate in Jiangxi, now returned home to help Zhang Jian, but had no influence in Tongzhou. His hometown elites took Zhang Cha lightly because his degree had been purchased. The jinshi and zhuangyuan titles Zhang Jian had obtained in 1894 marked the rise of the Zhang family from peasant to the elite class, but they were empty honors which did not immediately bring wealth and real power to Zhang Jian, nor did they automatically grant him recognition as an influential local elite. For instance, Zhang Jian owed a debt of 6,000 yuan after his father's funeral in 1894, and in 1895 he had to put twenty-four boxes of his books in pawn in order to start a local militia (Nakai 1976, 12; Zhang 1986, 44-45).

In his biography of Zhang Jian, Zhang Xiaoruo painfully described how much his father had suffered from people's cold shoulders in the founding years of the Dasheng enterprise. Zhang Jian frequently traveled to Nanjing, Shanghai, Hubei and elsewhere seeking financial support from a variety people ranging from local merchants to prefectural administrators to higher-level officials, but the results were often disappointing. As Zhang Xiaoruo said: "As a poor scholar, my father then had fame; but fame cannot be spent as money. There was no way for people to trust my father [enough to invest in the Dasheng Mill]" (Zhang 1965, 72).

The existing power circles in Tongzhou either tried to deny Zhang Jian's development or distrusted him in 1895, when Zhang Jian started the Dasheng Cotton Mill and became involved in local politics. He encountered difficulties created by prefect Wang Shutang, who refused to support Zhang's industrial activities (Zhang 1986, 60-61). Zhang Jian also experienced financial shortfall partially due to local merchants' reservations about his ability to succeed. Tongzhou elites did not all show respect to Zhang Jian either. One day, an official from outside Nantong came to visit. He was once a disciple of an official from the Gu family, so he visited the Gus first and only then the zhuangyuangong Zhang Jian. The Gus were immensely proud of this visiting arrangement and still talked about it two generations later (Xing 1992, 149). Obviously, Zhang Jian's external contacts and fame did not give him easy access to the inner reaches of local politics.

The Zhang Family's Rise to Power

Zhang Jian's eventual rise from being almost shut out of the power circles of Tongzhou to occupying a central position in them was due to many factors. Economically the Dasheng Cotton Mill made a profit soon after production started in 1898, and the Zhang family's financial condition consequently improved considerably. In addition to profits from the Dasheng Mill, when Zhang Jian and Zhang Cha divided their family properties in 1903, they split total landholdings of 3,800 mu

(Zou n.d., 419). Though their father had been a peasant all his life, the Zhang brothers now were not only capitalists, but also rich landlords. With the rapid increase of profits from Dasheng, Zhang Jian was able to create a dozen more factories, which not only brought wealth to the Zhang brothers, but also financed many social and public projects in Nantong.

The Zhang brothers began to gain control over the locality through the public institutions and projects developed in the local self-government movement of the Xinzheng period, Zhang Jian simultaneously held leading positions in many local institutions, such as schools and charitable institutes. In 1907 when the Tongzhou Local Self-government Council was established, Zhang Jian was its director.

While Zhang Jian often had to attend to national affairs, Zhang Cha wielded the family's local power in Tongzhou. He was the active manager of the Dasheng enterprises, and assumed many other positions in public service institutions such as in the Erosion Protection Society, the Peasant Society, and the Tongzhou militia. More importantly, he held the important position of director of the Tong-Chong-Hai General Chamber of Commerce from 1902 until the late 1920s (Fei 1981, 140-141; Zou n.d., 422). The Zhang family also had influence on local organizations in which they did not necessarily take leading positions, such as in the Educational Bureau, which was initiated and founded by Zhang Jian.

The local self-government movement and the establishment of public institutions in the 1910s considerably changed the power structure in Tongzhou. As Guan Jingcheng pointed out, the people the prefect had to deal with now were no longer the four city directors and directors in rural areas, but those who actively participated and held positions in local public institutions and self-government organizations. They consisted of industrialists and merchants, Dasheng stock holders, teachers, graduates of modern schools, returned students from overseas, managers of public institutions, lower-degree holders, and landlords, most of whom did not necessarily have prominent family backgrounds. Zhang Jian and Zhang Cha assumed leadership positions among this group, which constituted the new political force in Nantong.

The collapse of the Qing dynasty in the 1911 Revolution enabled the Zhangs further to expand their local influences. In the reorganization of the local administration after 1911, the head of the Civil Administration Office was Sun Baoshu, while Zhang Cha held the more powerful military office of General Commander of Nantong. The fact that Zhang controlled the real power in the new administration resulted in Sun's resignation, whereupon Zhang took over the post of Civil Administration Office head as well (Yan 1988, 195). Other members in the administration were all the Zhangs' trusted followers (Guan 1981, 65-73).

From this point on into the middle of the 1920s, when China's political route took another turn, the Zhangs, especially Zhang Jian, became the recognized representatives of local elite society in Nantong. Whenever local society had concerns which needed to be conveyed to the officials, such as requests for funds, Zhang Jian was the one who was asked to speak to the government on behalf of the community. Zhang Jian wrote countless letters, proposals, and reports to officials of various levels on local matters such as militia, police, erosion protection, education, floods, surveys, taxation, industry, transportation, land reclamation, and so forth. He often acted upon local interest when dealing with the government. To the outside world, Zhang Jian was known as "Zhang Nantong." He often represented the community to welcome guests and visitors who came to Nantong and responded to their questions and concerns (Zhang Jian 1965, 1795-1934).

At the same time, the Zhangs controlled affairs within Nantong. In 1914 Yuan Shikai ordered that all local self-government institutions, such as the councils and directorates at county, town, and rural levels, were to close down and county magistrates (the Civil Administration Office had been abolished and the position of county magistrate restored in 1913) were to take control of county affairs (Yan 1988, 196). But in Nantong, local officials appointed by the central government, from the county magistrate to the chief of police, had to take their cue from the Zhangs. Zhang Jian and Zhang

Cha could on their own authority move local armies when needed, as we will see in the following chapter. They also considered themselves the masters or owners of Nantong's natural resources. Zhang Jian once in his own name issued an announcement banning people from taking rocks from the five mountains in Nantong (Zou n.d., 422).

Zhang Jian often used his home as a yamen to administer local affairs. One of his servants recalled that Zhang Jian would sit in the living room at eight a.m. to take cases. People such as Zhang Jian's staff, local officials and peasants would come to see Zhang Jian with their problems. In some cases Zhang solved the problems right away, while in other cases he would write letters for them or ask them to come back in a few days for results. Usually if Zhang Jian took the case, it would be solved (Huang n.d., 14). Obviously, a new political center in Nantong was taking shape around Zhang Jian and Zhang Cha, and the elite society and the public had come to recognize and accept this new leadership.

Social Networks Within Nantong

The period from 1894 to 1911 therefore witnessed the establishment of the Zhangs' power in Nantong. Economic and political factors, as I have noted, had definitely contributed to the process. But money and institutions alone could not have been responsible for the phenomenal rise of the Zhangs' influence. Zhang Jian's social network was another factor

which helped him penetrate elite circles and make the public accept his leadership role.

It is indeed a difficult task to trace all of Zhang Jian's social connections. The Nine Records of Zhang Jian showed that Zhang Jian wrote 205 elegiac couplets alone for friends, relatives, and acquaintances who died during his lifetime, in addition to the letters, poems, and congratulatory couplets he made for his numerous other friends and acquaintances. Included among the elegiac couplets were those in memory of Sun Yat-sen, Cai E (the Yunnan General who launched the Second Revolution against Yuan Shikai in 1913), Mrs. Liang Qichao, and Shen Shou (an embroidery expert), among others (Zhang 1965, 3802, 3792, 3801, 3795). Zhang Jian Cungao, which collected Zhang's writings left out of the 1931 Nine Records of Zhang Jian, recorded more than 1,200 of Zhang's letters, mainly written after 1911. The addressees of these letters included the Republican presidents Li Yuanhong and Xu Shichang, warlords Sun Chuanfang and Zhang Zuolin, educators Cai Yuanpei and Huang Yanpei, and some Japanese and actors (Yang 1987, 1-44). These names should indicate the range of Zhang Jian's social contacts. His relationships with Zhang Zhidong, Liu Guangyi and many other well-known politicians have been frequently mentioned (Chu 1965; Bastid 1988). Here we rather direct our attention to the elite ties at the local and regional levels to see how they helped Zhang Jian

and Zhang Cha establish themselves not only as members but also as leaders of the local elite group.

In Nantong county, the people with whom Zhang Jian first came in contact were not well-established and deep-rooted officials and elites such as the Gus, but were instead a number of young scholars, such as Zhou Jialu and Fan Dangshi. They were from landlord or elite families and therefore belonged to Nantong elite circles, but not necessarily to the richest and the most powerful ones. Yet they were respected either because of their literary reputations or their personal experiences. These young people, splitting from the traditional gentry group, were reform-minded. Like Zhang Jian, they had also suffered from the difficulties imposed by the civil examination system and had shared a commitment to social reform.

It was therefore not surprising that Zhou Jialu and Fan Dangshi were among the first members of local elite society to join Zhang Jian in educational reform. Zhou and Fan, especially the latter, were great assets to Zhang Jian's rise in Nantong. It was said that Fan Dangshi was good with people and often helped them generously with money, though he himself was not rich. He was comfortable socializing with celebrities and high-ranking officials, while the latter felt honored to make Fan's acquaintance. For instance, prefect Wang Shutang, who had friction with Zhang Jian, was one of Fan Dangshi's friends (Guan 1985, 215). In fact, Fan Dangshi was one of the most

popular local elites in the early 1910s. In the Biography section of the 1922 Illustrated Gazetteer of Nantong County, the name of Fan Dangshi appeared in more than half of the 105 local elite biographies, indicating that Fan had interacted with these elites in one way or another (Fan 1922, 19).

Fan Dangshi's talent, popularity, family background, and reputation were extremely helpful in Zhang Jian's rise, especially in its early stages. In Bastid's introduction to "Friends and Collaborators of Zhang Jian during the Years 1901-1912," she especially points out that Zhang Jian "benefitted from his [Fan Dangshi's] prestige in Tongzhou" (1988, 166), of which Zhang Jian was aware. While Fan was dying of illness in 1904, Zhang Jian held his hands and said "The world does not necessarily need me, but it cannot do without you" (Fan 1922, 19. 17b). This of course was an emotional overstatement, but it showed how much Zhang Jian valued Fan Dangshi's contribution. Fan Dangshi helped Zhang Jian break into and build his influence in Nantong elite circles by participating in Zhang's educational reform and getting results from it. Through Fan Dangshi, Zhang Jian also came into close contact with other prominent local elites, such as Liu Yishan, who supported the Dasheng project and facilitated Zhang Jian's contact with Nantong merchant circles.

When locally prominent figures such as Fan Dangshi and Liu Yishan supported Zhang Jian, the community followed along in giving him acceptance, especially after Zhang Jian's

projects began to show results. At the same time, Zhang's connections in nearby Jiangbei counties not only reinforced his influence in Nantong but also expanded his power beyond the area.

Social Networks in the Jiangbei Region

In the Jiangbei region, Shen Xiejun of Haimen and Sha Yuanbing of Rugao were Zhang Jian's most important friends and collaborators. We have already mentioned Shen, who was Zhang Jian's business partner and political ally, and who later also became a relative when his daughter married one of Zhang Cha's sons (Jia & Yan 1988, 132). In Bastid's words, Shen Xiejun "played a role in Haimen similar to that of Sha Yuanbing in Rugao. Like Sha, Shen maintained business, literary, and political ties with Zhang" (1988, 169).

As for Sha Yuanbing, Barkan calls him "the most notable of Rugao's local leaders during the 1920s," while Bastid labels him as one of "the most active entrepreneurs at the provincial level," and also "one of the most vigorous supporters of Zhang Jian at the local and provincial levels" (Barkan 1983, 373; Bastid 1988, 60, 168). Sha Yuanbing was a Zhang Jian-like figure in Rugao, except that Sha was born into a much richer and more deeply-rooted gentry family than Zhang's (Guan, 1991: 8). Sha earned his jinshi title in the same year as Zhang Jian did, so they were tongke in addition to tongxiang. Interestingly, when Zhang Jian was named zhuangyuan and

called to meet the emperor, he was not properly dressed for the occasion because he did not expect to win. Sha Yuanbing quickly switched clothes with Zhang and saved him from embarrassment (Zhu 1988, 162). Like Zhang Jian, Sha Yuanbing was also appointed to the Hanlin Academy.

The connection and mutual support between Zhang Jian and Sha Yuanbing were very important to both of them. Rugao, the largest and most populous county in Jiangsu province, was part of Tong-zhou prefecture before 1911 and remained an important neighbor of Nantong afterward. Many projects initiated in Nantong included or affected the broader Tongzhou region, especially Rugao. Support from and cooperation with Rugao elites were crucial for the Nantong elites. Though Barkan paints a rather bleak picture of Rugao in the late 1920s, the county did in fact witness some industrial and commercial development in the early twentieth century. As a matter of fact, Rugao had more than 3,000 stores and firms before 1908, one third of which were located in the county seat. More than ten tongye gongsuo were formed at that time. In 1902, the Rugao Chamber of Commerce was established with a staff of forty and an office with twenty jie of rooms. This was one of the earliest local chambers of commerce in Jiangbei (Zhou 1991, 40).

Sha Yuanbing was actively involved in local affairs before and after the 1911 Revolution. He managed land re-surveys and land tax reassessment projects and set up a

surveying office in Rugao. He also contributed to the founding of a local public hospital (Barkan 1990, 204). Sha Yuanbing was one of the Tongzhou elites who initiated educational reform programs in the region. He established schools in Rugao. Sha's Rugao Normal School was like Zhang Jian's Nantong Normal School but not as famous as the latter. In creating this school, Sha Yuanbing and Zhang Jian exchanged ideas many times (Chen 1991, 39). Sha was also responsible for the establishment of the Rugao Middle School (zhong xuexiao) and the Yizhong Commercial School (Yizhong shangye xuexiao) (Barkan 1990, 201). Like Zhang Jian, Sha Yuanbing also participated in writing a local gazetteer, in this case the Rugao xianzhi (Rugao County Gazetteer) in the early Republican period (Huang 1990, 62).

After the 1911 Revolution, Sha Yuanbing became the first head of the Civil Administration Office in Rugao. He also took charge of the Rugao Educational Association, Chamber of Commerce, Surveying Office, and Water Conservancy Committee during the 1910s and 1920s. Sha was highly visible at both provincial and national levels. He participated in the Jiangsu railway movement, which tried to raise private Chinese capital for Jiangsu railway construction in order to reject foreign loans. He was an active member of the Society to Prepare for Constitutional Government created in 1906 in Shanghai. Sha had a position in the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. He was once the president of the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly and was also

chosen to represent Jiangsu in the lower house of the National Assembly (Barkan 1990, 202).

In addition to his recognized personal merits, prestigious academic degrees, and political positions in and outside Rugao, Sha Yuanbing was also a successful entrepreneur. He had investments in Shanghai and local steamship companies, the Dasheng Cotton Mill, a flour mill, an oil pressing mill, a local old-style bank (qianzhuang), several land reclamation companies, and a ham factory. The products of the ham factory won a prize at an international fair in Honolulu and were exported to the United States (Barkan 1990, 204).

Possessing considerable political, moral, academic, and economic power, Sha Yuanbing was capable of mobilizing resources and contributing to Zhang Jian's programs. In 1904 he was the co-founder of the Tong-Hai Educational Bureau and initiator of some of Zhang Jian's factories (Fan 1922, 9: 4a; NXZZH 1905, 6: 2). When Zhang Jian wanted to create a general chamber of commerce for seven Jiangbei counties, Rugao made a contribution of several tens of thousands of yuan (Zhou 1991, 41). Sha's reputation and financial resources were not only his personal capital, but were also transformed into capital for his friends. For instance, in a written request for creating the Guangsheng Oil Mill sent to the Nanyang Dachen for approval, Zhang Jian especially mentioned that Sha Bianxiu (Sha Yuanbing was appointed to the Hanlin Academy Bianxiu) was

involved in various aspects of the project, from raising funds to managing the Oil Mill (NXZZH 1905, 6: 2).

Zhang Jian frequently consulted Sha Yuanbing over many of his projects. In 1916 Zhang Jian was approached by a dyer from Zhenjiang with the suggestion of creating a dye factory. Zhang Jian in turn wrote to Sha to ask him if it was a good idea and if he was interested in it (Yang 1987, 148). To be sure, Sha Yuan-bing did not outshine Zhang Jian, but the latter's influence in the Jiangbei region was definitely enhanced by his close ties with Sha Yuanbing. Likewise, as Barkan points out, Sha Yuanbing also benefitted from his ties with Zhang Jian. She considers both Zhang Jian and Sha Yuanbing to have been members of the "Shanghai-centered Jiangsu provincial reformist networks" (1990, 201). The two leading figures together, along with other prominent merchants and elites in the region, constituted a prominent voice representing Jiangbei elites.

Like the friendship between Zhang Jian and Shen Xiejun, the close ties between Zhang Jian and Sha Yuanbing were maintained to the very end of their lives. In an essay Zhang Jian wrote to honor Sha's parents' seventieth birthday in 1899, Zhang Jian equated his friendship with Sha to some much-told tales about friends in Chinese history. In his essay written for Sha Yuanbing's sixtieth birthday in 1924, two years before Zhang's death, the same proud tone remained (Zhang Jian 1965, 2352, 2364).

It goes without saying that Zhang Jian's networks, even within Nantong and the Jiangbei region, extended far beyond the ones mentioned here. The connections we have discussed nevertheless serve as examples revealing how Zhang's networks were formed, how they contributed to his rise in Nantong, and how he and similar influential elites could use them to interact and maintain their power.

The Character of Zhang Jian-like Elites

How can we characterize Zhang Jian (and Sha Yuanbing as well) and the elite segment he represented? Obviously, they were not, as I will explain shortly, an exact counterpart of the European bourgeois class, nor were they the same as the traditional Chinese gentry. Having held academic degrees and governmental positions, and later engaged in managing industrial enterprises, Zhang Jian belonged to a variety of social categories: gentry, official, politician, local leader, industrialist, businessman and entrepreneur.⁵ He could even be appealing to ordinary people because of his peasant origin.

As both a degree holder and industrialist, Zhang Jian truly represented a unique social stratum which only late imperial China could offer. Never before and never after did China produce a social group with both statuses--before the

⁵ Walker gives Zhang Jian a long title which also shows Zhang's multi-faceted social identity: "scholar-bureaucrat, nationalist reformer, entrepreneur and domestic industrialist." (1986, 35)

late imperial period, there were degree holders who were not industrialists; after the abolition of the examination system in 1905, there were industrialists who did not possess gentry status in its traditional sense. Typifying the transitional period in modern China where old and new elements all came together, Zhang Jian and those like him possessed hybrid social identities that are hard to categorize.

Scholarship on Zhang Jian and Zhang Jian-like Elites

Reflecting this difficulty, past scholarship on Zhang Jian has disagreed on the question of his social status. Zhang Jian study has been dominated in mainland China by Marxist views since the 1950s, when debates focused on what class Zhang belonged to. The overall view on him then was quite negative, and emphasized his roles as a conservative politician and a failed capitalist (Liu & Du 1962). In the 1980s, China's economic reform led to a renewed scholarly interest in Zhang's industrial and educational activities, and his image was somewhat rehabilitated (Chen & Cai 1982; Zhang 1984).

Elsewhere in Asia studies of Zhang have also varied. Zhang has always been highly regarded in Taiwan, but most of the works published there have been biographies and personal recollections by Zhang's students, friends, and relatives, most of which lack scholarly analysis (Song 1963; Zhang 1965). Japanese historians have also been very interested in Zhang Jian and Nantong. Their studies have focused either on Zhang's

political position during the 1911 Revolution and his impact on national affairs, or on his industrial activities. Zhang Jian in general has been viewed as a constitutional reformer who contributed to the modernization of Nantong (Nakai 1976, 1983; Terahiro 1979; Hayashi 1981; Fujioka 1985).

In the West, two major works on Zhang Jian were done in the 1960s, one by Samuel Chu and the other by Marianne Bastid. Chu's is an extended biography of Zhang Jian, including the modern development of Nantong. Bastid's is about Zhang's educational reform in Nantong. Both Chu and Bastid portrayed Zhang Jian as an altruistic modern reformer (Chu 1965; Bastid 1988 [1968]). The most recent English work on Nantong has been Kathy Walker's study of the political economy of cotton textiles in Nantong. She employs an involution model to examine Nantong's industrial ventures and their impact on the rural economy. For Walker, the local elites--the "industrial-commercial bourgeoisie"--were conservative and retrogressive in nature, because, according to her, the development in the 1920s contributed to the subproletarianization of the Nantong peasant economy in the 1940s (Walker 1986).

Despite different opinions on Zhang Jian, scholars have generally agreed that he was a reformer. But what kind of reformer was he? He was clearly not an "altruistic reformer" because he gained considerable personal profit from the reform process by design as well as chance. Scholars have indeed tried to search for an appropriate label for Zhang Jian-like

elites who had multiple identities and who were most active in political and economic domains in the early twentieth century. For instance, Min uses the term "enlightened gentry" (1989, xii), while Eastman refers to the "new elites" and "new merchant class" (1988, 193-95). Some also use the term "merchant-elites." On the other hand, Bergere suggests that these elites represent the emergence of the Chinese bourgeois class because of their involvement in the modern sector of the economy and the rise of nationalism (1983, 721-763), and Walker apparently agrees with Bergere when she adopts the term "industrial-commercial bourgeoisie" in her study of Nantong (1986, 52).

Terms such as "enlightened gentry," "new elites," and "merchant-elites" only reflect the most obvious characteristics of the particular segment of local elites to which Zhang Jian belonged. Yes, these elites were new in some respects, but in other respects many of them were still traditional. These terms fail to stress the transitional nature of this elite segment and are thus vague and ill-defined.

On the other hand, the term "bourgeoisie" is a bit misleading. These elites, like the bourgeois class in the West, indeed engaged in modern industrial activities, but they were still very different from the typical bourgeois class. For one thing, economic activities for Western bourgeoisie were rationalized. Making profits, accumulating capital and expanding production were among the highest priorities for

industrialists and businessmen, and they "made decisions freely in accord with standards of profitability...with an economic rationality immanent, so it appeared, in the market" (Habermas 1993, 46). Economic rationalization was lacking in Nantong's enterprises. Instead of accumulating capital and reinvesting it in business, a considerable part of the profits from the first ten extremely profitable years of Dasheng's operation was spent in founding schools and other public facilities. The fact that local public service in a sense depended on Dasheng for funding undermined Dasheng's financial well-being, and ultimately crippled its ability to sustain itself in the 1920s when its markets were declining with the end of the war in Europe (Huang 1990, 135).

More fundamental differences between this elite group and the bourgeois class in the West exist as well in, for instance, ideology. The description Bergere has given of the so-called Chinese bourgeois class indicates that this was a class in the process of becoming, but does not prove that there existed a full-blown bourgeois class in early twentieth century China (Esherick 1976, 69).

The Urban Reformist Elites

In light of these discussions, I have found that "urban reformist elite," a term introduced by Esherick, is more useful to describe the elite segment in question. According to Esherick's definition, the urban reformist elites emerged as

a "coalescing body of individuals" who lived in the urban centers, had gentry backgrounds, and were prime movers behind industrial and railway development (1976, 104). More importantly, Esherick uses the term to stress the intermediate position of these elites--they were "distinct from the old gentry, but were not yet a bourgeoisie" (1976, 69). He also points out that the urban reformist elites were self-protective on the one hand, and progressive and nationalistic on the other. These general characteristics of urban reformist elites Esherick has outlined fit such Nantong elites as Zhang Jian to an extent.

In fact, we can roughly put Zhang Jian, Sha Yuanbing, and some segments in the groups of merchants, scholars, and professionals, such as Shen Xiejun, Liu Yishan, Fan Dangshi, Yu Chen, and Chen Chen, into the category of urban reformist elites. They were in fact the leaders of the urban reformist elite group in Nantong. They all had gentry backgrounds and were the driving force behind Nantong's reform programs. While serving their own interests, they contributed to local development. Their transition from traditional gentry to reformist elites was mainly through their social ties and due to their ability to take initiative in reform programs and modern economic undertakings. These activities provided them with new social resources which enlarged the scope of their influence.

Although the urban reformist elites shared sources of their unity in the reform orientation and transitional nature, I have to stress that they were not one fixed, stable group. There existed social, political, and cultural lines of division among them, and they varied in their attitude toward different social issues. For instance, Esherick's picture of the urban reformist elites stressed their anti-imperialism and support for student movements. In Nantong, however, Zhang Jian suppressed the student movements of 1920 while Yu Chen supported them, as we will see in this study, but both of them fit into the basic criteria Esherick has used to characterize the urban reformist elite. The Nantong case therefore suggests that while applying the term "urban reformist elite" to concrete groups, some modification of the definition is needed.

The other segments of local elite society, such as some of the professionals, were not the leaders of the elite society in Nantong, but were nevertheless its active members. Their rise to prominence was also due to their activities in public service and connection with the urban reformist elites.

Obviously, the social needs present at the turn of this century for educational and industrial development provided major arenas of activity within which local elites could adjust to changing circumstances. Those, such as the urban reformist elites, who grasped the opportunity and participated in these development needs, were able to adapt to social

change and improve their status, while those, such as the lower-layer scholars and the Gu family, who either had limited access to the activities dominated by urban reformist elites, or who indulged in their past learning and detached themselves from current developments, often declined or faded away.

The State and the Elites

To better understand local elite society in Nantong, we also need to take a look at the different attitudes the local elites adopted toward state authority and the relationships between the two. Generally speaking, the interests of Nantong elites, as of those in other local areas of China which have been documented in detail (Rankin 1986, Perdue 1987; Chauncey 1992; Pomeranz 1993), conflicted with state interests. But the degree of the conflict and the way it was expressed varied, depending on the positions of the elites involved.

Conflict of Political Interest

The discontent scholars like Fan Dangshi and Zhou Jialu had with the Qing court mainly resulted from their disappointing experiences in the civil examination system. They protested it either by refusing to participate in it again or by supporting educational reform to undermine the traditional examination system. What Zhou Jialu said to comfort Zhang Jian when the latter failed the examinations, as I have mentioned earlier, showed that this group had long become detached from

the state and had withdrawn their support from it. They had been looking for alternatives outside the official channels to fulfill their sense of mission to serve the country. The vigor they displayed in the educational reform reflected their determination for change. It was said that Fan Dangshi discussed and debated with other local elites "day and night" in order to find funds for schools in the beginning of educational reform in Nantong (Fan 1922, 19. 8a).

On the other hand, Yu Chen, who was Fan Dangshi's junior by approximately fifteen years, had not suffered as much as Fan's generation had in the examination system. But Yu had had the opportunity to study at new-style schools and had obtained his higher education at a Japanese university. He was therefore exposed to new radical ideas of that time which opposed the Qing government, and he also used these ideas to influence his students, one result of which was a queue incident.

The queue was not only the ethnic symbol of the Manchus but also the symbolic representation of the Qing's domination of China after 1644. In the early years of Qing rule, many Chinese, especially in the south, lost their lives just because they refused to have queues like the Manchus, and their refusal was considered as rebellion or an attempt to rebel. The Manchu haircutting order was issued to Jiangnan in 1645 and the people were given three days to make up their mind either to keep their heads or their hair. This order provoked much violence. Li Qian, the first Qing prefectural

governor of Tongzhou, was killed by local people in June 1645 because he tried to carry out the haircutting order forcibly (Guan 1985, 97-98).

In 1910 Yu Chen, who had just come back from Japan with fresh perspectives and was the General Affairs Section director at the Nantong Normal School, attacked the Qing official hair style as "pigtails" and their sleeve style as "horse feet" while talking with a student named Xu Kang. Yu asked: "Aren't these kinds of lingxiu just like animals"? (ling in Chinese means collar and here refers to head; xiu means sleeve. The two characters together also mean "leader"). Xu spread Yu's words among his peers right away, and all of the sudden twelve students had cut their queues. According to the recollection of Qu Jingren, one of the twelve students, it was quite an exciting experience. By coincidence one teacher did not show up in class that day and the students therefore cut their queues in the class. Some went to the campus barbershop to do their hair and those who did not have the time to go directly rushed to catch the next class. In the following several days, more than seventy students cut their queues at the normal school alone.

In 1910 many signs pointed to the fatal decline of the Qing dynasty. Promoted by the revolutionaries, nationalism characterized by anti-Manchu feelings was running high, especially among students. What the students at the normal school did was not an isolated incident. As a matter of fact,

a nationwide fad of queue-cutting was taking place, most notably in the treaty port cities (Esherick 1976, 162). But in relatively remote Nantong, what happened in the normal school was still a sensational incident. It made Yu Chen well known, yet he was very nervous. He reported it to Zhang Jian, and the latter panicked.

Zhang, as the director of the Jiangsu Consultative Bureau for constitutional reform, was in Nanjing preparing a trip to Beijing to visit the prince regent for some important matters. The chambers of commerce in Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangzhou, and Hankou had written to Zhang Jian and requested him to go to Beijing to find out what was the next move of the Qing court, so that the merchant elites in these cities could prepare for their actions. Zhang Jian's Beijing trip was supposed to accomplish this mission (Qi 1983b, 223).

Also, this trip was the first time Zhang had returned to Beijing since his resignation from the Hanlin Academy in 1894. It was a sensitive situation for Zhang to have direct dialogue with the court again after being away from the center for more than ten years (Qi 1983b, 225). If news was passed to Beijing that the students at the school Zhang had created and managed had cut their queues, it could ruin his mission and even endanger his life.

Zhang therefore immediately started to control the damage of the incident. He sent a letter to Yu Chen with orders to punish the students, which Yu did later. He then returned to

Nantong and held a meeting with the seventy students. In his speech, Zhang blamed the students for their carelessness and pointed out that this incident could damage his coming activities in Beijing. He also emphasized that this event should be kept within the campus and no one should spread it. Finally, Zhang Jian with tears in his eyes asked the students to wear a fake queue and never to break rules again. As for Yu Chen, this incident evidently did not cost his job and affect his promotion later at the Normal School, since the Qing dynasty was soon overthrown and cutting the queue became a politically correct fashion (Qu & Xu 1981, 154-155; Cao 1987, 83).

The queue incident in a sense reflected the generation gap between Zhang Jian and Yu Chen, but there was more to it. When Yu Chen's conduct showed his indifference and dislike of the Qing court, Zhang's attitude reflected that politically he was part of the ruling class. He was steeped in the Chinese classics and had made it to the top in the traditional system, which connected him with the ruling class politically and intellectually. This kind of connection was in a sense "genetic." This is why even on the very eve of the collapse of the Qing dynasty, Zhang Jian still tied his political career to the well-being of the dynasty. His intention in the reform was mainly to preserve the imperial system rather than to destroy it, despite the fact that he was not completely unprepared for its final fall and that the reforms in which he had

engaged had in practice undermined the state, as the following chapters will reveal. The close ties between Zhang Jian and the state, however, did not change the fact that the interests of the two were also in conflict, which was most evident in the economic domain.

Conflict of Economic Interest

Let's take the establishment of the Dasheng Mill as an example. Ironically, the state as the initiator of the Dasheng factory gave up the project halfway through. Government support of Dasheng in the form of textile machines and monopoly rights was far less than needed. It took four years for Zhang Jian to start Dasheng. During the period, more than once financial crisis struck Zhang to the degree that he almost had to back out. Zhang Zhidong and Liu Kunyi withdrew after offering the machines. The director of the provincial chamber of commerce, Gui Songqing, once promised to help Zhang Jian with 50,000 liang, but later went back on his word. When Zhang Jian confronted Gui in front of Liu Kunyi, the latter did nothing to urge Gui to keep his promise. Sheng Xuanhuai, Li Hongzhang's trusted follower, was then the director of both the Commerce Promotion Bureau (zhaoshang ju) and Telegraph Bureau (dian ju) (Zuo 1952, 53-55; Feuerwerker 1958, 88-95). He also did not keep his promise of collecting 250,000 liang for Zhang, though it was confirmed in a written agreement. At one point, Zhang Jian did not even have money to travel to

Shanghai for business. He had to sell his calligraphy in order to pay the travel fare. At another point, Zhang sent a petition to Liu Kunyi and threatened to seek Japanese assistance if Liu was not going to help him raise some money, although the primary motivation of building the factory was, ironically, to resist and compete with Japanese economic penetration (Zhang Jian 1965, 1115-1117).

By November 1898, the factory had been built and machines were installed, but there was not enough capital to start production. Zhang Jian once again wrote eight letters to Liu Kunyi, Zhang Zhidong, and Sheng Xuanhuai within twenty-five days, asking for support. Liu Kunyi, in response to Zhang Jian's appeal, instructed Tongzhou prefect Wang Shutang to help Zhang with local funds, but Wang was not supportive of Dasheng because he was uncomfortable with Zhang's increased influence in local affairs. What Wang did, first imposing taxes on the peasants to provoke local resistance to the Dasheng project, then allocating for Dasheng a travel fund set up originally to assist local students to participate in higher level examinations, was more of a hindrance than a help. As Wang wished, these actions angered local scholars and more than 300 xiucai came to protest (Zhang 1986, 60-61).

The preparation of Dasheng was finally completed and it started production in 1899. The success of Dasheng at this stage was partially due to the tremendous efforts Zhang and his assistants, including Shen Xiejun and several other local

merchants, had made in the previous four years. In the meantime, Zhang Jian was very disappointed with officials' reluctance to help him. Zhang's relationship with Liu worsened, which to a degree contributed to Zhang's resignation from the position of director of the Liangjiang Chamber of Commerce which he had assumed in 1898. He criticized Liu Kunyi in his diary for Liu's irresponsibility (Zhang 1967, 18. 22 November 1898; Zhang 1986, 62- 63).⁶

The tension between local officials like Wang Shutang and Zhang Jian and the local merchant group was also intensified. Zhang later instructed an artist to draw four pictures to vilify those who tried to jeopardize the founding of Dasheng. One of the pictures was titled "poison hiding in water and grass" (shuicao cangdu), referring to Wang and one of his assistants named Huang, because the character wang has the radical "water" and the character huang has the radical "grass". These four pictures were displayed in the Nantong museum as part of the Dasheng history. The prefect Wang Shutang was therefore stigmatized publicly and permanently as a negative figure in the history of Dasheng (Zhang 1986, 61)

The Dasheng case highlighted the changing nature of state-elite relationships in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As primarily an officially-sponsored project, state cooperation and backing for Dasheng was

⁶ Zhang Jian Diary, reprinted in Taiwan in 1967, has volume numbers but not page numbers.

presumably guaranteed. But after some of the initial governmental actions, the high-ranking officials like Liu Kunyi and Zhang Zhidong withdrew, either because they were unable or unwilling to see the project through. Unlike the local merchants, these officials had no interest directly involved in Dasheng. For the merchants Zhang and Liu represented the state, and their retreat from the Dasheng project showed that the state failed to safeguard merchants' interests.

Zhang Jian, despite his political ties with the state, nevertheless shared with the merchants the vision of economic development. His economic interest was tied with the merchants', and the latter often distrusted the government, which was evident when Dasheng was a joint project of government and merchants. At that point, Zhang Jian had difficulty attracting private investors. For one thing, the merchants feared government control of Dasheng and official corruption. Second, they did not trust the government's sincerity in developing the cotton industry. Merchants who had already invested in Dasheng wanted to withdraw, and Zhang Jian was unable to collect enough capital to meet the half-share the merchants were supposed to provide. The merchants still took a wait-and see attitude when Dasheng became a government supervision and merchant management firm. Not until the Dasheng changed to gentry supervision and merchant management enterprise, were the merchants sufficiently encouraged to invest in it (Zhang 1986, 58-59).

Evidently, the clashes between the interests of officials and merchants were not always expressed or solved through civil channels. In some cases, they could involve violence and other social groups as well. In Pingchao town, yarn merchant Li Qi was one of the victims of the li levy, which Shen Xiajun and Zhang Jian made efforts to reform. The local official who was in charge of collecting the li levy had a bad reputation, and he blackmailed Li, provoking a violent incident. The merchants and townspeople destroyed the office of the tax collector, and tied him up and humiliated him. His supervisor was furious, so he had Li arrested and demanded the death penalty. A fearless local school teacher Ma Ruzhou went directly to see the prefect, demanding justice for Li. Ma argued that Li was innocent, and that instead the tax collector was criminal. The case ended with Li's release from prison (Shao 1920, shijiuzhuan. 2).

The brief discussion above indicates that the imperial system and the social change which took place during the late Qing had produced an oppositional force to state power, which consisted of not only disappointed scholars and young intellectuals, but also merchants and even those who benefited from the system, such as Zhang Jian. While politically Zhang Jian was conservative, his economic activities had tied him to the merchants and industrialists whose conflict with the state was not always reconcilable. Although the Nantong elites responded to the state-society tension in different ways and at differ-

ent levels, they in general had shared interests in opposition to state interest, and their activities often reflected this shared interest. In the following chapters we will see more of the unfolding of the "tension-charged field of state-society relations" (Habermas 1993, 29) in other arenas of Nantong.

Summary

The elite society in Nantong showed marked diversity and pluralism. Social changes had fragmented the gentry group perhaps more than has been suggested. For instance, while the shengyuan has been considered a "static" group and its majority in Nantong did appear to be the surviving remnants of the old gentry class who did not change, some of them, such as Shen Xiejun and Yu Chen, improved their social status dramatically. Also Kuhn described a more rural and less educated gentry stratum known as the "local bullies and evil gentry" (tuhao lieshen) which "represented the remnant of the lower rural elite of imperial days" and were "relatively unsuccessful in adapting to the requirements of the times" (1975), but Chen Chen, the very rural gentry, made a successful transition. On the other hand, some highly educated official elites such as the Gus became part of the surviving remnants of the old gentry class. These individual cases do not necessarily invalidate the general scholarly assumption about the static nature of the lower-level gentry, but they do reflect the

degree to which the gentry class was fragmented. The changing social environment apparently had an impact on all groups.

This point was also evident in the fusion of the traditional occupational boundaries and the rise of new social forces, which came to share or took over the old gentry's position in the local community. For instance, there were strict distinctions between scholars and merchants in traditional China in terms of their social status. Merchants were often regarded as disturbing elements of society and banned from holding official positions in many dynasties. But in the early twentieth century, merchants had become active forces in local communities and scholars were engaged in business adventures. The elite leadership group of Nantong was composed of people from virtually all occupations, including merchants such as Shen Xiejun and Liu Yishan, scholars such as Zhang Jian, professionals such as Yu Chen, and rural elites such as Chen Chen. Obviously, developments in the early twentieth century had allowed a broad spectrum of social groups from different occupations to participate and play leading role in local affairs.

The fact that these people with different occupational backgrounds gained new identity as the urban reformist elites demonstrated their flexibility and ability to transform themselves in the midst of rapid social change. If they shared anything in common, it was 1) the local interest which affected them all and often united them in action, especially

in dealing with the state (we will see more of the unfolding of state-societal conflict in the following chapters), and 2) their transitional nature, as the term urban reformist elites implies, which typified the transitional period in modern China when conflict between old and new elements, Western influence and Chinese tradition, and the needs of local autonomy and of state protection, all came together.

Nantong elite society was also characterized by a combination of broad elite interaction and the expression of forceful personalities. Obviously, Zhang Jian and Zhang Cha had significant influence on major decision-making processes in the local society, but they did not completely dominate other elites' activities. Putting it another way, other elites were not all subject themselves to Zhang Jian's influence. For instance, while Zhang Jian considered Wang Shutang an enemy, Fan Dangshi remained Wang's friend. Chen Chen's development of a newspaper with a voice relatively independent from papers dominated by the Zhangs was another example in this regard. But Zhang Jian's domination of elite society should not be underestimated. In fact, such forceful personality and its extensive power existed in other local communities as well, as has been indicated by other scholars (Averill n.d.; Schoppa 1990; Bell 1990). In the elite society of Nantong as well as those of other localities, there indeed existed a hierarchy, though it was perhaps not as rigid as that of imperial times.

This hierarchical feature of Chinese elite society apparently differed from that of the European public sphere described by Habermas. According to Habermas, social intercourse in the public sphere "disregarded status altogether" (1993, 36). This is not to say, Habermas emphasizes, that social hierarchy based on political rank and economic status played no role in the public sphere; rather, it is that the idea of equality "had become institutionalized and thereby stated as an objective claim. If not realized, it was at least consequential" (1993, 36). This "objective claim," somehow still remaining as such today, has served as an inspiration in the development of Western democratic thought and practice. In Nantong, the concept of equality was not completely absent, and elite interactions showed some degree of equality, but the concept of equality and other Western ideas, such as freedom of speech, associated with Habermas's public sphere, had certainly not been made as an "objective claim"; this was largely left for the May Fourth generation to pursue. In this regard, the Nantong elites again demonstrated that they were a transitional group.

Four

CHANGING NOTIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Part One: The Traditional Pattern of Gentry Public Functions

How did elite public functions in early twentieth century China differ from those in the traditional period? Or, to use Wakeman's words, how can we distinguish between "traditional habits of gentry philanthropy and whatever the new gentry activism entailed?" (1993, 129). This is, in my opinion, one of the most important questions the recent discussion on the public sphere has raised. Scholars in the China field have long recognized the gentry's roles in local public service (Chang 1955; Hsiao 1960; Chu 1962), and recently Huang has introduced the term "third realm" to characterize it. He points out that in China since traditional times there had always existed a third realm between state and society "in which both participated," especially during times of dynastic decline, and he sees in this realm a neutral space intermediate between state and society (1993, 224). He further suggests that elite activism in the late Qing period was only "a part of the old cyclical expansion in the public functions" (1993, 228).

Huang, however, has also tried to identify some new trends of the third realm in the late Qing and the twentieth century, which included an unprecedented degree of elite activities; some modern elements, such as modern schools, in those activities; and a variety of new institutions. At the same time, Huang feels that public activities in the late Qing period in areas such as water control, road maintenance, philanthropy, academies, and dispute mediation remained the same as in early imperial China. Huang thus asserts that new trends were only visible in certain material aspects, such as new institutions, and in new kinds and enlarged scopes of activity, and he thus concludes that elite activities in the late Qing basically marked a continuation of the old third realm.

There is no question that some elements of traditional gentry public functions continued to exist in late Qing times and even today, but it is equally clear that these functions changed significantly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This and the next chapter will focus on this change by examining both material aspects such as concrete public institutions and projects, which expanded dramatically in late Qing times, and more abstract cultural elements such as the changing notion of elite public service, which constituted part of a locally-centered political culture emphasizing independent elite capability and criticism of the central government. It is indeed essential to take cultural

elements into consideration. For instance, what conceptual configuration did the gentry employ to interpret their public service participation? And what kind of social relationships did their interpretations reflect and constitute?

Questions like these can help reveal different patterns of gentry public activities. In fact, how the gentry presented their service was as important as what service they carried out. A school contributed by the gentry could be used to glorify the state as well as to discredit it. It all depended on how one presented it and what meanings one invested in it. A combined social and cultural study of gentry public functions will therefore shed new light on the subject.

This chapter concerns the basic pattern of traditional gentry public functions, in order to compare with the elite public functions in the modern period to which the next chapter is devoted. This study uses the term "late imperial China" to refer to the period after the 1850s, when the state-society relationship changed significantly. Accordingly, it considers the period prior to the 1850s as traditional China. In this chapter, the period between 1700-1800 is chosen to study the old pattern of gentry public functions. The eighteenth century was the so-called "high Qing"--the peak of the Qing dynasty. Some scholars have tried to identify governmental efforts toward modern state-making in that period (Zelin 1984; Mann 1987), but it is safe to say that during the eighteenth century the political and social structures

remained basically traditional, as did the gentry's roles and activities. This study therefore treats gentry public activities and their relationships with the state in that period as the old pattern. In some cases, examples are drawn from outside the eighteenth century, to include, for instance, the seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries, but the time frame in general does not go past the 1850s.

Public Service as Official Domain

Magistrates' Responsibility

The extent to which gentry could perform their public functions depended on the extent to which the central government could control local society and handle public service work through its own agents, the magistrates. Studies of the Qing's rule over local society have suggested that the Qing government, as an ethnic minority which had to govern the Han majority, tightened its control in every aspect from the outset of the dynasty, and that the consolidation of the central control was still in process during the eighteenth century (Chu 1962; Watt 1972; Perdue 1987). The baojia (community self-defense) and lijia (community self-monitoring) systems, the suppression of unauthorized books, and the reform of the taxation system, were some examples of institutional, ideological, and economic control (Hsiao 1960, 184-190, 241, 43-105).

The Qing's penetration of local society was mainly through its control of government at local levels, especially the county magistrate, who was a key figure among local officials.¹ The local government under the Qing, as Chu suggested, was "highly centralized" (1962, 193). The magistrates were given broad responsibilities and were under pressure to fulfill them. The magistrates, being the judges, tax collectors, and the general administrators, were virtually in charge of everything within the territories under their jurisdiction, including providing and managing public services (Chu 1962, 15-18, 150-156). At the same time, they had to accept orders and be checked by their supervisory officials at the prefectural, circuit intendant, and provincial levels. In fact, the Qing government established a set of systems to check and control the magistrates, including disciplinary regulations and techniques such as annual examinations of administrative accomplishment. Their misconduct was penalized. Under surveillance of their administrative performance, the magistrates were vulnerable to demotion or dismissal (Watt 1972, 7, 170-184). For instance, if roads, bridges, schools and other public works were in a poor state, the magistrates were subject to punishment (Chu 1962, 156). The magistrates

¹ The term "local officials" in this study refers to governmental officials at local levels, who, especially the county magistrates, were from the outside due to the rule of avoidance.

therefore had to be diligent and responsible and to perform well in public service as well as in other arenas.

Taking Initiative

The situation in Nantong in the eighteenth century fitted this scholarly description well as far as magistrates' duty in public work was concerned, as Table 7 shows. The participants in all these projects listed in the table were of course not limited to the initiators. It is necessary to distinguish between the initiators and participants because the former often acted as the organizers, fundraisers, managers and spokesmen for the projects, and therefore they were the ones who dominated the undertaking of the projects. According to this table, the local officials were very much in control of public works, except in the case of bridge construction, where private undertakings prevailed. The projects initiated and organized by officials usually involved county magistrates, prefectural prefects, directors of prefectural and county schools (xuezheng and xuedao), heads of waterway departments (hedao zongduo), heads of salt affairs (yezhang), and other related officials. The privately-initiated projects were conducted by individuals. In some cases, a single person took an action. In other cases, a group of individuals, or husbands and wives, or fathers and sons together contributed to a project.

Officially-managed public service as a dominant pattern of local public work first manifested itself in large water-control projects and granary constructions.² The gentry, to be sure, participated in these projects, but in most cases

Table 7: Public Service in Tongzhou, 1700-1800³

initiator project	official	private	combination	total
righteous institu- tions	10	5	2	16
famine relief	11	8		19
academies	16	2		18
school- related construc- tions	15	7	3	24
water pro- jects	28		1	29
bridge building	5	13		18
granaries	21			21

(Source: Ji 1875, 3-5.)

² There were granaries in county seats, towns, and villages. The magistrates usually took charge of those in county seats, while supervising those in towns and villages, which were often established by local residents through voluntary donations. See Chu 1962, 156-159.

³ The numbers in the table, except for the categories of water control and disaster relief, indicate undertakings. For example, the number 18 in bridge building does not mean 18 bridges were built, but means 18 actions related to bridge building were taken, including changing stones and repairing surfaces as well as building new bridges. The same was true in the areas of righteous institutions, and school and school-related construction. They could be contributions to building doors and walls, or to refinishing existing schools, as well as to establishing new ones.

they were not the initiators, especially in waterworks, which were usually organized by the government in imperial China. As in the past, the Qing government took care of and provided funds for water works on principal rivers and left projects on river tributaries, dams and other irrigation-related works to the local officials and people (Chu 1962, 155). In Nantong it was often the officials instead of the gentry who took the initiative in these local water works, because, at that point, the gentry's limited financial resources and organizational capacity were not adequate for initiating such undertakings.⁴ For instance, because of the complex of waterways in that region, the water control projects often required collaboration and coordination of several counties and even with adjacent regions. Their organizers were often prefectural instead of local officials. Sometimes it took two or three county magistrates to work together to build a dike or block up a culvert (Ji 1875, 2. 73). Since water control was often an intercounty affair in the region, the author of Tongzhou zhili zhouzhi (Tongzhou Zhili Prefecture Gazetteer) cleverly discussed it under the subheading of "Lakes, Rivers, and Oceans," while recording other undertakings under the subheading of each county (1875, 2). Rarely did the local gentry sponsor a project so demanding during the period before 1850.

⁴ Nantong was not unique in this regard. Chang listed twelve irrigation undertakings from 1818 to 1870 in Sung-chiang (Songjiang) prefecture of Jiangsu, all of which were managed by the officials with gentry's participation. See Chang 1955, 59-61.

Raising Funds

An official's capacity to organize such community projects lay in his ability to raise funds, for no government funds were provided. As Chu pointed out, large-scale projects which were approved by a superior authority might obtain some government funds; otherwise it was up to the magistrates to find means to pay for them. Chu indicated two common ways of meeting the cost: through magistrates' own donations, or by inducing the gentry and the wealthy people to contribute (Chu 1962, 156). In Nantong the officials often personally financed local projects. In 1722 prefect Ma Shilong gave money to an orphanage in Tongzhou, the prefectural seat (today's Nantong city) (Ji 1875, 3. 62). In 1773, county magistrate Jin Xia along with more than twenty local gentry funded the refurbishing of the Zilang Academy located in Tongzhou (Ji 1875, 5. 71-72). In some of these cases, the official acted more as one of the local prominent gentry than as an official. In other cases, the official made his personal donation purposely to attract and encourage more gentry to participate in public work. In 1657, Rugao county xuedao Zhang Nenglin proposed to refurbish a school addition. He first donated 130 min from his salary to set an example and encourage the others to follow (Ji 1875, 5. 28). The tradition that officials personally helped finance public works was carried on well into the nineteenth century. In 1868, prefect Liang Yuqing, Li Hongzhang, and local merchants and gentry together financed the

Dongjie Academy in Sijia town (Ji 1875, 5. 73-74). In 1874, county magistrate Zhang Xingshi himself provided funds to build twenty-four feeding-rooms for a local orphanage (Ji 1875, 3. 69).

The main duty of local officials in providing public service, however, was to raise funds and administer the project, since their personal donations were limited. They usually appealed to local gentry for assistance. In 1671, prefect Wang Nihen administered a project to dredge sixteen li of the abandoned Grand Canal using money and labor from local merchants and people. This project "did not cost one penny of public money" (Ji 1875, 2. 71). In other words, it was funded entirely by local private sources. In 1747, Rugao county magistrate Zheng Jielong persuaded local gentry to support a floodgate construction (Ji 1875, 2. 73). In 1724, the newly-arrived Rugao county magistrate, Cao Qu, decided to set up an academy in Rugao, since all existing ones in the county were actually private family academies. He consulted about his proposal with the local gentry and the latter consented to it. As a result, a group of gentry donated land to endow the academy, and the Dai family offered one of its houses. The first county academy of Rugao, named the Chongzheng Academy, thus came into being (Ji 1875, 5. 76). In 1835 prefect Ping Haiqiang suggested replacing an old and damaged wooden bridge with a stone bridge. He asked the rich to contribute funds and the poor to provide labor. The new bridge was done within two

months (Ji 1875, 3. 54-55). Private contributions for all these undertakings included money, lands, houses, and labor. They were accomplished by combined efforts of local officials and gentry under the former's supervision.

Raising funds for those projects was by no means an easy task, especially in cases where the actual cost exceeded the original budget, and the official in charge had to raise more money in the middle of a project in order to complete it. The local people, on the other hand, were not always ready to pay the extra money. This could cause problems for the official and he often had to persuade the people to give more support. Wang Nihen's Grand Canal dredging project encountered this difficulty. He had to send documents and letters to local merchants and appeal to them several times. The latter finally made more contributions (Ji 1875, 2. 71). But in general, the officials were able to appeal to the local gentry, and the latter were willing to respond to the officials' calls, so that the two could work together to get the job done.

Administering Local Projects

The officially-sponsored works often required collective action in which administrative involvement was more than just fundraising. The official usually had to identify the need for a project, make a proposal including budgeting, hold and preside at meetings with the local gentry to discuss the proposal and make the final decision. Rugao's Chongzheng

Academy founded in 1724 and the Anding academy in 1747 were initiated by county magistrates named Chao and Zhao through this process. They described the necessity of such projects and consulted the gentry on matters of scale, location, and budget (Ji 1875, 5. 76-77).

The official also had to make personnel arrangements for the project since he could not himself take care of every detail. Taixing county magistrate Feng Qu organized a dike-building project on the Tianjin river in 1584. He had a man named Chen in charge of money and grain supplies, one named Zheng as general supervisor of the labor, and help from men named Yu and Zhou (Ji 1875, 2. 68). The official also acted as the intermediary between the administrative office at a higher level and the local community should any conflict occur between the two. In 1741, Rugao gentry asked for permission and help to construct a channel for irrigation and transportation purposes. The proposal was rejected by the superior officials and the local gentry were frustrated. In 1747 county magistrate Zheng Jianlong inspected the situation in person and realized that it was a beneficial project. He insisted that the prefect consider the proposal. It was finally approved and the project was finished in the same year (Ji 1875, 2. 73).

Local officials' responsibilities in public service included removing other obstacles. In 1622 Rugao county magistrate Li decided to repair the holes of the Ya bridge.

The project was approved by his supervisor, but several local people opposed it and made trouble for Li. He arrested them and continued the construction work (Ji 1875, 2. 71)

The fact that the officially-sponsored program was the dominant pattern in local public service and that officials assumed broad responsibilities and deep involvement in those projects revealed the nature of public works in traditional China. They were indeed governmental matters. To be sure, the service was to meet the public needs and therefore was for the public, and the local gentry did actively participate in these projects. But in terms of administration, the so-called public service was a governmental arena. In the eighteenth century, the imperial state and its local officials, just as in the past, were responsible for providing public works. They were expected to do so. Local officials, especially county magistrates, bearing the image of the state's agents on the one hand and of the parents of the common people (fumu guan) on the other, were supposed to take care of local needs, otherwise they might be punished.

The local officials in general were capable of accomplishing their duties. Their abilities lay in their legitimate authority to play the role of administrators in public service granted by the state and accepted by the people. Both the officials themselves and the people were very much aware of this authority and responsibility. That is why, when the Haimen county magistrate Yi saw a school falling into disre-

pair, he deeply blamed himself for neglecting his duty (Ji 1875, 5. 16). That is also why, when people had suggestions for local projects, especially large water control projects, they wrote to the officials in hopes that they would carry them out (Ji 1875, 2. 67-68). What was recognized in these actions was the authority of the officials. Since only officials had the authority to make decisions and to issue orders, as Chu noted, local gentry had to induce the officials to initiate or modify decisions or actions when they thought it necessary (Chu 1962, 175)

Gentry Involvement

Gentry Initiative

Privately-initiated public service therefore was only a welcome addition to officially-controlled activities. The local gentry needed to cooperate with the officials in order to maintain their privileged positions (Chu 1962, 191), and they might be condemned by their community if they refused to even participate in and make contributions to the officially-sponsored program. But they were not necessarily obligated to initiate any of the work, unless they chose to, though they might feel moral obligation. There was a big difference between initiation and participation. Unlike elite public activity in the late imperial period, the privately-sponsored projects in traditional China usually were independent individual undertakings, with no organizations or institutions

involved. Those who were involved in them were self-motivated individuals, but they were not forced to perform this service, and they also did not claim ownership of the projects they accomplished. Most privately-organized projects had no long-term plans or follow-up service. They were rather spontaneous.

The most notable public activities in which the gentry took the initiative were philanthropy, famine relief, bridge-building, and school-related construction. These services were truly local, often at village or town levels, and the contributions were flexible and therefore more manageable. Charitable institutions (yijue) included benevolent halls (tongshan-tang or tongrentang), orphanages (yuyingtang), and poor and solitary people houses (yanliyuan). The gentry contributed to these and school-related construction in different ways. Basically they personally financed the projects they initiated. Some donated land or money; others repaired or refinished academy buildings; still others provided additions, such as feeding-rooms, halls, walls, studies, libraries (zunjingge), and temples (wenmiao), to those institutions; and still others sponsored new academies (shuyuan), orphanages and benevolent halls (Ji 1875, 3. 62-73; 5. 10-33, 66-81).

The same was true in bridge construction. Some people fixed the surfaces and holes of old bridges by replacing eroded stones, and others built new ones. Sha Wugang of Rugao county constructed several bridges whose total length added up to eighty li while his countryman Tang Binzhong contributed to

the building of nineteen li of bridges during the Kangxi period (Ji 1875, 3. 52-61). In the case of famine relief, the local gentry either offered money or food. The amount of their contribution also varied. Some supported their villagers for one and others for five months (Ji 1875, 4. 71-74). Generally speaking, gentry public services were limited to very local communities such as villages, and to a rather small scale, both in terms of the projects and amounts they contributed.

Motivations

The gentry's initiative in public work could be motivated by purely personal factors, as in the case of bridge construction. Bridge building in Nantong invited more private than official initiative, and there were reasons for this. That the crisscrossed waterways in that area needed more bridges was only one of the reasons; more important was popular belief.⁵ Road and bridge construction (xiugiao pulu) had long been considered a beneficent conduct in the traditional Chinese value system. The virtue embodied in this kind of activity was greatly enhanced by the fact that it would benefit numerous people generation after generation. As a matter of fact, the Chinese often use the term "xiugiao pulu" as an analogy to characterize other activities with long-term positive effects,

⁵ I use the term "popular belief" to refer not only to folk culture, but also to ideas widely spread and accepted by various groups of the society, the elite as well as the common people. Also see Roger Chartier's discussion of the term (1988, 38-41).

whether they are political decisions or economic projects. Also because of the influence of the Buddhist concept of karma, mixed with, as always in Chinese culture, the Confucian emphasis on now and this life, the Chinese believed that if one took such a virtuous action, he would in return receive some tangible benefit in his lifetime (yinguo baoying).

During the Kangxi reign, Nantong's Ji Kaisheng and his wife constructed a bridge named suanziquiao, which literally means "counting-on-son bridge" (Ji 1875, 3. 58). Given the fact that the wife was also mentioned, which was very rare, and because of the name they gave to the bridge, we can conjecture that this couple probably did not have a son and they built the bridge to appeal to the gods for the blessing of a son.⁶ Other privately-sponsored bridges were also named to convey this kind of personal message, such as wanshou (long life), leshan (pleased to be benevolent), huimin (benefiting the people), dayi (great righteousness), and so forth (Ji 1875, 3. 56, 57, 60).

The concept of righteousness held such power over even ordinary people that sometimes it could result in extraordi-

⁶ Because of the importance of the male descendant in Chinese culture, a family without a son often was regarded as lacking in virtue, or vice versa. Zhang Jiashan, considered a kind man, did not have a son at age forty. Then his concubine gave birth to twin boys. His folks believed the twins were a repayment from god for his kindness (Shao 1920, 5). Gu Hui had a wife and two concubines but remained childless. He purposely did many nice things for others. Several years later, he had six children. The whole village thought it was a well-deserved consequence of Gu's moral conduct (Gu 1930, 8. 20).

nary actions. There was a bridge named Wang Shilun in Guanyin-shan town. Wang Shilun was the name of a ferryman who made a good living through his job. But he also understood the inconvenience caused by the lack of a bridge, and decided to make a change. After more than ten years of saving, he finally built a wooden bridge solely with his own funds. To memorialize this ferryman, the bridge and later a village nearby were named after him (Song 1984, 12). Personal reasons and the desire to be righteous were the basic layers of motivation, which was quite popular, for it was rooted in popular beliefs and appealed to everyone. It also explains why bridge-related activities invited more private involvement than any other public works.

The success, or apparent success, of the Qing government during this period also inspired some individuals to take the initiative in public works, especially schools and school-related construction. The development of schools was thought to be a symbol of a peaceful and prosperous era. The "high Qing" period, at least on the surface, was characterized as stable and prosperous. To fit Tongzhou into this picture, local people were encouraged to build academies, temples, halls, and other school additions. In 1778, Tang Ding, a local student (taixuesheng), refurbished a school temple. It was a surprise to his community since Tang had neither gentry status nor academic title. Apparently, he was impressed by the long-time peace and prosperity achieved under the Qing government,

and wanted to be part of the good cause (Ji 1875, 5. 11). The other few privately-sponsored school-related works were also inspired by the "high Qing" accomplishment. In a sense, they reinforced the concept of high Qing by putting on a show for the government.

The gentry had no obligation in any of these activities. They could feel free to invite themselves in or out. But some did feel obligated and had a sense of commitment. The Rugao gentry Mao Xiang provided food for his village people for five months in 1639, when a natural disaster struck the area. He presented four reasons to persuade other gentry to follow his action. First, he said, people, the poor included, were all human beings. If a rich person watched a poor person dying of starvation, the rich person's heart must be dead; and a dead heart was no better than a dead body. Second, what contributed to the wealth of the rich, Mao indicated, was the rent and labor from the poor. If the famine extinguished the poor or provoked rebellions, the rich's interest would be greatly damaged. Third, we the rich people, Mao stated, were blessed by benevolent gods and our virtuous ancestors. We should respect them by carrying on their example, and our virtues would in turn benefit our descendants. Fourth, saving lives was, Mao emphasized, our responsibility (Ji 1875, 4. 61-62).

Of the four reasons Mao listed, humanity clearly played a major part. He saw the importance of saving lives and felt a mission to do so. The idea of minben--that the ruled was the

basis of the ruler--also underlay his action. Minben was a deep-seated concept in Chinese political thought. According to Confucian principles, the relationship between the ruler and the ruled is like a boat and water. Water can support the boat, but also can overturn it. It depends on the ruler (the boat) to keep harmony with the people (the water) in order to protect himself. Anything a ruler does which hurts the people will eventually hurt the ruler himself. Confucian scholars in traditional China constantly used the water-boat analogy as a warning against the ruler's abuse of people (Nathan 1985, 127-128; Shao, 1986; Xiong 1986, 36-37).

In this case, Mao was willing to help the poor because he did not want to lose his people or turn them into his opposition. He invested his own interest in the famine relief activity, and he had reason to do so. Shao Bingchang, an owner of a rice store in Pingchao town, always reduced rice prices during bad harvests. When poor people came to purchase rice, he often gave their money back by hiding it in their rice bags without saying a word. The whole town knew that Shao was a kind man. In 1855, rice prices increased rapidly after a crop failure. The angry people launched riots and destroyed all rice stores in the town except Shao's (Shao 1920, 10). Examples like this one clearly illustrate how the mutual dependence between the rich and poor worked, and explains some of the gentry's benevolent conduct.

Mao's sense of obligation thus was both moral and self-protective. He did not have any administrative responsibility, just as one of his guests asked him: "You were not an official and you did not have any power, why should you worry about it so much?" (Ji 1875, 4. 62). The fact that he tried to persuade the other rich people to make contributions also revealed that the gentry did not have to help, if they so decided. It was not the gentry but the local officials who were in a position to handle matters like famine relief (Chu 1962, 159-160).

Lineage Service

There was, however, one field where the gentry had obligations beyond morality and where they also had control to some degree, and that was within their lineages. Traditional China as a patriarchal society bred strong concepts of kinship and paternalism. The elder and richer in a lineage were supposed to help the younger and poorer and to take care of lineage affairs.

The Gu lineage was a case in point. Trying to escape the disorder and warfare in the Jiangnan region during the late Yuan and early Ming period, the Gu family moved from Jiangnan to Xicang town in Tongzhou. The Gu became very rich after accidentally discovering gold when building their house in the new place. The family then set up rules to require their descendants always to treat each other generously and benevolently, since the discovery of the gold was, they believed, a

sign that heaven was especially kind to them (Gu 1932, 1). The services the rich branches in the Gu family provided for the kin included offering loans at low or no interest, famine relief, donating land as cemeteries and providing coffins, building or refinishing ancestral temples, holding family meetings and solving disputes, helping with employment, and so forth (Gu 1932, 3, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22).

These services were sometimes extended to their neighbors and villagers. For instance, Gu Neng often loaned money to his clan and neighbors (Gu 1932, 3). The rich members of the family, while helping others, developed control over family affairs. Gu Juishu liked to build and refurbish temples. In order to keep a temple in family hands, he held a family meeting to reach the decision that the Gu would never take money from other families to maintain the temple (Shao 1932, 8. 1b-2a). The tradition of family service and kinship concepts were passed down to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Gu as well as other families (Gu 1932, 24, 25, 27; Shao 1920, 8, 10, 15, 16). The strong obligation to help the family came from paternalism. It is doubtless true that paternalism also played a role in the gentry's public service in some cases, especially to those who had the image as zhangzhe, old and reputable people, in local society. But the family was the primary territory of the obligation; beyond that, the sense of responsibility declined.

The Relationships between the Officials and Gentry Official Encouragement

In late imperial China, as we will see in the following chapters, some officials became obstacles to the elite's public activities, as the latter threatened the former's power. In the traditional period, gentry public activities served as a supplement to government action and helped the officials to fulfill their responsibility without threatening their authority; therefore the local officials very much welcomed and encouraged the gentry's contribution. They expressed their appreciation and encouragement in various ways. For one thing, the names of gentry participants and their donations were officially recorded on stone inscriptions for each event. We will examine the stone inscriptions in more detail later.

The local officials often presented honorary titles to distinguished gentry. Gu Neng, for instance, extended his service from his clan to his community. He never turned down any loan request from his clan members and neighbors. He often burnt loan contracts if the borrowers could not afford to pay them back. He also helped his relatives and villagers in many other ways. The local official set a stone inscription to honor him as an yimin (righteous person). He refused to accept it, because, he said, he was an ordinary person and only did what he was supposed to do. The official insisted that he accept the stone the next year, and he did so (Gu 1932, 3). In

1835 Gu Jun donated two hundred yuan (silver) and also raised more than a thousand yuan to refurbish a bridge. When it was done, the prefect inspected the bridge in person and praised Gu extravagantly (Shao 1920, 13).

Official and Gentry Cooperation

The projects initiated and funded by individuals in the late nineteenth century were often called sili (privately-owned-and-managed)), in contrast to gongli (officially-owned-and-managed). In the traditional period, however, the gentry who initiated a project did not take it as a private matter. Local gentry and officials often took turns to provide services needed for the same projects. In the late Ming a Taixing county gentry built two gates for a local school. From then to 1710, five actions were taken to refurbish the gates, among which three were by county magistrates and two by local gentry (Ji 1875, 5. 20-21). The local gentry and officials sometimes took part in an action together. In 1671, a Rugao gentry named Su refurbished a school wall while the county magistrate was building the school's eastern and western gates. In 1732 the Rugao county magistrate refinished a school wall built in 1674 by three gentry (Ji 1875, 5. 29). Examples like these indicate that when a need concerning public service appeared, if there were gentry volunteers, they could go ahead and take action; otherwise the officials would perform their duty.

It is clear that in imperial China, the gentry's public functions were an addition to the government-controlled domain. There did not exist an independent gentry public sphere where, as Habermas pointed out, "the private people came together as a public," let alone one where they could "engage ... in a debate over the general rules governing relations..." (1993, 27). What existed was a governmental arena providing service for the public with the participation and involvement of private people. Except within their own lineages, the gentry were rarely the initiators of most public works, and they did not constitute a "public" in Habermas's terms. What they expected from their activities was to maintain their privilege, and to gain public reputation and personal satisfaction as a moral model, which distinguished them from the commoners. Rarely were they politically ambitious, simply because there was not a power vacuum in the arena open to them. The power zone was under the control of the officials.

Local officials, on the other hand, had shared interests with the gentry. They also very much understood the gentry's motivations and expectations. The officials recognized the gentry's contributions by praising and honoring them. Thus, when the gentry supported the officials' duties by contributing to public work, the officials in turn helped the gentry to establish themselves as prominent moral models in local society. This mutually beneficial relationship mirrored the

harmony between the state and the local gentry. Not only was the officials' authority in the public service as organizers and managers never questioned, but also the gentry found it rewarding to be part of government-controlled projects through which they voluntarily expressed their loyalty to the state. Some of them contributed to public works to glorify the Qing state, as in the case of Tang Ding; others did it to help stabilize the social basis of the state, while also advancing their personal interests, such as in the case of Mao. Thus, what the gentry public service reflected was state and society as complementary entities.

When the local officials depended on the gentry for support and the gentry "allied themselves with the existing government" (Chang 1955, 69-70), the relationship between the two was basically cooperative. This is not to say that there was no sign of conflict of interests. But, as Chu correctly observed, conflict often occurred "between the magistrate and individual members of the gentry rather than the local gentry as a whole" (1962, 190-191).

The Conceptual Configuration

The Privilege of Interpretation

The cooperative relationships between the local officials and the gentry can be further attested by exploring the conceptual configuration that both the gentry and officials used to interpret their public service. The questions are: How

did they themselves conceive of and present their activities? Did they share the same perception? If so, what was it? If not, why?

In all the public works, whoever initiated and organized the project enjoyed the privilege to present and interpret it. This privilege of presenting an event was used, for instance, to name the project. The person who contributed to a bridge with his own initiative and funds would have the honor to name it at his free will. The examples given earlier on bridges' names reflected some of the conceptions, such as kindness, virtue, and benevolence. It was also common for those people to name the projects after their family names. But it sometimes was hard to tell, since in some places all villagers shared the same surname.

The local gentry as project initiators often recorded the events by making inscriptions on stones, written by themselves, or their friends, or local reputable persons, to honor the occasions when they accomplished the projects. When Tang Ding refurbished a local academy, Qian Zaopeng wrote a short essay to praise him. It emphasized that the Qing government's political success encouraged him to make this contribution (Ji 1875, 5. 11). In 1771 Shi Minggao and seven others together provided additional facilities for a local school; Shi himself recorded the event in which he hoped the students would cultivate themselves from the great Chinese classics and became successful scholars (Ji 1875, 5. 32). If the people

involved in public service were prominent local gentry, some officials might be willing to record the event for them. The prefectural examiner (xuezheng) Wang Yixian recorded Xu Zongyong's contribution to a school temple in 1816. The Xu were a big family (daxing), one of the four most prominent local gentry families before the twen-tieth century. Xu Zongyong's son was currently a high-ranking official in Zhejiang (Ji 1875, 5. 33). In 1816 Rugao county magistrate He Chongxi was asked by another county official to record the establishment of Chian shexue (traditional village school) by three local gentry (Ji 1875, 5. 81).

These stone inscriptions usually briefly introduced the event, the person involved in it, and his motivations and purposes. It was a way to credit and praise the person and his family, and to make the person a moral example for others. The words used were "virtue," "benevolence," and "kindness." The significance of these events, as expressed in some of the stone inscriptions, was increased by establishing connections between the personal actions and the emperor's political success, as in the case of Tang Ding.

In officially-organized actions, the organizers, even if they did not personally provide funds for the project, would enjoy the privilege to name or rename the structure, which could be an academy, a bridge, or a dike. They could also set regulations for the use of the project, such as for orphanages, old people's homes and other charitable institutions (Ji

1875, 3. 63-66). They often recorded the events by themselves in an apparently modest but essentially bragging tone, or had other people, often local notables, or their colleagues and superiors, praise the events by making a stone inscription or writing it into a local gazetteer. The format of these writings included description of the needs and purposes for the actions, the processes with time frames, the participants, the contributors, the beneficial results and their significance. They served as vehicles not only to record the officials' political achievement and personal merits, but more importantly to show their loyalty to the central state by crediting the emperor for every result achieved in the locality.

In 1774 Tongzhou prefect Jing Rutang wrote an essay on a new orphanage in the prefectural capital which he had organized and partially funded. He first described how much it disturbed him to see children suffering, and how he started the project and finished it. He gave credit to other participants, but mainly the inscription was about how he made it happen following the emperor's will. He stated that it was the emperor's intention to treat everyone in the same way and to protect the weak. The establishment of this new orphanage was to practice the emperor's ideas and to meet his expectations (Ji 1875, 3. 63).

In 1752, prefect Wang Jizu and school director Lu Shumao together contributed to a school hall (mingluntang) and Wang

himself recorded it. He first referred to the ancient three dynasties, during which time the school hall was an important component of the education institutions where the students could learn to distinguish right from wrong and always behaved properly. Putting emphasis on the hall, Wang believed, contributed to the success of the three dynasties. Then he stressed that as an official his most important duty was to promote education, through which people would learn their relationships with each other and would behave properly. The emperor, he especially pointed out, highly valued the examination system, and the court was encouraging virtues. We should not, he said, disappoint the emperor and the court. He hoped that the building of this new hall would attract more people to engage in learning (Ji 1875, 5. 10-11).

Anding Academy in Rugao county was established in 1747 under the supervision of county magistrate Zhao Tingjian, who also recorded the event. He started the essay by describing the great educational and cultural achievements under the Qianlong Emperor, which, he said, were greater than those achieved in the Han and Tang dynasties, and could stand comparison with the ancient three dynasties. That was why, he stated, we should create this academy to train more talents to serve the court (Ji 1875, 5. 7).

The Shared Conceptual Framework

Not surprisingly, the officials and gentry interpreted their public functions with the same conceptual framework. The basic term used in these writings was sandai, the three ancient dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou. These three dynasties were first idealized by Confucius. Born in the sixth century B.C., Confucius was greatly disturbed by the constant warfare and disintegration in his time. He therefore referred to the previous era, the three dynasties, as a good society. He criticized current events by comparing them with what happened before, when not only had peace and prosperity prevailed, but also an undisputable social hierarchy had existed with the king as the center of power and everyone else behaving himself accordingly. The stable social order based on strict hierarchy was at the core of Confucius's concept of the three dynasties (Zhonghua shuju 1982, 1705-1717).

With the establishment of Confucianism as official ideology in the Western Han dynasty, the concept of three dynasties as the perfect society and political model was established. In this process, the characteristic backward-looking of Chinese thinking was fostered. In the meantime, the term "three dynasties" became a fundamental conceptual configuration for the Chinese intellectuals to conceive and evaluate the political practice since then. The later Han and Tang dynasties were considered examples of strong and stable societies, but the three dynasties were always regarded as the

primary model of good government against which all the later dynasties were judged (Huang 1981).

Unlike the French "ancien regime," whose images were questioned (Doyle 1986), the Chinese "ancient regime" remained as the unshakable political model until the late nineteenth century. The major figures of that period were worshipped as sages. On the other hand, like the French "ancien regime," the Chinese, during the two thousand years of imperial history, defined and redefined the concept of the three dynasties. It served as justification and criticism of all sorts of political and social phenomena within the imperial structure. The emperor used it to regulate the behavior of his subjects, because obedience, according to the ancient sages, was a virtue. The peasant referred to it as a weapon to oppose abusive emperors and justify their rebellion, for the ancient sages believed that the ruler should be benevolent (Huang 1981; Xiong 1986, 36-50). These political and intellectual practices contributed to the formation of this conceptual configuration based on the three dynasties.

Concepts such as de (virtue), ren (benevolence), yi (righteousness), and shan (kindness) were the key elements in the conceptual configuration. What made the three dynasties so perfect was, according to Confucianism, the fact that the ruler was kind to the people and practiced benevolent and virtuous politics (renzheng). So the people were happy to obey him and his dynasty lasted for a long period of time. The Duke

of Zhou was a primary example of such a ruler (Zhonghua shuju 1982, 2716-2727). Benevolence, virtue and kindness were originally the code of the nobles. With the popularity of Confucianism, these concepts became a component of Chinese culture and were instilled into popular beliefs. They had in traditional China become so commonplace that no one even bothered to explain them, just like concepts of democracy and freedom in the Western world.

But common sense is also a cultural system (Geertz 1973, 73-93). The fact that both officials and gentry used the same conceptual configuration to interpret their public service as benevolent and virtuous conduct proved that they shared the same ideology, and therefore that their cooperation in the arena of public service was not a coincidence. Moreover, the concepts of the three dynasties, benevolence, and virtue in traditional China represented harmonious relationships between the ruler and the ruled based on the existing social hierarchy. The fact that not only the officials, but also the gentry, constantly used these classifications to glorify the Qing court and the emperor confirmed that the state and local society in the eighteenth century were in harmony, and that the highly centralized Qing dynasty was relatively stable, at least on the surface, as Chu, Perdue and others have concluded.

Summary

Did the shared ideology and cooperation in actions between the officials and gentry make public service a "third realm" as Huang suggested? Apparently, such a space in the physical sense indeed existed in the greater Nantong area in the eighteenth century, where some public activities could be identified neither as solely state actions nor as independent societal developments. Instead, the two worked together as a combination of state and society. But what was the nature of this "third realm"? For Huang, this realm was neutral and could not be "collapsed into either or both" state and society (1993, 225). According to the analysis I have presented, the arena of public works was dominated and administered by the local officials, though the gentry participated. More importantly, the conceptual framework employed to interpret public service reflected official perceptions of social order and therefore reinforced state legitimacy. This was how the people were taught and led to believe. As Chartier points out, "state perceptions of social phenomena are never neutral." (1988, 5) They are used, as they were in the Nantong case, to impose state authority and glorify the ruler. We indeed have no reason to believe that this so-called "third realm" in Nantong was neutral in nature.

Clearly, public works in traditional China were mainly a government domain, and the magistrates, who were in control of local society, were most responsible for it. At the same time,

the gentry cooperated with the magistrates and contributed to public service. By doing so, they helped the magistrates to fulfill their duty on the one hand, and maintained their own privileged positions in local society on the other. The cooperation between the gentry and officials was conditioned by the relatively harmonious relationship between the government and local society. This is not to say that there was no conflict between the two, but rather that the conflict had not yet come to surface at this point.

Five

CHANGING NOTIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Part Two: The New Pattern of Elite Public Service

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, social changes and upheavals such as the Taiping Rebellion, commercialization and urbanization, foreign invasion, and the causes which led to the 1911 Revolution greatly weakened the state and intensified the tension between state and society. Unlike officials in earlier times, late Qing officials often failed to perform their regular duty in managing public works due to the overall decline of the state. Local elites had to step in to shoulder the load of public work. In the process, they often asked for government assistance, but it was hardly ever available.

Public service therefore became a main arena where the local elites, especially the urban reformist elites, came to assume leadership positions by taking initiatives, raising funds, organizing, administering, and managing public institutions and projects. They proved that they were more than capable of doing so by providing systematic and institutionalized services for the locality. The success of the elites in establishing schools, parks, highways, and even large water

control projects was an index of their unprecedented capacity in organization and management, which undermined state power on the one hand, and established the elites as the dominant force in the public arena on the other. At the same time, a concept which credited local elites' capability and dependability was taking shape. To reinforce this concept, local elites deliberately used their public service to criticize the Qing court for its failure to perform official duties, and compared the failure with local achievements. This critical discourse further delegitimated the state and helped legitimate elites as the main source of public authority. State-society contestation and local politics were therefore shaped by and manifested through the public institutions and projects and the critical discourse.

The Expansion of Public Service

General Characteristics

A glance at Tables 5 and 6 tells us that the groups which brought these services to the community indeed had enormous capacity. First of all, the scope of elite public service was expanded tremendously. Table 5 and 6 show us that elite activities had spread to virtually every aspect of social life, from child care to old people's homes, from schools to entertainment, from hospitals to sports, from transportation to communication, from museums to parks, and so on and so forth. Never before had the gentry's public service ranged so

broadly and diversely. This is partially because many new modern services were created, including Western-style schools, women's schools, a prostitute reform bureau, kindergartens, special education, vocational education, hospitals, bus companies, highway construction, telegram and telephone companies, and much more. The modern society created the concepts of and the needs for these services, and also provided the means to implement them. One century earlier, even the concept of a women's normal school would have been totally foreign and unthinkable, let alone the actual establishment of one.

Moreover, Tables 5 and 6 indicates that the dominant pattern in public service had shifted decisively from official to individual initiative. Of the more than one hundred projects listed above, fewer than ten percent were the result of official initiative. The individuals acted simultaneously as the initiators, fundraisers, organizers, managers and spokesmen of the public works. Another factor which evidenced the elite capacity was that public works at this stage were institutionalized through a mushrooming growth of organizations in charge of these works, with the result that elite public service became more systematic.

The elites now often carefully designed their services with long-term plans in mind. In 1904, Zhang Jian decided to build a new orphanage to replace the old one which was located improperly under poor sanitary conditions. The initial funds--23,400 yuan--were from Zhang Jian, Zhang Cha and several other

Dasheng stock holders (Zhang Jian 1965, 1983). Apparently, Zhang Jian did not think that the project would be complete if it stood alone. A fish pond, and later a fishing company and a garden, were added in order to provide supplies to the new orphanage. A kindergarten, a primary school, a nurse training center, a children's hospital, dormitories, bathrooms, and cafeterias were established one after another near the site of the orphanage. Zhang Jian's plans were for the children in the orphanage to go to kindergarten at the age of five, and to primary school at seven, and then go to a textile school training center to prepare for their careers.

What concerned Zhang was not only these orphans' childhood, but also their future. He expected them to become self-supporting adults. The orphanage expanded rapidly from nursing 305 infants in the first year to accommodating 1,609 in the eighth year (NXZZH 1915, 3. 7-11). It was said that the new orphanage was clean and provided a favorable environment for the children to grow, and that children there were better-attended and had more promising lives than those in their own homes. The orphanage also set up regulations for adoption to protect the children. Those who adopted the girls as child daughters-in-law and as concubines had to make annual reports to the orphanage (Fan 1922, 10. 2b).

Zhang Jian also sponsored an old people's home in 1912, funded by gift money Zhang received on his sixtieth birthday, together with some of his friends' additional contributions.

There were different sections for the male and the female in the old people's home. Along with the old people's home were dormitories, cafeterias, bathrooms, washing and dressing rooms for the females, a drugstore and a clinical center. In total it consisted of 136 jie of rooms, accommodating 120 old people. They were later organized into different groups to engage in light labor, such as sewing clothes, making shoes and socks, planting vegetables, watering flowers, and other activities. The income from their work was collected to pay their medical expenses and also to be saved for their funeral services (NXZZH 1915, 3. 23-24). Following Zhang's example, a local gentry named Shu Ya also used his seventieth birthday's gift money to build an old people's home in Haimen county, which was the second one in the Nantong region. The third one was also donated by Zhang Jian with his seventieth birthday's gift money in 1923 (Chen 1938, 2. 91).

Another project which typified the systematization of public works in early-twentieth-century Nantong was education. We only need to refer to Table 5 since we will discuss the topic further later. Table 5 indicates Nantong had established a complete school system from primary to higher education and from formal to popular education. In order to develop primary schools, the Nantong educational system started with the creation of the Nantong Normal School in 1902 to train teachers for the future. It was a fundamental step for the

rapid growth of primary schools later in Nantong (Chen 1938, 1. 26).

Not only were individual projects like these systematically organized, but the public work for the county as a whole was also carefully designed and constructed. To be sure, what later appeared to be a near complete public service system was first a single industrial undertaking--the Dasheng Cotton Mill--initiated by the government. But it gradually progressed to include other programs and to form a system. The Nantong Normal School, then called Tongzhou People's Normal School (Tongzhou minli shifan xuexiao) and other new-style schools were established with Dasheng's profits. In addition, philanthropical projects started. The Poor People's Workshop, Old People's Home, Beggars' Home, Home for the Disabled, and other institutions were established one after another. Practically there was a social welfare system operating in Nantong. The system, as illustrated by the new orphanage and the Old People's Home, tried to help less fortunate and less able people become self-sufficient and productive members of the community, much like the welfare system President Clinton intends to achieve in the United States today. At the same time, construction of parks, highways and bridges was also in process (Table 7). In 1915 Zhang Jian looked back on Nantong's local development over approximately twenty years, saying that "From 1895 on I concerned myself with industry. From 1901 on

I was occupied with education. Not until 1907 did I take up philanthropy" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1854).

This structural building of public works put great responsibility on the shoulders of the elites. Now they had obligations to perform and could not quit after one or two benevolent actions. At one point, the new orphanage Zhang Jian initiated encountered some financial difficulties. Zhang, while appealing for help from others, had to sell his own calligraphy, which the traditional Chinese intellectual would not care to do (or would not care to admit), to make up the necessary funds to keep the orphanage in operation (NXZZH 1915, 3. 8). In 1904 Zhang wrote an announcement to raise funds for the orphanage, in which he stated that he would have to make five hundred yuan from his calligraphy each quarter in order to meet the yearly needs of the orphanage (Zhang Jian 1965, 1983). The public, on the other hand, counted on the provider not just occasionally during times of crises, but on an ongoing basis in their daily lives. In the process the elites developed a great deal of influence on and control of public affairs, as the local public service system more than ever connected the public with them.

Fiscal Power

The capability of the elites to provide public service and dominate the local community was evident in their ability to raise funds, for none of the projects would have been

implemented unless the elites had provided the necessary funds. In fact, while exploring different ways to finance the systematically planned public work, the elites established themselves as fiscal authorities in Nantong.

The privately-initiated projects listed in Table 5 and 6 were by no means all financed by the initiators. Funds from private individuals, local institutions, public sources, and official channels were all absorbed. But in most cases private and public funds prevailed. For instance, official funds for the 1904 Nantong new orphanage only accounted for one-fourth of the total cost; the rest came from Zhang Jian, his brother and some stockholders of the Dasheng Cotton Mill (NXZZH 1915, 3. 7-8). The Nantong Library and Museum and many other institutions were also funded by Zhang Jian's private donations (Chen 1938, 1. 96-97).

With the development of public service as a regular and structured activity, the local elite's ability to raise funds became critical, especially when official funds were often not available. One way for the elites to collect money was to appeal to rich individuals, similar to the county magistrates asking local gentry for support of official projects in traditional China. Only this time the elite became the driving force for fundraising. In 1873, seven Tongzhou gentry sent a petition to the prefect, suggesting the construction of an infant protection office in Tongzhou city. They were able to collect enough money from the governor, the prefectural

military head (zongbing) and other officials, wealthy families, merchants and other people in the city. The project was implemented the next year (NXZZH 1915, 3. 17). Raising money from individuals always played a role in the local fundraising process. Stocks were only the modern form of this age-old practice.

But financial resources from individuals were always limited, even for a person as wealthy as Zhang Jian, who in 1911 asked the county assembly to take over his privately-endowed orphanage because of financial crises (NXZZH 1915, 3. 8). Also private resources were not always stable and guaranteed. For example, two years after the establishment of the Prefectural Infant Protection Office, its executive body, which consisted of local elites and merchants, found out that some of the original contributors had never made any payments, others had always paid late, and still others had asked that their shares be reduced or waived. The executive body finally had to reexamine each donor's financial situation. Some received waivers and some were asked to pay more (NXZZH 1915, 3. 17).

To avoid problems like these, raising money through individual donation appeared to be less significant later, when more regular channels were explored. With the institutionalization of local public service, the fundraising process was gradually formalized through taxation, and local elites began to assume positions as fiscal authorities, starting in

1891 in Nantong. Because of the lesson learned from experience in creating the Prefectural Infant Protection Office and also because they were suffering from a money shortage for other projects, a group of local elites sent a proposal to the provincial administration via the prefectural office. It suggested following the example of Haimen county in taking a portion of the official tax from the printed cotton trade within Nantong county at the ratio 3: 1,000 wen--three wen from every 1,000 wen regular tax--to finance local projects.

In 1896, this taxation proposal was approved by the provincial government, and the tax was called huabu sanli shanjuan (three wen benevolent printed cotton levy). The money generated from it was used to support philanthropic institutions and schools until 1912, when the three wen tax was abolished and the Nantong County Special Accounting Bureau was set up, taking over many local privately-managed philanthropic institutions and including their costs in the county budget. In 1915, the Special Accounting Bureau was replaced by the Public Property Management Bureau (NXZZH 1915, 3. 18-19).

In the case of the three wen printed cotton tax, the local elites successfully made the officials share government revenue sources with them. The elites were also in charge of allocating that portion of the tax for certain projects. At the same time, they had the power directly to tax the people to collect necessary funds for public works. For instance, in order to carry out a large water control project, which we

will discuss in detail later, the elites in charge of the Erosion Protection Society first tried to borrow money from the Qing Bank. When that was denied, they decided to tax the people who would benefit from the project. But they thought it was unfair to tax everyone at the same rate, because some would benefit from the project more than others, depending on what part of the county they resided in. So the local elites decided how to apportion the tax amount for each area. When more money was needed in the process, the local elites made a decision to reclaim previously privately-occupied marsh and sandy land, which gradually emerged from the sea, as the county's public property. In 1915, the county regained a total of 14,349 mu of land and used its income to fund the water control project (Fan 1922, 2. 2b-5b; Xu 1991, 22-23).

In the process of initiating and managing public work, the local elites thus became fiscal authorities. They were in a position to make decisions about how to raise funds as well as how to spend them. They were in charge of issuing taxation and allocating local resources. When the county elites were making all these financial policies, the elites and merchants below the county level were the ones who bore the responsibility of implementing these policies, including collecting taxes from the peasants. For instance, Gao Liqing, a cotton yarn merchant in the Nanshan district of Jinsha town, was the agent of the printed cotton tax (Ren 1983, 64). Tang Baosen of Pingchao town was a member of the county Erosion Protection

Society. He handled concrete affairs, including collecting taxes, for waterworks (Fei 1986, 5-6).

Popular Resistance

However, local elites' newly-gained fiscal power was challenged by local people, mainly peasants, who did not want to pay all the taxes. The increase of popular violence against the elites not only testified to the rise of elite power, but also indicated the tension between the elites and the people. To be sure, tension and even violent clashes between the two groups were part of the social establishment in traditional as well as modern China. What was new at this time was that the target of popular discontent was elite-sponsored reform programs, and that the elites, instead of the county magistrates, were the ones who had to deal with it. Nantong elites were not alone in facing this problem. Bastid has noted that the creation of modern schools invited people's anger and resistance in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and throughout China in the early twentieth century. According to her, besides religious or superstitious feelings, in most cases peasants' rejection of the educational reforms was because of the tax increases which were necessary to keep schools in operation (1988, 74-75).

Esherick's study of Hunan and Hubei provinces during the 1911 Revolution also showed how such "reform institutions as schools or self-government offices were singled out as targets

of violent disturbances" (1976, 120). According to Esherick, increased taxation, inflation, corrupt self-government officials, anti-Western feelings, and the gap between reform projects and peasants' daily lives, all were factors contributing to mass discontent and disturbances toward the reform elites. This tendency intensified around the time of the 1911 Revolution due to the increase in reform programs (1976, 118-119). Although Esherick focused on the urban reformers and their relationships with rural gentry in Hunan and Hubei, his study of popular violence is relevant to the situation in Nantong. As a matter of fact, Bastid's and Esherick's studies and the Nantong case all indicate that tax increases were among the main causes of growing tension between the elites and people, and that the development of elite power was not only in conflict with state force, but was also challenged by popular movements.

Nantong was an isolated place whose "people have been given to peace" (Fan 1922, 5. 1). Unlike some areas in Shandong and Henan provinces, Nantong did not frequently witness significant peasant uprisings in history. One notable pre-twentieth century incident occurred in 1863, when the Taiping armies were forced to leave Jiangnan for the northern expedition, and Tongzhou peasants armed themselves and came to the Taipings' aid. They planned to capture the prefectural seat, but failed before even having a chance to try, for the peasants were too inexperienced to organize large-scale

revolts (Guan 1956; Zhen 1991, 34-35). Another violent action took place in 1866 between salt field workers and salt field yamen officials in Yu Dong and Yu Xi areas over their competing interests in reclaiming tide land for cultivation. This event started with an insignificant clash between the two and ended up with the involvement of the prefect Liang Yueqing and two Qing armies, largely because the officials were on the alert against any unusual move on the peasants' part due to the abortive peasant revolt of 1863 (Xiao 1991, 12). Other than these two incidents, Nantong in general was peaceful.

However, a large-scale peasant uprising broke out in the summer of 1912, led by peasant Zhu Tianrong in the Pingchao area. The targets of the revolt were local elites Tang Baosen, Jiang, Zuo, and Cui, who were all members of the county Erosion Protection Society and heads of waterworks in Pingchao. This clash lasted for two months and involved forty-eight yu of 14,303 households on the peasants' side and the prominent figures of the county Erosion Protection Society like Zhang Cha on the elites' side.

Apparently, this violent action was provoked by Tang's overcharging of the peasants for his own personal gain in the name of collecting taxes for the water project. When the peasants heard the news, they first held a demonstration of several thousand people to protest. They also set up a Safety Protection Society (baogan hui) to organize the action. At the same time, the peasants armed themselves and sent people to

make connections with peasants in the Jiangnan region to strengthen their forces. At one point, Tang invited Zhu for dinner and tried to negotiate with the peasants. When that failed, Tang went to Zhang Cha, the Director of the Nantong Erosion Protection Society, head of the county Civil Administration, for help. After discussing the matter with other members of the Society, Zhang Cha decided to suppress the peasant uprising by sending troops both by water and by land. The peasants tried to occupy Pingchao town and resisted county troops. They burned down the houses of Tang, Jiang and Cui, destroyed the Xibei Primary School, which had been created by Tang Baosen, and also attacked a local self-government office. Local elites finally suppressed the uprising (Fei 1986, 6-7; Qian 1986, 12-13; Qian 1988, 8-13).

Similar but smaller-scale incidents also occurred elsewhere. In July 1905, for instance, Nanshan peasants destroyed Gao Liqing's cotton yarn firm along with the Gao Private Primary School, which had been created by Gao Liqing. The reason? Gao was in charge of collecting the printed cotton tax and the peasants did not want to pay (Ren 1983, 64). In both cases, peasants viewed the local elites and merchants like Tang Baosen and Gao Liqing as the immediate causes of tax increases.

Peasants, however, were not the only opposition with which the local elites had to deal. Ironically, old yamen officials and clerks who had formerly been opponents of the

peasants (as in the 1866 incident) became their allies after the 1911 Revolution, and together they created difficulty for local elites' reform programs, which in some cases damaged the interests of both old yamen officials and peasants. For example, the area around Jinsha town used to be salt fields. With the emergence of new land from the sea and the Land Reclamation Movement which reformed salt fields into cotton fields in the early 1910s, the Jinsha area no longer produced salt, but the yamen of the Salt Field Office still existed. In 1912, Sun Jinchen, the director of Jinsha Local Self-government Office (zizi gongsuo) suggested eliminating the yamen. The yamen director Liu Hanzhang and clerk Zhang Hong did not want to become unemployed, so they persuaded thousands of zaomin (kitchen people) to protest.¹ These zaomin destroyed the Jinsha Self-government Office and humiliated Sun Jinchen. When news reached Nantong city, Zhang Cha sent an armed force to back Sun. Zhang Hong was arrested and later was sentenced to death. The zaomin were ordered to pay for repairing the damaged Local Self-government Office buildings (Chao & Lin 1981, 124-125).

This incident intensified the tension between the zaomin and the Local Self-government officials in the Jinsha area. Within one week of the Jinsha incident, zaomin in Qian village (fifteen li from Jinsha town) rose up against Yu Xianggu, who

¹ Zaomin were people who used to work in the salt fields. Because they boiled sea water to make salt, they were called the "kitchen people."

tried to raise funds to arm Qian town's local militia. The zaomin intended to destroy the Qian Local Self-government Office. When they were marching to the Office, Yu's militia attacked them with guns. The zaomin apparently had no idea what guns and bullets would do to them. They thought that no bullets would penetrate them once they put water-soaked cotton coats on. This confrontation ended in bloodshed and the zaomin were defeated; more than twenty of them were killed (Chao & Lin 1981, 125-126).

The fact that peasants directed their hostility toward local elites who took charge of public works indicated the change in the relationship of rural classes. With the rise of the elites as both fiscal and administrative authorities in the public domain, they replaced local officials to become the outlet of peasant discontent. It was therefore natural that the peasants came to oppose the elites, since most reform projects at the county level or below involved them. Clearly, the new class relationships between the people and the elites were by no means all harmonious, and state power was not the only force the elites had to deal with in establishing their domination.

Water Control Projects

Scholarship

One other notable aspect which demonstrated the strength of the elites was that the elites assumed responsibility in

projects which traditionally had been organized by the state. The most important state-sponsored projects in premodern China were large waterworks, which have long attracted scholarly attention (Elvin 1975). For instance, the recognition of the necessity of irrigation work for China as an agricultural society had led to the development of the theory of Oriental Despotism in the West (Perdue 1987, 2-6). This theory suggests that the Oriental despotic system of China was based on the need for the state to control waterworks, for large water projects could not be implemented at local levels or by any individual forces. They required leadership and coordination at the national level in terms of financial resources, labor force, organizational capacity and managerial scope. Whether or not the formation of the Chinese imperial system had anything to do with water control is of course an open question. Karl Wittfogel, for example, emphasized the bureaucratic character of the Chinese system instead of its link with the economic aspects of the society (Wittfogel 1957).

Along this line, Barrington Moore pointed out that the "near monopoly of bureaucratic posts" by the landed upper classes and their close ties with the government, more than anything else, contributed to China's despotism (1966, 162). He suggested that the landlord was also responsible for irrigation works, because he "had a strong interest in proper irrigation in order to enable his tenants to grow good crops. Hence local landlord families were constantly pressuring the

government to construct water-control systems." Moore then came to the conclusion that "larger projects on a provincial scale were the work of provincial landlord cliques. Imperial projects were the work of still more powerful cliques with a national vision" (1966, 169). What Moore saw is that the ultimate force in waterworks as well as in Chinese society as a whole was the upper-class landlord. This group of landlords pushed the government to build irrigation systems. The latter acted upon the former's interest. Both Wittfogel and Moore challenged the classical model of Oriental Despotism, which was based on Marxist economic determinism.

Peter Perdue's study of state and peasant in Hunan from 1500-1850 indicated yet another objection to the Marxist model. He suggested that no direct relationship existed between size of project and degree of state control (1987, 171). In other words, the assumption that large waterworks required state involvement and therefore contributed to the despotic system has no foundation. Furthermore, he described a dynamic and dialectical relationship between the Chinese state and the agricultural society in irrigation projects as well as in other aspects of agricultural work. Perdue argued that state initiative and local autonomy coexisted. The huge Sangyuan polder in Hunan, for instance, was a relatively autonomous work (1987, 171).

Perdue also recognized the change over time in the balance of this dialectical interaction between the state and

local society. Basically, he saw three phases of this relationship. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the state played an active role in building irrigation systems and in other agricultural activities as well. The state and local interests at this stage were in harmony. The former did what the latter needed. In the later eighteenth century, though the state and local society did not conflict, officials were more reluctant to commit to economic growth, and non-official initiative started to increase. By the end of the eighteenth century, Perdue held, the state and rural society were definitely in conflict, with the latter holding the initiative (Perdue 1987, 235).

The Circumstances of Nantong

We can agree with Perdue that the relationship between the state and local society went through an evolution from harmony to conflict. In the case of Nantong, the period from 1700 to 1800 as a harmonious stage between the officials and gentry as I have described does not exactly match the Hunan situation, which Perdue studied, but China is so large that we cannot in fact expect anything to have developed evenly in every corner of the country in any given period.

Also, unlike the cases Perdue described in Hunan, in Nantong the size of a project did bear direct relationship to the degree of state involvement. Local people in Nantong simply could not afford large waterworks. For one thing, what

the Nantong people had to deal with was not lakes, but rivers. In order for any serious improvement of the water system to occur in Nantong, the Huai River had to be fixed first, which could involve the three provinces of Henan, Anhui, and Jiangsu.² Without the commitment of the state or the effort of large corporations, a project like this was unthinkable. In fact, as Finnane has realized, the water control situation in the Subei region was "the opposite of that in the Dongting lake region, where by the middle of the eighteenth century the state was virtually absent from the domain of hydraulic management" (1993, 226 [Perdue 1982, 762]).

Zhang Jian in 1907 did try to establish an official-gentry corporation and to take care of the Huai problems. He was appointed to the post of the Director General of Water Conservancy of the National Water Conservancy Bureau in 1913 and took some actions to start the project. But no fundamental improvement of the Huai system was achieved (Chu 1965, 149-160). In Nantong, the question is not whether the elites wanted to pursue complete autonomy in local waterworks, but whether they had adequate funds to do so. As much as they were willing to take the initiative, local people desperately sought government funds to support water projects. Only when the Qing government showed no interest in them whatsoever did the local people have to raise funds on their own. The local

² For the water system and the Huai problem, see Chu 1965, 148-161; Finnane 1993b, 218-219.

society therefore did not invade, but was rather unhappily forced into, the previously officially-controlled domain.

The Battle of Erosion Protection

Beyond the several dikes listed in Table 6, one problem of concern to the local people was erosion protection. It was a constant battle for the residents in Nantong, Haimen and their neighboring counties to deal with landslides along the northern bank of the Yangzi. Without any protection for the shore, high tides and floods (especially between June-August) washed away lives, properties, and land. Every year ten fanli was eroded into the river. Each fanli contained 540 mu of land and each mu was worth thirty yuan (silver), which meant the yearly loss was 5400 mu of land at a total price of 162,000 yuan. High water and violent typhoons also destroyed many homes and claimed people's lives. In 1911, 4,654 families (hu) and 20,780 people (kou) were affected by floods in Nantong county alone (NXZZH 1915, 113-115). Absurdly, those who lost their lands to fish still had to pay taxes. They were therefore forced to leave home and wandered about as refugees (Fan 1922, 2. 2-4). To escape the invasion of the Yangzi, towns, ports and tombs were constantly moved inward. Nantong jinshi Gu Pan's tomb was moved twice (Gu 1932, 8. 4). Qinglong port in Haimen county was moved four times from 1910-1930 (Mao 1988, 22). Also at stake was Nantong city. The yearly collapse of land on the north bank exposed the city to the river, and

the city faced the danger of being flooded away someday. It was especially urgent to protect the city in the early twentieth century, when this political, industrial and cultural center was equipped with advanced modern facilities. In the twenty years before 1914, countless vain efforts were made to seek government help in controlling the water (Fan 1922, 2. 2-4).

In 1907, the Erosion Protection Society was established with Zhang Cha as its director. Its duties included writing reports and sending petitions to the government, investigating floods, making speeches, organizing flood relief events, raising funds, and managing accounting and other flood-related activities (NXZZH 1915, 1. 97, 104). In 1911 when a typhoon struck Nantong and claimed thirty yu people's lives and homes, an additional Flood Relief Association was immediately set up to help those in need (Fan 1922, 2. 4). With 3,000 yuan (silver) of Zhang Jian's private funds, a Dutch engineer was hired to help survey and make maps in 1908. Later Swedish and British engineers were also involved. They suggested building long dikes along the banks and dividing the water to reduce its damaging force. The cost of this cross-county project was estimated at 500,000 liang, which was simply beyond the capacity of local resources. The local elites were nevertheless determined to give it a try.

The Tongzhou Local Self-government Association (established in 1908) held meetings with the people to discuss this

matter. The key issue was how to finance the project. In the beginning the elites still tried to appeal to higher-level officials for help. They first wanted to borrow money from the Qing Bank through the prefectural government for a period of twenty years. The prefectural officials refused the proposal because "the amount was too large and the twenty-year period was too long" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1828). Then the local people asked the Qing government to allocate part of the money it had collected from Nantong through the lijin system in the past twenty years, but this appeal was denied also.

In 1910 the Tongzhou Local Self-government Councils and Directorates held a joint meeting to further discuss the matter. At this meeting they decided to ask the government to appropriate a portion of jinyang shanhou, a surcharge imposed by the government since the Taiping Rebellion. But this suggestion did not go through the prefectural administration either. The prefectural administration instead repeatedly instructed Nantong elites to "raise funds within the local community" and not to ask the government for money (Qian 1988, 2. 3, 5b).

The same year Zhang Jian twice wrote to the Ministry of Civil Administration (Minzhengbu) and Ministry of Revenue (Duzhibu). In his letters he described how much Nantong people had suffered from floods and how the prefectural officials had turned down their appeals for support. He once again suggested borrowing money from the Qing Bank or the Communication Bank,

but with no results (Zhang Jian 1965, 1826-30). The next year Zhang Jian sent two telegrams separately to the Ministry of Revenue and Ministry of Civil Administration with requests for funds. The Ministry responded with one line: "Let the local officials handle the matter." The Ministry of Civil Administration's answer was also one line: "Let the Ministry of Revenue handle this matter" (Qian 1988, 2. 3b) In 1912 the Nantong County Local Self-government Councils tried to get loans from foreign banks. Zhang Jian negotiated with two foreign banks, but it was fruitless because of the lack of strong guarantors (NXZZH 1915, 1. 100-111).

While Zhang Jian was using his special stature to strive for official funds and foreign loans, Chen Shen and a group of twenty local elites acted as "people's representatives" and went about drumming up support for the dike building project. From 1908 to 1911 they sent four petitions to the prefectural and provincial administrations and to the central government. In these petitions, they stressed the importance of preventing erosion and suggested possible solutions. They also asked for government investigation of the flood situation and required official funds (Fan 1922, 2. 2B; Qian 1988, 2. 3a-3b, 5a).

None of these letters and petitions was answered and outside help never came, but the local people did manage to complete a dike of 1,856 zhang in 1913. This project, to be sure, was only a temporary solution to fighting floods and was much smaller than the one suggested by the engineers. But it

was the first result of more than twenty years of collective efforts by this local community. The funds came from private sources (NXZZH 1915, 1. 98-99).

At this point, the Qing dynasty had been replaced by the Republican government. But the chaotic beginning of the Republican era was no better than the last years of the Qing state in terms of financing local projects. The people in Nantong almost gave up the idea of striving for official assistance. In 1913, the Erosion Protection Society came up with a new idea to collect funds. They decided to claim already privately-occupied marshes and sandy land as public property and demanded that the occupants purchase the land from the county. The county in turn could use the money to finance the building of more dikes. This proposal was accepted by the County Self-government Councils and it reported the decision to the provincial government. In 1915, Jiangsu provincial officials investigated the situation and discovered a total of 14,349 mu of such land. The county decision to sell the land and use the money to fund the waterworks was approved (NXZZH 1915, 1. 102-103; Fan 1922, 2. 4b-5a; Xu 1991, 23).

To search for a better solution to Nantong's water problems, Zhang Jian in 1914 held a workshop in Nantong with the participation of engineers from Holland, Sweden, Great Britain, and the United States. At the workshop the Dutch engineer suggested building jian, while the American engineer thought dikes would be most helpful. Zhang Jian decided to

combine their ideas and to build both jian and dikes. Using about a half million yuan from selling the public land, the project was able to be implemented. Up to 1927, eighteen jian were completed which stretched eighteen li in length, and a nine-kilometer dike was also built. The Nantong shore along the Yangzi was relatively stabilized. In 1927 the official Nantong Construction Bureau was established to replace the self-organized Erosion Protection Society. With the bureaucratization of the organization, a five-fen erosion protection fee became mandatory in 1931 (Xu 1991, 22-24).

During this long and painful process, the elites were the active force which pushed the government for action on the one hand, and provided leadership for the community in handling this difficult problem on the other. Overcoming enormous difficulties, they were finally able to implement part of the project, which became the ultimate proof of their capacity. At the same time, the official presence was insignificant in the process. This was not because official support was not needed, but because local as well as higher level administrations were unable to meet local demands and perform their duties. What the people needed was government funds necessary to undertake such a project. The government rejected all of the proposals and never took any action to help.

Caught between an inactive government and an angry community led by a strong Local Self-government Association, local officials became dysfunctional. They were pushed by the

community to communicate local needs to the higher level officials, yet they could not do anything when the latter ignored them. In 1907, a newly-appointed prefect named Guan was asked by a group of local elites to inspect the erosion situation on the day following his arrival. Later he had a meeting with the people to discuss the problems. What he could do, however, was very little, since he could not come up with the funds (NXZZH 1915, 1. 97). In 1909, before the completion of his tenure, Guan, due to constant local complaints, sent a report to the central state and asked it to exempt from taxes those who had lost their lands in floods. Nothing resulted from his report, except that documents traveled among bureaucrats of different levels (Fan 1922, 2. 2b).

Government Negligence

The Qing court showed striking negligence and indifference to Nantong's water projects, and for that matter, people's lives there as well. What contributed to the government's indifferent attitude? Obviously, it was not due to the increase of local initiative, as in Perdue's Hunan case, for the elites in Nantong had tried everything to get the government involved in the erosion problem. Was it then because the state was financially too weak to support local economic development due to its overall decline? It is hard to imagine that the government could not even come up with at least a small amount of money, or show at least some concern,

to the Nantong people. Or, was it because Nantong was a negligible area which did not deserve government investment?

A recent study by Kenneth Pomeranz on the Huang-Yun area in western Shandong along the Grand Canal and the Yellow River sheds light on these questions. According to Pomeranz, government withdrawal from its traditional domains such as water projects reflected a shift in its priorities instead of its inability to promote economic growth. He argues that with the presence of Western economic challenge and modernization processes in coastal regions such as the Yangzi delta and major urban areas such as Beijing and Tianjin, the Qing government had to redirect its resources to these regions to avoid more foreign intrusion and to ensure the development of the modern sectors of economy. In doing so, government budgets for water projects were cut. Moreover, Pomeranz suggests that the reduced water funds went mainly to the coast and to locations which were closely linked to the coastal economy, such as those near railroads. As a result, he stresses, inland areas such as Huang-Yun where the stimuli of coastal economy were absent were neglected and disinvested. Huang-Yun, once part of "the throat of China," became a marginal area due to the decline of the Grand Canal.

Pomeranz shows that in the early twentieth century, when areas on the north Shandong coast and on the junction of the Yellow River-Tianjin-Pukou railway still received government money to deal with water problems, water control projects in

Huang-Yun were largely left to local people. He therefore finds two opposite patterns of economic development in different regions, one which received increasing priority and the other which suffered increasing neglect (1993, 5-12, 202-211).

Perhaps nowhere is more fitting than Jiangsu for one to test Pomeranz's model of the "two opposite patterns." The Jiangnan and Jiangbei regions are so close and yet so different. The former, as a strategically important and heavily commercialized area, had been notable as one of the major sources of government revenue since China's economic center had shifted to the south in the late Tang dynasty. China's modern economic development also concentrated in the area, with Shanghai as its center. Jiangbei, similar to Huang-Yun, declined with the development of sea transport which diminished the importance of the Grand Canal and some of the towns and cities in Jiangbei.

It would require another work, perhaps with a focus on economic geography, to examine whether or not the gap between Jiangnan and Jiangbei was partially a result of different government treatments. My sources, however, do provide some evidence of the existence of different treatments which may be relevant to Pomeranz's findings. For instance, when the Chongming county seat (near Shanghai on the coast) was threatened by flood around 1883, 113,000 yuan of government funds went to pay the cost of building stone dikes, while

Nantong got nothing from the court for their water projects. The Nantong people constantly referred to this recent precedent and asked why Nantong should be treated differently (Fan 1922, 2. 3a). Across the Yangzi was yet another marked example which showed how the Qing state had ignored Nantong. After describing the costly and superior dikes along the Jiangnan side, Zhang Jian sighed with emotion and said: "The ways the court treats people in Jiangnan and Jiangbei are as different as day and night. Although the Jiangnan people pay more rent than those in Jiangbei, the latter's lives now could only depend on heaven [because they do not receive any concern and support from the state]" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1833).

The Chongming case and Zhang Jian's comments revealed that the Qing court favored Jiangnan and neglected Jiangbei due to their different economic significance, as in the cases of western and northern Shangdong. To be sure, the government never admitted to sacrificing one area for another. In fact, it never explained to the Nantong people why government funds were not available for their waterworks yet were allocated to Chongming, but the state partiality was nevertheless clear to the Nantong elites. The Qing court therefore had a price to pay for selecting its priorities, since theoretically the benevolent ruler should treat all its subjects equally. What was in question was the legitimacy of the Qing court. The way the government handled the waterworks in Nantong had resulted

in much local objection and criticism directed against the state, as we will see shortly.

Education

The Changing Pattern of School-Building

Education was another arena in which the Nantong elites demonstrated their ability to take responsibility and get results. Unlike the situation with regard to large water control projects, China historically had both private and official schooling systems. From Confucius' concept of sixue (private education) to Zhu Xi's idea of the shuyuan (private academy), individually-sponsored schools had played an important role in the history of Chinese education (Rawski 1972). But promoting education had always been a highly-regarded official duty in premodern China. For in Confucian values, a prosperous and strong dynasty was unavoidably associated with its achievement in education, and it also depended on schools to train future officials and to instill the Confucian values so the dynasty could be a lasting success. Local officials usually took establishing and maintaining schools as respectable duties. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that sixteen out of a total of eighteen academies existing in Tongzhou prefecture between 1700-1800 were officially-sponsored (Table 7). This pattern, however, changed dramatically after 1900, when privately-initiated schools became an overwhelming majority

among Nantong's schools, a fact which had never occurred before.

Public Participation

What contributed to this phenomenon was the broad participation of the general public in building new-style schools. We have mentioned in Chapter Three the extensive involvement of local elites in public projects. As a matter of fact, Nantong in the early twentieth century created a culture which encouraged practically everyone to participate in public service. Anyone who wanted to legitimate himself as a prominent member (not necessarily a recognized elite) of the community had to perform public service, through which the degree of one's visibility and reputation were determined. Since education was both highly valued in tradition and closely linked to the actions of local elites, and also since schools, especially primary schools, required limited financial resources and could be carried out and managed as independent undertakings, many local people, who were by no means all established elites or merchants, engaged in educationally-related programs. The relatively large number of primary schools in Nantong to a considerable degree was owing to local people's personal contributions, which came in different forms.

Some supported local schools in a still rather traditional way by donating land or rent. For instance, in 1900 and

1913, Zhou Huiyi purchased 5,500 mu initially to set up a righteous ferry and an orphanage. Later the rent went to schools. Gu Cengcai in 1896 and Gu Huizong in 1901 also offered rent from their land to local schools (Fan 1922, 2. 5a-5b).

Local people also worked together to create schools as the result of collective actions of a village, district, or town. Those schools were usually called "public schools," and the cost was shared by local wealthy people, who were now the creators, managers, and fundraisers of the schools. For instance, the Jinsha Public Higher Primary School, the first higher primary school outside Nantong city, was locally initiated and funded in 1906. Before higher primary schools were set up in other rural areas of Nantong, the students who lived within a hundred li came to Jinsha to complete their primary education. Up to the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, the position of principal at the public school was exclusively held by local elites (Jiang 1984, 57).

It is well-known that local elites or landlords initiated schools, but the first lower primary school in Pingchao town was established in 1904 at the initiative of townsman Qian Cangpei and with the participation of Pingchao people. There were a total of fourteen newly-built schools in Pingchao from 1900-1914, one of which was a girls' school (Qian 1985, 63). Yu Shicheng, a school teacher, suggested setting up a higher primary school in Zhang Zishan town. He worked with local

elites and merchants to complete the project. Later Yu became the principal of the school (Lu 1992, 107-110).

But one of the most striking examples of local people's active involvement in educational projects was the growth of individually-sponsored schools, which often bore the founder's family name as his "private school." It was not unusual for a landlord, a merchant, or even a school teacher to create a school with his private funds. Zhang Jian, Zhang Cha, Liu Yishan, and Shen Xiejun all had their private schools (Song 1992, 35; Jia & Yan 1988, 133; Gu 1987, 44-46). In some areas like Jinxi, private schools at one point prevailed. During the six years from 1909 to 1915, five lower primary schools were created, four of which were privately owned. In 1915, another privately-funded higher primary school was created. It was the first private higher primary school in the county (Lu 1985, 5). In Jinsha town and its subordinate rural area there were a total of twenty-five lower primary schools as of 1913, eight of which were privately-owned. Sun Lifu's Private Lower Primary School and Gu Hongkai's Jinsha First Lower Primary School established in 1905 were the earliest ones (Ren 1983, 64).

Besides primary schools, local people were also interested in popular educational projects. Influenced by the May Fourth movement, Yao Weixiang, a graduate of Nantong Normal School, then the principal of Nantong Second Higher Primary School, established the Commercial Night School in 1922. The

school was open to workers and staff in business professions who had finished primary education. The teachers Yao invited for the school ranged from local cotton firm owners to new graduates of Beijing University. In addition to mathematics and Chinese, they taught vernacular writing, accounting, natural science, business strategies and morality, and also promoted speaking standard Chinese pronunciation (putonghua) (Ji 1984, 50). Although it lasted only one year, Yao's night school brought fresh air to the educational circles in Nantong, because other schools' curricula were designed more to revolve around the needs of the local self-government movement.

Pingchao's wealthy merchant Zhang Xinfu was a man of high prestige in the town. Encouraged by Zhang Jian, one of his relatives, Zhang Xinfu decided to establish a Common People's Educational Center (pingmin jiaoyuguan) in Pingchao. The Center included sections for administration, art, teaching, and propaganda. There was a two-hour class every night during weekdays for workers, peasants, and apprentices to eliminate illiteracy. The Center also had a small photo studio and a zoo, and served as a gathering place for local people. Opera amateurs came to perform on weekend evenings. lovers of folk arts could also enjoy themselves here. This Center was forced to close in 1938, when Nantong was occupied by the Japanese (Zhu 1992, 201-204).

The Nantong public indeed showed a tremendous interest in educational programs in the early twentieth century. The number of schools in an area had become an index of the area's progress. Sun Jinchen once challenged an ancient saying, which goes: "To hand down to your son a basket of gold is not as good as to teach him a classic." He replaced it with his own: "To hand down to your son a basket of gold is not as good as to create a school." He said that he was old, but still wanted to use his spirit to promote education and set an example for others, because he wanted his hometown to be known as an "advanced area" (Ji 1988, 169-170).

The Functions of Education

The attention and priority given to schools reflected the changing purposes and functions of education. As Sun Jinchen's saying implied, a classic used to link one to officialdom. In fact, in traditional China, upward mobilization was the only purpose of education, and schools were the only channel for such mobilization. That was why a classic could be more valuable than a basket of gold. On the other hand, education then was more a purely personal investment which could hardly expect public participation.

In late Qing times, education was still (and would continue to be) a personal investment for the future, but public attitudes toward education changed significantly since education was considered a means to save and strengthen China.

To improve China's weak position in the face of the increasing foreign challenge, Chinese officials and scholars had tried economic and political reform since the middle of the nineteenth century, without good results. In the early twentieth century, inspired by Western nations and Japan, the Chinese thought education a remedy for China's problems, and the functions of modern education in strengthening the country and training a good citizenry were greatly emphasized. "Education saves China" (Jiaoyu jiuguo) became a popular slogan. Education was expected to produce a knowledgeable, patriotic, hard-working and united citizenry to be the source of national strength (Bailey 1990).

Nantong's education exactly developed along this line of thinking, which was reflected in three principles Zhang Jian set up for the Nantong normal school: nationalist ideology, industrial and commercial knowledge, and military spirit (Zhang Jian 1965, 1531). Among the trio industrial and commercial knowledge was to meet the needs of China's economic development, military spirit mainly referred to highly-disciplined physical education, and nationalist ideology was patriotism. As Zhang Jian said: "China now is really weak, but one cannot save China unless one is educated....The Chinese are one family, and every one should realize and take his responsibility for the family." He set up "hard work and self-reliance" (jieku zili) as the motto for the normal school students, and the last three sentences in the song he made for

the normal school were repetitions of the phrase "minzhi zi guolao" (learned people can make a strong nation) (Cheng 1989, 113). For Zhang Jian, a disciplined, responsible, patriotic, and learned citizenry was China's hope, and schools were supposed to produce such a citizenry (Zhang Jian 1965, 1538-1539).

To serve this end, Nantong schools had strict rules regarding punishment and awards, conduct in and outside the classroom, and even personal hygiene and environmental sanitation (Chen 1938, 47-51). The students were banned from smoking, drinking, quarreling, fighting, damaging school properties, being late or absent, leaving seats before dismissal of class, making too much noise, and so forth (Yong 1921, 45).

While saving China appeared to be a noble yet rather remote purpose for schools in Nantong, the local elites came to promote education for local needs and to incorporate it into the local self-government movement. The basic principle for all Nantong schools was to train local people to serve the local community. To this end, Nantong schools, including colleges, were mainly open to those within the Nantong region. For instance, among the 437 students at the Nantong Normal School, more than 420 were from the Nantong region (Chen 1938, 44-45).

A few examples will also indicate the local orientation of Nantong schools. In 1906 courses in surveying were added to

the Nantong Normal School, because of the need for local water-control projects. In 1907 the Normal School offered a major in agriculture, and the Agricultural School created the next year took a special interest in the main crops of Nantong, such as cotton. To develop the local banking system and commercial activities, a banking school and business school were set up within a middle school by Zhang Jian, Zhang Cha, Liu Yishan, and other local merchants in 1911. In 1908 the normal school offered courses on civil engineering to train students for local construction work, and later the school developed the Civil Engineering Department, from which the native architect Sun Zhixia graduated.

As a matter of fact, colleges of higher education and training schools such as the Nantong Textile School and Nantong Agricultural School were all created to suit local needs. Some of the graduates from these schools played significant roles in the textile industry and other modern sectors of the Nantong economy. Successfully controlling the local school system, the elites were able to utilize schools and students to serve their economic activities. In fact, the elites paid a great deal of attention to having the students focus on local development and keeping them away from outside temptation. For example, the students were not allowed to concern themselves with anything taking place outside Nantong. During the May Fourth Movement, as we will see in more detail

later, students who became involved in the movement were punished (Jiang 1984, 58).

At the same time, education had its political dimension. Under the control of the local elites, schools came to play a role in local politics. In 1908 the Educational Association and Self-government Preparation Bureau together created the Law and Politics Practice Office within the Nantong Public Middle School. This office changed its name to the Local Self-government Research Bureau in 1909. Zhang Cha used the middle school to set up the local Police Training Center in 1909. In 1911 the Educational Association started the Speech Practice Office to assume the task of educating the public about local self-government ideas. It was said that unless you were trained, you could not make effective speeches to the public (NXJH 1926, 2-4). All these activities and institutions contributed to the establishment of elite power.

Education also had value as a route for career advancement, and local elites and educators as brokers often controlled access to influential networks of personal connections (Averill n.d. 28). For instance, Zhang Jian was one of the elites who decided which students from the Nantong schools would be sent to study abroad in the early 1910s. It was quite common for Zhang Jian (and later also for Yu Chen and other elites and educators) to write recommendations for their students when they went to job markets. Sun Zhixia's employment with the Provincial Consulative Bureau in Nanjing was

directly introduced by Zhang Jian. With more and more students graduating from Nantong, local networks of personal contacts both in and outside of the educational system expanded, and local educators' influence was consequently extended.

Let's take the Nantong Normal School as an example. As Yu Chen established himself as an influential educator and scholar in Nantong and became well-respected in educational circles, graduates of the Nantong Normal School were spreading everywhere. They became, to use Helen Chauncey's term, "schoolhouse politicians" (1992). While some of them were employed by their former teachers and taught in their hometowns' primary schools, others held important positions and responsibilities in and outside Nantong. For instance, Sha Yuanqu, the most active local leader of Rugao county in the post-1927 era, was a graduate of the Nantong Normal School (Barkan 1990, 198). Over time, Nantong ties expanded like a snowball along the chain of regional schools, and they showed their strength in local politics.

In 1928 a lawsuit between Nantong and Haimen occurred over the land of the Normal School, which both sides claimed. Yu Chen represented the normal school and the case was to be handled by the Provincial Educational Bureau. The lawsuit attracted a great deal of attention from the alumni of the normal school, many of whom were Yu Chen's former students and now held responsible positions in educational, industrial, judicial, military and administrative divisions of the Jiangsu

provincial government. They maintained that the land belonged to their old school, which should be protected. They supported Yu Chen in the two-year legal battle and also put pressure on the Provincial Educational Bureau to favor Nantong. In the end, Nantong won the case and was given four-fifths of the land (8,000 mu), while Haimen was given one-fifth (2,000 mu) (Ding 1987, 89-91; Qiu 1991, 87). This education-related dispute highlighted the political functions of school networks, and demonstrated that local educators could indeed "exert influence on, or call for aid from, people in a wide variety of places and occupations" (Averill 1990, 296).

Education was also the primary reason bringing many celebrities to Nantong. One reason for this was that Nantong was known for the creation of the first normal school in China, for its county-wide school system, and for its well-developed social and public educational institutions. They, in addition, existed in a county where everything else was also showing a promising future. Since the Chinese then placed hopes on saving China through education, it was therefore of public interest to find out how education could effect social change. In this regard Nantong appeared to be a worthy case for study. These celebrity visits, as we will discuss in detail in Chapter Six, brought much positive publicity to Nantong and the local elite society.

Promotion of Education

Economically, politically, and socially, education was clearly a great asset to the local elites, and they closely monitored the school system and promoted its development. For instance, the Exhortation Bureau and Educational Research Bureau were established in 1907. In 1912 the County Educational Association began editing the Educational Yearbook (jiaoyu nianbao), based on which a cumulative Yearbook of Nantong Education was published in 1926. This book included accounts of educational development in Nantong since 1902, statistics and tables comparing yearly growth of various schools in every district, and records of budgets, plans, regulations, administrative structures and decisions.

The County Educational Association also created the Primary Educational Research Office and an exhibition of primary education achievements in 1913. Up to 1922, the Educational Association held six large conferences, one special meeting, twenty-five regular meetings, and fifty-two evaluation meetings. Each time the Educational Association circulated its decisions to all the educational bureaus below the county level (Fan 1922, 4b-5a).

Before 1930, education was an area almost completely controlled and managed by the local elites and people, and there was little official interference in local education. To be sure, governmental funding was always welcome. Zhang Jian, for instance, asked for official support for his effort to

establish a normal school and to develop special education, respectively, in 1902 and 1907 (Zhang Jian 1965, 1522, 1598). In 1905, he requested money from the government for the Tongzhou Middle School (Zhang Jian 1965, 1578). But the local elites and people enjoyed the autonomy to decide where, when and how to set up schools, since the local community was able to fund most of the schools, though always with some difficulty. More importantly, local elites had the autonomy to manage the schools, and could thus utilize them for local development and personal interests.

The Critical Discourse

Delegitimizing the State

The public institutions and projects established in Nantong provided physical testimony both to a very able elite group and to an extremely dysfunctional state. The public who participated in the process of creating these projects witnessed the facts that the public local schools were growing rapidly in number without government assistance, and that the erosion problem was partially controlled because of the construction of the dikes managed by the elites, while the state had failed them after more than twenty years of struggles, negotiations, and expectations. What these public projects brought to Nantong was not only material change, but also conceptual change--the public's faith in state leadership and dependability was shaken, and they realized that public

services were now purely a local matter which could only be implemented through local efforts and elite leadership.

For the local elites, the public institutions and projects became a field for their political performance. Institutions such as the Erosion Protection Society and schools were important loci for elite actions which often had political implication. Clearly, when they designed the public service system, they also defined their own roles and positions within it. Paralleling Nantong's economic, educational, and social progress, the local elites established Nantong as their own domain. The elites' pursuit of their own power in local society at the expense of state authority was a vital part of their effort to build the public service system. To further demonstrate this point, we need to see how the elites highlighted their capability by developing a critical discourse targeting the state's reputation and credibility. They used virtually every opportunity to criticize the government. The true dynamic of early-twentieth-century elite public service lay in its instrumental functions in helping the elites establish legitimacy which entitled them to their dominant position in the locality, and Nantong was not alone in this regard (Rank 1986; Strand 1989; Schoppa 1990).

Legitimacy here refers to one's possession of some degree of moral authority recognized by other people which entitles one to one's position (Schoppa 1994, 162). The traditional Chinese state was portrayed as possessing high moral authori-

ty. Benevolence and fairness were parts of the projected moral superiority of the imperial state. The fall of a dynasty was often viewed as a result of moral decline of the emperor, who was portrayed as abusive and indifferent to people's suffering. The critical discourse the Nantong elites developed also challenged the moral standing of the Qing court. For elites, the court was not only incapable, but also morally inferior, and they used their own experience to prove it.

For example, at the turn of this century, developing education was on the agenda of the Qing court as part of the constitutional reform, but when Zhang Jian first came to Liu Kuangyi with the suggestion of creating Western-style normal schools and seeking official funds, Liu was not supportive at all and his officials instead laughed at Zhang by asking him: "Although China is poorer than the West in other aspects, how could we even need to follow the Westerner in schooling"? (Zhang Jian 1965, 1522). In other words, these conservatives did not understand why the Chinese had to learn from the Westerners as far as education was concerned. China's five thousand years of civilization obviously blinded these officials' vision. Zhang Jian was disappointed but not discouraged, and he used part of his share from the Dasheng enterprises to build the Nantong Normal School.

This was quite an accomplishment at the time. The fact that it was the first and the only normal school built by private initiative and funds in China at that time, and that

the Qing government nominally promoted educational reform yet refused to support this project, gave ammunition for Zhang to use to belittle the state and applaud his achievement on many occasions and in different ways. He pointed out that 1902 marked the beginning of the history of normal schools in China because of the establishment of the Tongzhou Normal School, which symbolized people's ability in creating schools on their own. He emphasized that it was the only people's normal school in a country with twenty-one provinces and a population of 400 million. In this way, Zhang Jian presented the normal school as a monumental work with great historical significance not only in Nantong, but also in the nation.

Zhang detailed the difficulties in the process of creating the school--raising funds, choosing locations, providing teaching equipment, selecting teachers, and handling other affairs--which, he stressed, had all been overcome by local efforts without any official assistance. In fact, Zhang Jian elaborated, it was precisely because the government was incapable of taking on such a project that the local people had to carry it out on their own (Zhang Jian 1965, 1522-1534, 1557). In his speech at the opening ceremony of the Normal School in 1903, Zhang said: "In other countries, normal schools were all sponsored and funded by the government. [But in China] I have tried seven to eight years with no hope [of getting government support]. So I have had to make money by starting the factory [the Dasheng Cotton Mill] in order to

create the school" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1539). Whether or not the original purpose of building the Dasheng Cotton Mill was to support education was questionable, as we will see in Chapter Seven, but that was what Zhang Jian wanted the public to know after the school was established.

Zhang Jian implied that the Qing court said one thing but meant another, and was in fact not sincere about encouraging education. He stressed that in all other countries, government used national revenue to finance official schools, local taxes for public schools and both national revenue and local taxes to make up the fund shortage for private schools (Zhang Jian 1965, 1557). But in China, Zhang said, the government did not allow local taxes to fund private schools and had no financial plans to support education. If this persisted, Zhang concluded, all the ideas of promoting and popularizing education would become empty words (Zhang Jian 1965, 1551).

In addition, Zhang carefully watched out for possible government attempts to compete for local school funds. In 1906 when the elites in Tongzhou put forth a plan to universalize primary education in the area, they came up with a tentative taxation plan which would collect about 300,000 yuan yearly as a school budget. This amount was unfortunately equal to the yearly official taxes. Zhang was worried that if the government learned that the local society was able to collect this amount, it would be greedy and try to tax Nantong even more (Zhang Jian 1965, 1587).

For Zhang Jian, educational reform should begin with normal and primary schools, just as it did in the West. But in 1900 the Qing court started a modern school system beginning with universities. While emphasizing the importance of primary and normal education with the perfect example of Nantong, Zhang pointed out that the Qing court was instead ignorantly focusing on higher education, which "invited the foreigners to laugh at us" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1592-1593). By constantly comparing what Nantong had achieved with what the state was unable to do, Zhang Jian created the impression that Nantong had surpassed the nation without government involvement, and that the Qing state had obviously failed as far as education was concerned.

The dialogue between the local society and the official administrations--central as well as prefectural governments--over erosion protection projects also revealed in a telling manner how the elites tried to create distance between themselves and the state and to deprecate the latter. The local elites strongly justified their request for official funds for the waterworks. First of all, they reminded the government that it was the latter's responsibility to take care of such matters. And it indeed was. In his telegram to the Ministry of Civil Administration in 1910, Zhang Jian stated that "the land and people all belong to the Qing court, and the people's livelihood is in your hands." He urged the

government to take actions to get involved in such a life-and-death matter (Zhang Jian 1965, 1827).

In his telegram to the Ministry of Revenue, Zhang Jian listed all the official excuses made by the prefectural and provincial administrations to refuse to support Nantong water-works. Then he pointed out:

Those important officials had the nation's responsibility to perform and they were supposed to communicate local needs to the court. Even if the nation had suffered from financial difficulty, the decision whether Nantong could borrow money or whether government funds could be allocated to Nantong should be made by the court. How could the provincial officials persistently deny our request without even letting the court know it? (Zhang Jian 1965, 1829)

Instead of directly criticizing the court, Zhang Jian, a skilled politician, used the strategy of "pointing at the mulberry and abusing the locust"--he knew very well that the problem was in the court, yet he tried to put pressure on the court for some positive results by targeting the officials in Jiangsu. He then said: "If there were landless people [like those in Nantong who had lost their fields to the river] who still had to pay rent, the government must be able to come up with some means to protect the land and take care of the people" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1829).

These arguments were indeed logical, yet the underlying theme embodied in them was quite severe. It implied that the only thing the court cared about was rent instead of the people, and it held the court to be fully responsible for the erosion problem and the people's suffering in Nantong. In

light of the traditional concept of a paternalistic relationship between the ruler and the ruled, it was all the more wrong for the state to be an onlooker of this painful experience. What was in question was morality. If the court was unwilling or unable to reach the people who were obviously in such great need, Zhang Jian implied, it would be morally inappropriate for the court to be respected as the central authority.

In addition, Nantong people blamed the state for its unfairness in handling local water projects. Why did Chongming county receive government money to deal with floods? Why should not Nantong be treated equally? Why were superior dikes built along Jiangnan banks? These questions were asked in local people's petitions sent to the government repeatedly, but they were never answered (Fan 1922, 2. 3a). By condemning the court's unfairness, the local elites further denigrated the moral standing of the Qing state.

Moreover, financially the people argued that Nantong had paid the state 140,000,000 liang in the fifty years since lijin was imposed. To undertake the water project, Nantong needed 3,100,000 liang from the state, which was only one forty-third of the total 140,000,000 liang. In other words, the state only had to provide the Nantong people with the equivalent of twenty year's of lijin revenue out of what the state had collected from Nantong in fifty years. Why could not this be done? Was this too much to ask for? The Nantong people

felt that the government had taken advantage of Nantong for years because the people used to be vulnerable, as the author of the Illustrated Gazetteer of Nantong County pointed out while speaking of the li levy:

Nantong has not suffered any warfare during the 300 years since the late Ming. People have been given to peace. They feared the officials and carefully obeyed the laws. ...Nantong people have paid the government several millions for the li levy but have not been able to keep one penny for local use (Fan 1922, 5. 1).

But now they wanted this to change. Besides lijin, there was another surcharge, named jinyang shanhou, which had been imposed after the Taiping uprising. The total amount Nantong had paid for this surcharge over fifty years was several million (liang). Now Nantong wanted to borrow two percent of the total amount from the government to build the dikes. This effort had also failed. The people called the government to account for not even lending money (the people's own money, from the point of view of the Nantong people) to them for such a well-justified and much-needed project. The arguments along this line further showed how reasonable it was for the people to obtain official support. They also implied that the state was too greedy and financially obligated to help Nantong.

Furthermore, the local people emphasized that the water projects would benefit a great many people, protecting their lives and properties. It would also benefit the Qing state in the long run by securing the revenue resources. Why did the

government refuse to support it? This point implied that the Qing officials were stupid and short-sighted. Finally, the argument went on to say that the reason the people were still suffering from floods after twenty years of effort was not because they deserved to be miserable, or even because of the floods, but because the government had abandoned the people (Fan 1922, 2. 1-4). "If our cry for help [over the twenty years] could have reached the court," Zhang Jian wrote in his report on the flood of 1911, "the court could have provided funds to take care of the problem....If so, even the most violent tide and typhoon would not have been able to hurt the people [as they do now]" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1835).

Again Zhang Jian was not directly criticizing the court; at one point he explicitly said that he felt deep sorrow for the people yet had no resentment against the court (Zhang Jian 1965, 1836). But if one reads between the lines and takes into consideration these implicit points, there can be no question that he held the court responsible for the flood damage. For Zhang Jian as well as other Nantong elites, the inability of the court, instead of the natural disasters, was the real cause of their long-time suffering.

Language as Instrument

What we see here is the practice of a rational and critical-oriented discourse in which certain rhetorical devices were invested to constitute a social reality such as

the elites conceived or as they wanted to conceive. The function of language as an instrument for constructing the world of objects, as Bourdieu has studied, was clearly displayed in this discourse. According to Bourdieu, language has the power to make people see and believe, to predict and prescribe, to make known and recognized. Language can also define the world of what can be said, done and thought, in contrast to what should be rejected as wrong, unsayable and unthinkable. It has the power of maintaining or subverting the social order through creating the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. Members of each social group therefore try to impose the definition of the social world that is best suited to their interests (1991, 164-181).

Bourdieu assumed a close link "between actions and interest, and between the practices of agents and the interests which they knowingly or unknowingly pursue" (1991, 16). More importantly, these perceptions and definitions bear the "virtue of objectification" (Bourdieu 1991, 182)--they are objectified and presented as the truth, while the truth is actually created to promote the interests of certain social groups. The "truth production," to use Foucault's words, is therefore only one of the functions of power play (O'Brien 1989, 35).

The Nantong elites indeed fully exploited language as an instrument to create an "objective" world in which the state legitimacy was questioned. The Qing court was portrayed as

immoral because of its unfairness, its indifference towards people's suffering, its inability to keep its word, and its neglect of its paternalistic obligation to protect the ruled. The government was presented as a failure in terms of administration, because of the inefficient communication channels between the Jiangsu officials and the central state as suggested by Zhang Jian, and because in thirty years the state could not solve, or, at least lend a hand in solving, the flood problem. Financially, the court was described as greedy, for it created and imposed all sorts of taxes on the people, and even forced those whose land was eroded to pay taxes, while neglecting their pain. Besides, after collecting taxes from Nantong for so many years, the court did not provide any funds to help Nantong's local projects, and even refused to lend money to them. The Qing state was all the more problematic when it was compared with what the elites had established in Nantong, where the educational reform, for instance, started from normal and lower level schools as it was supposed to, instead of from universities, as the court did, and where many programs were successfully carried out under extremely difficult circumstances, including discouragement and sometimes obstacles created by the state. These arguments created the strong impression that the Qing court was in a crisis so deep that it was absolutely irreversible.

The critical discourse created by the elites also employed a set of traditional Chinese concepts of society and

government, which, to use Habermas's words, is "the consensual foundations of normative structures" (Habermas 1973, 3), to mirror the troubles the Qing court was in. A "normal" government (a legitimate government indeed) in ancient China was supposed to take care of the people and answer their pleas, to be fair to them in all regions, to straighten out the tax system whenever problems occurred, and to have a vision for the future well-being of the dynasty by securing its revenue sources and protecting its people. These principles, theoretically, constituted a normal and functional state leadership. Though this was a rather ideal model, for few dynasties were in such a positive situation in a given period, the local elites nevertheless used these principles to measure the Qing court and to attack it.

This discourse, while shaping the faith in local capability and dependability, along with the images of a capable elite body and a dysfunctional state, constituted a social reality in which the government was on the defensive and lost its legitimacy, and the elites had more legitimate authority than the state since they outweighed the latter in both capacity and moral standing. Clearly, the establishment of the belief in local elite independent capacity was an important component in the formation of an elite-centered political culture.

Summary

This chapter has shown the change in elite public service in Nantong since the eighteenth century. In the eighteenth century public service was an official domain and local gentry's contributions were often interpreted as part of the state achievements and served state interests. The public service then was an intermediate arena where state and society met. In the early twentieth century, the elites completely took over local public service, and the "intermediate arena" became a line separating state and society. By providing the public service the elites came to control the public domain of the locality in which state influence was significantly diminished.

As the study by Rankin on Zhejiang proves, the expansion of public services such as welfare and education was key to understanding the rise of elite influence, and Rankin considers elites' leadership role in managing these public institutions to have been one of the most important features of elite public functions in the early twentieth century (Rankin 1986, 93, 106, 206-207). The situation in Nantong showed a similar pattern to the Zhejiang case. Nantong elites' leadership positions in public management were evident, and institutions such as the Erosion Protection Society became centers of decision-making. With state involvement fading away (or shifting to other areas), an elite public domain, which not

only served the public but also was managed by the public, was indeed evolving.

The Nantong elite public domain bears a number of similarities to and differences from Habermas's model of the bourgeois public sphere. Habermas concentrated on institutions such as salons, coffee houses, and societies which, together with the press (which made information available to the public), served as forums for open discussions of literature, art, philosophy, and politics, and these critically oriented discussions broke the monopoly of state and church authorities over interpretation of various issues. The factor that private people made their own judgement through open and critical debates produced a sphere relatively independent from the court and led to an oppositional relationship between the two. In short, the main functions of the institutions of the public sphere, Habermas suggested, were to forge a critical public and to form public opinion which manifested state-society conflict and dissolved court's control of society (Habermas 1993, 31-43).

The Nantong public institutions we have described were different from salons and coffee houses, in that they were functional and attended to essential practical needs of the locality. Whether these types of institutions and activities were lacking in Europe in the period Habermas studied or whether he overlooked them is an open question. In fact, as has been noted, Habermas has overlooked a number of aspects in

the European experience (Calhoun 1993; Thompson 1993). Nevertheless, the elite public institutions in Nantong performed functions similar to the salon-like institutions in the sense that they manifested and intensified state-societal conflict and weakened state control over the locality, therefore contributing to the change in state-society relationships.

On the other hand, while salons and coffee houses were not the most marked components of the Nantong public sphere, a critical discourse targeting the state was nevertheless evident. The development of this discourse was more associated with elite public service than with the press. It was formed, for instance, in the discussions at the meetings of the Erosion Protection Society and embodied in the petitions, reports, and letters sent to the government concerning public projects. The Nantong case indicates that salon-like institutions and the press were not the only facilities capable of forging a critical public. To be sure, Strand has described a public sphere in Beijing in the 1920s and 1930s, where, in addition to public and political institutions and organizations, teahouses, parks, Tiananmen square, and even "eating associations" were all important loci for open discussion, which indicated a broad citizen participation in public affairs (1989, 167-181).

The Beijing case reflects the conditions of urban politics in early twentieth century China. Because of its

large concentration of college students, workers, professionals, merchants, officials, brokers of all sorts, and foreigners, and its position as the political and cultural center of China, Beijing had a more diverse, well-informed, and better-educated populace than a place such as Nantong. The activities of Beijing people were therefore more diffused and less likely to revolve around one center and be dominated by one elite group and its institutions. For instance, organizations in Beijing such as various fatuan (professional associations), labor unions, students' unions, and citizen assemblies were relatively self-regulating bodies with their own leaders (Strand 1989, 18, 177-78), while such organizations in a relatively small and isolated county like Nantong could be controlled by one elite group; elite-controlled public institutions could likewise be the most important loci of local political actions in a place such as Nantong, because of the close ties among the elites, the small scope of public domain, and the limited outside influences.

Nevertheless the public institutions in Nantong helped gather private people together to deal with local affairs and state-societal conflict, and to shape a critical discourse. Scholars in the China field have paid close attention to the institutions of public service--including public associations, citizens' groups, the chambers of commerce, waterworks, street repairs, welfare and philanthropic activities, local schools, and communal land and enterprises--and to their significance

in promoting elite activism and eroding the state's control of local society (Rankin 1986; Rowe 1989; Duara 1988, Strand 1989). In fact, the studies of a "public institutional sphere" (Schoppa 1982) in the China field have added new topics to the theory of Habermas's public sphere.

We should also be aware that while public activity in Nantong (and elsewhere as well, especially at county level and below) involved broad participation by local elites, they were in fact few in number compared with the peasants who formed the majority of the rural population, and who were basically excluded from ordinary public activity. As Rankin points out, elite public activity did not involve mobilizing the populace, and it was carried out by relatively "small elite groups that could organize themselves easily" (1986, 17). In fact, the elites were potentially "repressive to the mass," as Esherick has suggested (1976, 105). The Nantong case confirms Esherick's observation, as elites there even had to use force to suppress the peasants and other social groups who took violent actions against the elites and their reform programs.

This multi-faceted and conflictual nature of the elite public domain has been largely overlooked, for which Habermas is perhaps partially responsible. While Habermas's study of the public sphere almost entirely focused on the emergence of a new bourgeois class and its changing relationships with the court, he neglected other types of social and public discourse, such as those of working class movements, which

existed parallel to the bourgeois public sphere in the period from the seventeenth to nineteenth century in Europe. He also overlooked the conflictual nature of the bourgeois public sphere in terms of its relationship with popular movements. This problem has been raised by scholars such as Geoff Eley and John B. Thompson (Eley 1992, 326-331; Thompson 1993, 180). Based on Eley's study, Thompson points out that

Just as the emerging bourgeois public sphere defined itself in opposition to the traditional authority of royal power, so too it was confronted by the rise of popular movements which it sought to contain. The bourgeois public sphere was, from the outset, embedded in a field of conflictual social relations which shaped its formation and development (1993, 180).

The same can be said of the public domain in Nantong, which indeed witnessed contestation against both the state and the mass.

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MAKING POLITICAL CULTURE--THE CASE OF NANTONG, 1894-1930

By

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CHANGING DIRECTIONS OF LOCAL AUTONOMY

The local self-government movement was one of the many developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which reflected and defined the unprecedented social changes Chinese society was undergoing. It was one of the core ideas involved in the manifestation of local elite political influence and it paralleled and intertwined with the constitutional reform. In this chapter, we will focus on the interaction between the local self-government movement and the constitutional movement in Nantong and the changing meaning of the concept of "village-ism." The aim is to examine how the evolution of the local self-government movement at the county level, including the instruments such as mass media involved in it, shaped local politics and the locally-oriented political culture, especially the concept of local autonomy.

The New Policies and Scholarship

The New Policies Reform

The 1890s was a chaotic decade which demanded change. Although the One Hundred Days of Reform in 1898 failed, the

very ideas the reformers advocated continued to be appealing. With the Boxer crisis unfolding in 1900, the Qing court which had suppressed the One Hundred Days of Reform was forced to admit that times had indeed changed, that China was in great danger, and that reform "must occur" (Bastid 1988, 1-7; Reynolds 1993, 201). The reform edict issued on 29 January 1901 represented the court's effort to take the initiative in reform by opening a broad range of areas for discussion, which included "dynastic regulations, national administration, official affairs, matters related to people's livelihood, modern schools, systems of examination, military organization, and financial administration." The court encouraged the officials to send detailed reform proposals within two months and promised carefully to review these proposals and make due change in policy (Reynolds 1993, 203).

With the reform proposals from high-ranking officials rushing in, the court after 1901 issued a series of new policies including new laws and regulations for education, economy, military and police forces, constitutional reform, and the local self-government movement. The period from 1901 to 1910 was therefore known as the New Policies (Xinzheng), during which time many institutions were set up to implement these laws and regulations. Ideas which used to be mere topics of discussion, including Western and Japanese ideas such as modern schools and constitutional reform, were now gradually put into practice (Rankin 1986, 205; Reynolds 1993). It was

the court's hope that the New Policies would bring wealth and power to China and change its weak position in the world, and that they would "increase state penetration into society, recentralize power on a denser institutional basis, and allow officials to mobilize the populace for government-defined national purpose" (Rankin 1986, 204).

The Constitutional Reform and Local Self Government

The local self-government movement and the constitutional reform were among the closely-intertwined issues shaping the course of the New Policies. The idea of following Japan in establishing a constitutional government became widely discussed among the Qing officials and scholars, especially after the Russo-Japanese War, which for them seemed to be the victory of "constitutional Japan" over "autocratic Russia." Yuan Shikai, Zhang Zhidong (then Governor-General of Hu-Guang), Wei Guangtao (Governor-General of Liang-Jiang), and Sun Baoqi (Minister to France) were among the high-ranking officials who sent petitions to the court after 1904 calling for constitutional reform. After a joint memorial by Yuan Shikai, Zhang Zhidong and Zhou Fu (the new Governor-General of Liang-Jiang) reached the court in 1905, the latter sent a delegation of five officials to Japan and Europe to investigate the laws and institutions of the constitutional government of foreign countries. Upon their return, a Investigation Commission was established to supervise planning for constitu-

tional government, and it set up an office in Shanghai to translate foreign materials regarding constitutions. All of these moves pointed to the court's intention to adopt a constitution in China. Encouraged by this trend, the Public Association to Prepare for a Constitutional Government (Yubei Lixie gonghui) was established in Shanghai first in 1906 and spread to other cities soon after. From 1907 to 1909 consultative bureaus (ziyiju) were set up in every province except Xinjiang and provincial elite leaders called for the establishment of a national parliament (Min 1989, 137, 140-41; Thompson 1988, 208-209).

At the same time, reform of local government was already unfolding after 1900 in some cities and rural areas, led by reform-minded officials. For instance, Shanxi governor Zhao Erxun introduced a Xiangshe reform program in 1902 to change the structure of subcounty administration by having the magistrate select local leaders from a list of nominees recommended by their community (Thompson 1988, 194). In 1907 Yuan Shikai, the Zhili governor-general, encouraged the first election of a municipal council in Tianjin. A similar election was also held and a municipal council set up in Shanghai. In August 1907, Yuan Shikai sent a memorial to the Qing court requesting the adoption of the Tianjin model throughout the nation. An imperial edict endorsed this recommendation in October 1907 and the Ministry of Civil Administration drafted local self-government regulations, which formalized the local

self-government movement in 1908. The main feature of the regulations was to set up elected councils from the local elites at municipal and subprefectural levels to help the state reach local communities and, in turn, to channel local concerns to official administrations (Thompson 1988; Reynolds 1993; Fincher 1981). The regulations limited the elite participation mainly to public service under the supervision of government-appointed officials, which was clearly stated in the beginning of the first chapter of the Local Self-government Regulations (Zhang 1986, 207).

The official purpose of the local self-government movement in the beginning was to reform local administration, to expand the state structure and ensure efficient state penetration (Rankin 1986, 204). But this direction gradually changed with the unfolding of the constitutional reform. The two movements were indeed closely linked and affected each other in the course of the New Policies reform, as an article in Dongfang zazhi indicated:

The system of local self-government is closely allied with the system of constitutional government. If a constitution is to be sought, the reality of local self-government should also be pursued. Self-government can only be realized through the efforts of the people and should not be guided by officials (Min 1989, 142).

The author was not alone in these thoughts. For many of the constitutionalists, such as Sun Baoqi, Liang Qichao, and Zhang Jian, the establishment of provincial assemblies and similar self-government institutions at county and village levels were

among the first steps toward a constitutional government. For instance, Sun Baoqi, one of the initiators of the constitutional debates, suggested creating a public forum called Gongyi tang (Hall of Public Discussion) in each provincial capital and prefectural and county seat. For Sun, the Hall of Public Discussion in a provincial capital would "embrace the gentry of the prefecture and counties in that province, one in a prefectural seat would embrace the gentry of its counties, and one in a county seat would embrace gentry in the villages"; based on such a bottom-up system, the national constitution and parliament was to be set up (Min 1989, 141).

Clearly, for the constitutionalists, the constitutional reform was not just to set up a constitution or a national parliament, but included local self-government as well. In other words, local self-government was not just an isolated reform targeting local administration, but had been incorporated into the constitutional movement as part of the effort to change the government structure as a whole. Moreover, the court apparently came to terms with these concepts. In 1906, in the conference discussions among the Grand Councilors and high officials such as Yuan Shikai, the establishment of local self-government institutions had been considered a method of putting the constitutional government into practice and a preparatory step toward that goal. With the recommendation of the Grand Councilors, the Imperial Court announced preparation for a constitutional government in 1906; one of its first

steps was to set up regulations to reform local administration, which led to the institutionalization of the local self-government movement in 1907, as we have mentioned earlier (Min 1989, 148-149).

Scholarship

The two movements were obviously related and their interaction redirected the purpose of local self-government from expanding the state's basis to changing its structure. However, the topic of the interaction between the two movements, especially at the county level, has not been fully explored by scholars. Some scholarly work concerning the New Policies and the constitutional reform does not cover or only very briefly mentions the aspect of local self-government. For instance, Reynolds' study on the Xinzheng reforms (i.e., the New Policies) focuses on institutional and intellectual changes affected by Japanese influence, which to him was revolutionary. He therefore argues that the Xinzheng reforms were not just moderate changes, as the conventional scholarship holds. He instead considers them collectively to constitute a revolution, one which was even more radical in many ways than the 1911 Revolution. While the local self-government movement is largely excluded from his work, Reynolds does suggest that the relationships between local self-government, the Xinzheng reforms, and Japanese influence should be examined (Reynolds 1993). Other work by Zhang Pengyuan on

constitutionalists' relationships with the 1911 Revolution and their activities in its aftermath is very informative, but has little discussion on local self-government (Zhang 1969).

On the other hand, scholars who do deal with both local self-government and constitutional reform or the New Policies have not yet provided information on how the two developments interacted at the county level. Min, for instance, has rightfully pointed out that arguments about local self-government "took a new turn" around 1903, when what was sought was not simply organizational reform or the improvement of administrative efficiency, but a constitutionalism aimed at the "overall reform of the political structure itself" (1989, 141). Unfortunately, Min's emphasis on change in political ideas does not permit him to examine exactly how this "new turn" took place in practice in specific localities.

Studies by Rankin and Esherick on Zhejiang and Hunan-Hubei have touched upon the connections between local self-government and the New Policies, and their conclusions about the increasing politicization of elites in the New Policies period and its impact on the 1911 Revolution are insightful, but both works deal primarily with elites' activities at the provincial levels, providing little information about the relevant development at county level (Esherick 1976; Rankin, 1986). Fincher's work mainly concerns institutional changes (also at the provincial level) with regard to local self-government and constitutional reform. He suggests that new

institutions such as the assemblies produced a "broad, flourishing pluralistic democracy" at provincial and local levels (Rankin 1986, 246; Fincher 1981). Kikuo, on the other hand, treats Zhang Jian's involvement in the constitutional movement and local development as two separate topics (1985).

A study of the interaction between local self-government and constitutional reform reflected in a county like Nantong will thereby provide information which is largely left out in the works mentioned above, and it will also shed light on the issue of the local self-government movement. Nantong is indeed one of the better, if not the best, locations for such a study, because Zhang Jian was one of the major figures in promoting both local self-government in Nantong and constitutional reform at provincial and national levels.

Zhang Jian and Constitutional Reform

A Moderate Reformer

Zhang Jian's role in the constitutional reform has been recognized by scholars. For Min, Zhang Jian was "a typical proponent of constitutionalism at that time" (1989, 140), and Reynolds considered the "energetic Zhang Jian" a "rapidly rising star" in the movement and credited him for assembling and funneling essential information about constitutional government to high officials and the court (1993, 162, 186). There were several factors which contributed to Zhang Jian's active role in this particular movement.

Zhang Jian was never a revolutionary or radical reformer. China had changed dramatically in Zhang Jian's lifetime and he also had to change, but despite the many other changes he underwent, his attitude as a moderate reformer did not alter. Prior to 1911, despite his disappointment with the court, Zhang Jian still hoped to improve the government through gradual and moderate reform programs, not only because of his ties with the imperial system, but also because what Nantong had established required a stable social environment to protect it. Major social turmoil was the last thing he wished to see. The constitutional movement appeared to fit into his moderate reform approach, which was consistently reflected in his writings.

In 1895, China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War and the consequent Treaty of Shimonoseki provoked the Gongche shangshu (Scholar Petition) movement in Beijing led by the then-radical reformer Kang Youwei, and involving more than 1300 juren degree holders. This action not only broke the official rule that scholars should not interfere in politics, but also proposed to reform the political and institutional system and establish a parliamentary system in China (Min 1989, 124). This petition practically became the preface for the tragic One Hundred Days of Reform.

In the same year, in light of China's defeat Zhang Jian wrote the "Memorial of Self-Strengthening Items" (Tiaochen liquo zigiangshu) to Zhang Zhidong, for him to direct to the

court and high-ranking officials. The key word in the memorial was "zìqiáng" (self-strengthening) in terms of economic development as a response to the current crisis (Zhang 1986, 46). He suggested areas in which China should improve, including military defence, industry, commerce, education, and railroads. His ideas of encouraging private investments, protecting commercial activities, and establishing chambers of commerce in each province were relatively fresh (Zhang Jian 1965, 38), but the core content and the rhetoric in the writing did not go beyond that embodied in the Self-Strengthening Movement. Later he summarized his ideas at this point as "cotton-and-iron-ism" (miantie zhuyi)--he believed that China would become strong by developing both heavy and light industries (Zhang Jian 1965, 1304).¹ Zhang Jian's distance from radical reformers such as Kang Youwei who advocated political reform was evident.

But manufactured Chinese goods, whether cotton or iron, could not remedy China's problems. The Boxer Uprising deepened China's crises, and reform, especially political reform, was no longer a luxurious option but a painful necessity, especially when more radical approaches were being developed by revolutionaries such as Sun Yat-sen, who threatened to overthrow the Qing court as the ultimate solution to China's problems. In light of these developments, Zhang Jian came to

¹ For an analysis of Zhang Jian's "cotton-and-iron-ism," see Hayashi 1980, 131-148.

terms with institutional reform. In the 1901 "Proposals on Reform" (Bianfa pingyi), Zhang Jian explored the problems of the existing institutions and suggested some changes, including reform of the civil examination system and establishment of a parliament and county councils (Zhang Jian 1965, 52, 59-60, 76-77; Zhang 1965, 74-75). The Meiji Restoration and the Japanese models of government, schools, and other arenas were frequently mentioned in the proposals. The nature and the rhetoric of Zhang Jian's reform at this point was politically-oriented. These ideas were very similar to those advocated by the constitutional movement. In fact, what Zhang Jian saw in the constitutional reform was the opportunity for him to practice these moderate ideas in a systematic manner and on a large scale.

The Constitutional Circles

Zhang Jian's close ties with other upper-level elites and high officials (especially those from the southeastern region) who later became the driving force behind the movement, was another factor which defined Zhang Jian's role in the constitutional reform. Controlling the richest and most developed part of China, the ever-growing force of southeastern officials, elites, returned students from abroad, merchants, and industrialists was so powerful that they had the potential to form a separate political center in the southeastern region. For instance, these groups launched the "Southeastern Mutual

Defense" movement during the Boxer Uprising, which testified to their rise as a regional force.²

Zhang Jian was one of the leading figures in the group. Unlike ten years earlier when Zhang Jian only had an empty jinshi title, now his activities in Jiangsu, especially Nantong, had won him high reputation. He had become a well-established elite celebrity and carried much weight in regional and national affairs. To use Bourdieu's terms, Zhang at this point had much capital to play in the game of power struggle. The Qing court also recognized this and tried to draw upper elites of the southeast, including Zhang Jian, over to its side. In early 1904, Zhang Jian was appointed to the position of head adviser of the Commercial Ministry in the central government. This appointment further raised Zhang's reputation and also encouraged his illusions about the Qing state.

Zhang Jian's industrial undertakings connected him with a large number of Shanghai-based bankers, investors, merchants, and industrialists, one of whom was Tang Shouqian, a jinshi degree holder from Zhejiang, who in 1905 was the chief administrator of railways in Zhejiang and directed the constitutional movement. Zhang Jian also frequently visited Zheng Xiaoxu, a diplomat in Japan who later returned to work

² About Zhang Jian's activities in the "Southeastern Mutual Defense" movement, see Zhang Jian's diary of 1900, especially the diary between April to August of that year, and also see Qi Longwei's annotation of Zhang's diary (Qi 1983a, 339-358).

for Zhang Zhidong and became involved in a number of enterprises in Shanghai, such as the Commercial Press and Shanghai Savings Bank. Zhang Jian was widely respected in educational circles as well and he was once the director of the Jiangsu Educational Association. Zhang Jian also had close relationships with the mass media in Shanghai, among which Shenbao, Shibao, and Dongfang zazhi were the most notable. Xi Zipei was a Shanghai publisher who bought the influential Shenbao in 1907 with Zhang Jian's encouragement and assistance, and the latter had an impact on the direction of the Shenbao. Shibao owner Zhang Yuanji was an old friend of Zhang Jian's, and the two together promoted many reform programs in Jiangsu. Meng Sen, a student of Zhang's who took charge of the courses in politics and law organized by the Jiangsu Educational Association, was an important contributor to the Dongfang zazhi, and became its chief editor in 1908 ((Zhang 1969, 58-60)

In political circles, Jiangsu governor Cheng Dequan, a constitutionalist, was allied with Zhang Jian. Zhao Fengchang, a Jiangsu native and Zhang Zhidong's private secretary, was one of the closest associates Zhang Jian came to relate to in that period. Zhao Fengchang had broad personal contacts and influence in both political and economic domains in the southeast region and beyond. All of these people were among the most vigorous promoters of the constitutional movement. When Zhang Jian came to Shanghai, he often met these people in the Shenbao office, Zhao Fengchang's home, and the office of

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the Shanghai Educational Association. These places became the gathering points for the constitutionalists, producing many ideas and actions affecting the course of the movement (Zhang 1969, 53, 218-219, Bastid 1988, 168-171).

Zhang Jian's Trip to Japan

Zhang Jian's commitment to the constitutional reform was also due to his admiration of the Japanese political system. To be sure, Japan's success was painfully recognized by all educated Chinese, and Japan's influence in modern China was evident throughout the constitutional movement and beyond (Reynolds 1993, Min, 1989, 126-130). In his 1901 proposals for reform, Zhang Jian had already used Japan as an example of success. He also had personal contacts with Japanese. In the so-called "age of Japanese teachers" (Reynolds 1993, 78), Nantong Normal School hired Japanese teachers at the very beginning of the school.³ They taught Japanese, mathematics, Western history, philosophy, Western geography, ethics, surveying and civil engineering courses, and agriculture. Most of them held department chair positions (Zhang Jian 1965, 3481; Chen 1991, 38).

But nothing was more powerful than first-hand experience and visual persuasion to convince Zhang Jian what and how China should learn from Japan. In April 1903, Zhang Jian was

³ According to Reynolds, thirty-two of China's new normal schools had Japanese present due to the shortage of teachers in the early stage of China's educational reform (1993, 103).

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invited by the Japanese Consul to attend Japan's Fifth Industrial and Agricultural Exposition in Osaka, and this trip lasted for seventy days. Besides attending the Osaka Exposition as a major event on this trip, Zhang Jian spent the rest of the time in Japan investigating the Japanese system. He visited a total of thirty-five educational institutes and thirty agricultural, industrial and commercial units in different cities (I will say more about Zhang Jian's investigation of Japan's local aspects shortly).

Japan to Zhang Jian was not flawless. In fact, he criticized some aspects of Japanese society (Zhang Jian 1965, 3485). His overall impression of Japan, however, was absolutely positive. What he saw in Japan was a fine combination of an efficient constitutional government based on many functional local units achieved since the Meiji Restoration, which convinced him that China's hope rested in reforming the government by following Japan in establishing a constitutional system without a revolution.

Organizational Activities

Zhang Jian's activities in the constitutional reform were devoted exactly toward this end. His leadership roles were most notable in organization and propaganda. Zhang in fact was one of the initiators of the movement. After 1903, he wrote to Zhang Zhidong and Yuan Shikai several times specifically to discuss the possibility of establishing a constitution in

China. In 1904 Zhang Jian, invited by Zhang Zhidong, stayed in Nanjing for two weeks to help draft and redraft ten times the "Request for Constitutional Reform," which was sent to the court in the name of the southeastern officials and elites. In a 1905 letter to Yuan Shikai, Zhang Jian explicitly pointed out that it was time for constitutionalism in China. Zhang Jian's activities were one of the many factors which led to the events in 1906 (Zhang 1986, 161, 163-65; Min 1989, 140)).

1906 witnessed the high tide of violent actions organized by the revolutionaries against the Qing government, such as the Ping-Liu-Li uprising led by Huang Xing in Hunan. 1906 also marked the heyday of the constitutional movement. As a result of the constitutionalists' tireless efforts, the Qing court was finally forced to proclaim "preparation for constitutional reform" in 1906, and a nine-year period was set up as the preparatory stage (Zhang 1986, 152, 170, 175-76). Encouraged by the court's move, Zhang Jian, Zheng Xiaoxu, and Tang Shouqian immediately created the Public Association to Prepare for Constitutional Government in Shanghai in November 1906; Zheng Xiaoxu was elected to its chief administrator and Zhang Jian and Tang Shouqian the vice administrators.⁴ This association consisted of celebrities of the southeastern region, mainly from Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces: upper-level

⁴ After Zheng's resignation, Zhang Jian became its chief administrator.

elites, wealthy merchants, famous men of letters, and some bigshots in the academic world (Zhang 1986, 173-74, 183-84).

This event sent a constitutionalist wave to other parts of the country. Similar associations were soon established in Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong and other regions. In 1907 the Qing court set up the national assembly (Zizhengyuan) as a preparation for the establishment of a formal parliament. At the same time, consultative bureaus for constitutional reform were set up in each province; the one Zhang Jian headed in Nanjing was considered a model of such bureaus.

At the same time, representatives of Guangdong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Jilin, and Shandong urged the central government to reduce the nine-year preparatory period and to convene a formal parliament immediately (Zhang 1986, 190). To achieve this goal, Zhang Jian organized the Combined Association of Provincial Consultative Bureaus, which held eight meetings in Shanghai in 1909 with fifty-five representatives from sixteen provinces to discuss how they could persuade the court to establish the national parliament. They decided to send a delegation to petition in Beijing. After the failure of two petitions, Zhang Jian again suggested holding a national consultative bureau directors' meeting in Beijing in 1910. Under the pressure, the Imperial Court in 1910 finally agreed to reduce the preparatory period to six years (Zhang 1969, 63, 67; Esherick 1976, 95).

Media Activities

Along with Zhang Jian's effort in organizing these institutions and directing these events, he also utilized mass media to promote constitutionalism, targeting both the court and the high officials and the public. As a matter of fact, Zhang Jian was fully aware of the importance of public opinion in pressuring the court and pushing the movement forward. He called public opinion "fire" and realized that it took the "fire" to "warm up" the movement and to keep it going. In one of his letters to Zhao Fengchang, Zhang asked him for "good ideas" on how to add "fire" to the movement, while he himself was by no means short of ideas about how to make the "fire" (Zhang 1986, 166).

For instance, soon after his return from Japan, Zhang's Diary of Travels East (Dongyou riji) was published and sent to friends and governmental offices to spread his observations on the Japanese constitutional system. In 1904 Zhang Jian managed to have books on Japanese constitutional history translated into Chinese and wrote introductions for some of these books. Explanation of Constitutions, The Japanese Constitution, and The History of the Japanese Diet were printed and sent to the key figures of the movement; twelve of these books were even secretly carried into the palace with Zhang Jian's arrangement (Zhang 1986, 167). Zhang Jian also personally sent these copies and discussed them with Tieliang, the head of the Army Ministry and later a key promotor of constitutionalism

(Reynolds 1993, 187). In 1908 Zhang Jian, Tang Shouqian and Zheng Xiaoxu together created in Shanghai the Yubei lixie gonghui gongbao (Public Newspaper of the Public Association to Prepare Constitutional Government). Later the newspaper moved to Beijing. This newspaper was controlled directly by Zhang Jian and it represented the voice of the most powerful constitutionalists (Zhang 1991, 45).

At the same time, newspapers and magazines such as Shenbao, Shibao, and Dongfang zazhi served as chief media instruments for the constitutional movement. Under Zhang Jian's control, Shenbao during the period showed tremendous interest in the development of the movement and the activities of the major figures. It frequently printed articles by Zhang Jian and other constitutionalists. Shenbao remained constitutionalist-oriented even after the 1911 Revolution took place in Wuchang, because Zhang Jian at that time maintained that the revolution should be suppressed. Not until Zhang Jian changed to favor the Republican government did Shenbao began to alter its position to support the new government. Shibao was partially financed by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, but neither Kang nor Liang was very involved in the newspaper. It was so closely linked with the constitutionalists that three of its main journalists became members of the Jiangsu Consultative Bureau. The Dongfang zazhi had a special column on "constitutional government" written by Meng Sen, who also

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joined the Public Association to Prepare Constitutional Government (Zhang 1969, 57-60).

The tremendous energy put into the movement by the constitutionalists such as Zhang Jian and also those in the media created such an impression that at one point it seemed possible that the Meiji experience would be repeated in twentieth-century China; at least this was what Zhang Jian and other constitutionalists hoped, but this hope was unfortunately disappointed. However, a national parliament and a constitutional government was only part of the goal the constitutional reformers wished to achieve; the establishment of local self-government was the other part. In this regard, the impact of the constitutional movement was evident, at least in Nantong.

The Pre-1911 Local Self-government Movement in Nantong Village-ism

Village-ism (cunluo zhuyi) was a concept Zhang Jian used to characterize zizhi, which literally means self-governing--local people dealing with local affairs. This idea originated from the age-old debate on the merits of the feudal (fengjian) and bureaucratic (junxian) governmental systems. The untimely collapse of China's first bureaucratic government of the Qin dynasty had ever since led to a debate on the positive and negative aspects of the two systems among the ruling classes and scholars. This debate had become part of traditional

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Chinese statecraft, whose sole purpose was to create a stable and long-lasting dynasty (Min 1989, 89-104).

The bureaucratic system came under increasing attack in the Ming and Qing period because of the intensification of central control and the influence of Japan and the West. Scholars such as Gu Yanwu, Huang Zunxian, Feng Guifeng, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao vigorously advocated the necessity of reforming the bureaucratic system by absorbing some of the self-government virtue from the feudal system--encouraging gentry participation in governing local affairs and abolishing the "rule of avoidance," which as an important aspect of the bureaucratic system was designed to ensure state control and prevent the expansion of local influence.⁵ The writings and activities of these scholars had major impact on the formation of the local self-government movement and constitutional reform in the 1900s (Kuhn 1975, 263-268; Min 1989, 120-130).

While all of these scholars hoped to improve the existing system through developing local autonomy and expanding gentry involvement in local affairs, they nevertheless put different emphasis into the self-government idea depending on their political and social positions (Kuhn 1975, 263-268; Min 1989, 120-130). Huang Zunxian, for example, argued for using local autonomy to limit and balance imperial power. Local self-government for him therefore involved a political institution

⁵ The "rule of avoidance" meant that officials should "avoid" (they were not allowed) to serve their home areas.

separate from the central government. Kang Youwei's self-government concept, on the other hand, did not promote local autonomy per se. He conceived of local self-government as a channel for the gentry to help the officials govern and to bridge the gap between their communities and the central government, so that state power could efficiently penetrate local society (Min 1989, 139). Kang's view was reflected in the local self-government program promoted by the Qing court

Zhang Jian's village-ism revealed a position between Huang's and Kang's. His moderate reform approach and his position in the constitutional reform movement did not allow him completely or openly to accept Huang Zunxian's view in the early 1900s, but his experience as a sophisticated politician and his involvement in Nantong enabled him to realize the conflicting interest between the state and local society and the significance of local autonomy to elites like himself, whose power was based on localities.

Zhang Jian's village-ism advocated a local self-government model which involved a self-sufficient and locally autonomous system. This system would be a basis for a strong nation and a central government under normal circumstances, but should the central government collapse and the nation be in turmoil, the local self-government system could sustain itself on its own as an independent entity preserving local order and elite power. This model was designed to have the flexibility both to advance local interest together with

national interest and to pursue local interest separately. In order to do so, Zhang Jian emphasized the development of basic social units, from family to village to county. For Zhang Jian, if each family, each village, each town, and each county in China was reformed, China would be strong. To reform these basic social cells, Zhang Jian suggested developing industrial, educational and charitable programs at the local level. Zhang Jian labeled these ideas "village-ism" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1959).

One of the main sources for Zhang Jian's village-ism was the Japanese model of self-government (zizhi, jichi in Japanese). In fact, it was after his trip to Japan in 1903 that he gradually defined the idea of village-ism. The concept of local self-government became popular in Japan between 1888 and 1890. It was considered an apolitical means of national integration--through the self-governing organizations of each local unit, the foundations of the state would be strengthened. It was also believed that insofar as the localities were stable, political turmoil in the central government would not shake the nation (Gluck 1985, 192). The ideal Japanese jichi model started at the village level. Each village as a self-governed unit worked to promote its own interest and advance its own development through its institutions, which took charge of social, economic, and cultural programs. There were also designated "model villages" in Japan to promote the jichi movement (Gluck 1985, 195-197).

During his trip to Japan, Zhang Jian witnessed how the Japanese model worked. He investigated many of those local units in minute detail, and talked with teachers, school administrators, farmers, bankers, journalists, merchants, industrialists, and Chinese students in Japan. In his Diary of Travels East, Zhang Jian recorded in meticulous detail the classrooms, school costs, games the students played, dormitories, bathrooms, school uniforms, and also village systems, farmers' lives, tax systems, land reclamation activities, ship companies, salt making and other technologies about which he had learned in Japan (Zhang Jian 1965, 3445-3509). He was impressed by these well-developed local units and the disciplined students and citizens in Japan. He praised Japan as a "xueguo" (learned nation) and attributed all the achievements to the constitutional system, which included local self-government (Zhang Jian 1965, 3464).

The Japanese jichi model was very appealing to Zhang Jian. He decided to adopt it in Nantong in the belief that village-ism would work for China as well. It was upon his return from Japan that he began to consider overall planning for Nantong's local development. To be sure, before 1903, Nantong already had created some factories, schools, and other social institutions, but they had developed as isolated projects instead of as a systematically organized entirety. Now Zhang Jian looked at Nantong in its entirety and tried to experiment with village-ism, including a vaguely-defined

higher purpose, which was to strengthen China. At the same time, the New Policies and constitutional movement in China were unfolding. While promoting the movement beyond Nantong, Zhang Jian immediately took the opportunity to legitimate and expand local programs in Nantong and incorporate all of them into a local self-government system to inculcate his village-ism with a concrete purpose and direction--to create the basis for a constitutional government.

The Proposal of 1907

Before the 1907 Imperial Edict which formalized the local self-government movement was issued, Nantong elites led by the resourceful Zhang Jian had paid a great deal of attention to the local self-government movement. In late 1905, the general chamber of commerce and the educational association had invited some scholars to Nantong to study and give lectures on constitutional law and politics (fazheng), attracting an audience of hundreds. In 1906, the two institutions sent three of their members to a Law and Politics Lecture Bureau in Shanghai to learn about the ideas and practice of local self-government. Partially through these activities, Nantong elites were preparing for the implementation of such local self-government in their locality. After Yuan Shikai's Tianjin election in 1907, the Nantong elites immediately sent a proposal to the prefectural administration, requesting permission for them to follow the Tianjin model in experimenting with

local self-government in general and setting up a surveying office in particular (NXZZH 1915, zizhi. 19-20; Fan 1922, 9. 21a)).

In the proposal, they pointed out that local self-government was a foundation for a constitutional government in the future, so it was extremely important in local affairs. The proposal also suggested that local self-government consist of two types of offices, councils (yishihui) to make decisions and directorates (dongshihui) to perform the checking and balance functions, and that these offices be set up first in Nantong city, and then gradually be spread to town, district and rural areas. According to the proposal, all existing local institutions such as chambers of commerce and educational associations would become subordinate units of the two types of local self-government offices after they were established, and the responsibility of the local self-government offices was broadly defined as including everything which was related to "gongyi" (public interest).

The proposal emphasized that Nantong was ready for local self-government because local elites had engaged in local educational and industrial development for years. Furthermore, it explained that development in Nantong, though having achieved some results, lacked an overall plan (tongchou). Without local self-government, "the current situation can hardly be maintained," and "the future is uncertain and no further progress can be expected." In conclusion, the proposal

expressed the determination of local elites to carry out this change: "We will endure all hardships to make local self-government a success, so that we will not disappoint the court's intention in preparing a constitutional government" (NXZZH 1915, zizhi, 20).

This proposal is an important document in the history of Nantong's local self-government movement, because it in general drew the blueprint for the movement in terms of defining its purposes, functions, and significance. Local self-government was portrayed as an essential step for the preparation of a constitutional government. In other words, if local self-government failed, the preparatory stage of the constitutional reform would have to be indefinitely postponed. Besides, the local self-government institutions were considered local administrative centers which were expected to provide a system for the overall planning of local development. These points were extremely relevant to Nantong's development in the following years.

Institutional Establishment

This proposal was approved and the Tongzhou Local Self-government Preparatory Councils and Directorates were established in late 1907. Zhang Jian was elected to be the director of the councils and Sun Baoshu was the assistant director. The directorates' director was prefect Qi Shan and its assistant director was Zhang Cha. The members of the councils and

directorates were elected from the prefectural and subprefectural levels; they consisted mainly local elites, merchants and professionals, including many of those we have mentioned in Chapter One: Liu Yishan, Shen Xiejun, Gao Qing, Yu Chen, and Bao Siyu (Fan 1922, 16. 2a-4a). The old prefectural examination hall was converted to be the office building for the councils and directorates, which in 1908 became the Tongzhou Local Self-government Association.

At the same time, other institutions directly related to the local self-government councils and directorates were established, including the Self-government Research Bureau, Law and Politics Training Bureau, Investigation and Election Bureau, Election Advisory Body, Household Registration Investigation Bureau, Speech Practice Bureau, and Surveying Office. They together constituted the self-government body. There were also new institutions created in this period, such as the Agricultural Association, the Water Conservancy Society, and the Erosion Protection Society (NXZZH 1905; NXZZH 1915; Fan 1922; Zhang 1965; Liu 1967; Fei 1981, 140-141). Other organizations which had been established before 1907, including the General Chamber of Commerce and the Educational Association, now became subordinate units and programs of the local self-government apparatus, a change about which I will say more shortly (Zhang Jian 1965, 1819).

The functions of the Local Self-government Association and its subordinate institutions can be roughly divided into

two areas: political and public service. In the political area, it supervised the implementation of local self-government institutions--mainly the councils and directorates--in districts and rural areas through election. In order to do so, they had to train people in local self-government ideas and procedures, and also to raise public awareness of the movement. Some of the bureaus, such as the Self-government Research Bureau, Law and Politics Training Bureau, Investigation and Election Bureau, Election Advisory Body, Household Registration Investigation Bureau, and Speech Practice Bureau, mainly worked in this area. For instance, the two bureaus of Speech Practice and Laws and Politics Practice after 1908 held many sessions to train mainly graduates of the normal school and then sent them to rural areas to spread the ideas of local self-government. The Local Self-government Research Bureau explained the election system and procedure and taught about rural elections.

The other area with which the self-government institutions dealt was practical community service, such as schools and water projects, through institutions such as the Educational Association and Erosion Protection Society, which I have discussed in the previous chapter. The political and service areas of course were not distinctly separated. For instance, in the erosion protection movement, the Speech Practice Bureau, working with the Erosion Protection Society, wrote and distributed reports on flood damage, organized

petitions to the government, and called for public participation in the activities (NXZZH 1915, zizhi. 1-17; Fan 1922, 9. 23a).

In terms of operation, all of the institutions in fact worked together with the Local Self-government Association as an administrative center. For instance, the Educational Association, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was responsible for the establishment of the Speech Practice Bureau, the Law and Politics Training Bureau, and later also for the Local Self-government Research Bureau. Most of the members of these bureaus were graduates of Nantong schools, especially the normal school (Fan 1922, 9. 23a).

As a matter of fact, before the creation of the Local Self-government Association, the elites did not have a unified central office which acted on behalf of all the other organizations, so they chiefly exercised their influence through chambers of commerce, educational and other public institutions. For instance, the reform proposal of 1907 was made by Zhang Jian in the name of his position as the director of the Educational Association. After 1907, the General Chambers of Commerce, the Educational Association, the Erosion Protection Society, and other organizations were still the loci of many local actions and remained active in local affairs. In fact, the elites who controlled these institutions were the ones who headed the Local Self-government Association.

But the establishment of the Local Self-government Association, which was considered a lower-level counterpart of the constitutional Consultative Bureau of Jiangsu province, represented the rise of an elite administrative center which expanded elite activities from public service to overall governing of the locality. For instance, through the Surveying Office and its large-scale land-surveying and map-making activities beginning in 1907, the Local Self-government Association not only symbolically claimed its right to govern the land and the people within Nantong's territory, as every new dynasty did in traditional China, but also identified and gradually to some extent came to control local financial sources, including rents and taxes, for the use of the local self-government movement projects, such as the erosion protection projects mentioned in Chapter Five (NXZZH 1915, zizhi, 19-35).

Sources do not disclose exactly the positions of the government-appointed local officials during this period and their relationship with the newly-established local self-government institutions. But there is evidence which indicates that the official bureaus were somehow merged with the Local Self-government Association, and that local elites and officials worked together. For instance, prefect Qi Shan assumed the position of the director of the Local Self-government Directorates. In the land-surveying process of 1907-1909, county magistrates named Wu and Qu respectively

were involved in making budgets and plans together with the local elites, such as Zhang Jian and Sun Baoshu, who were the director and assistant director of the Surveying Office. But the working relationship between the magistrates and the local elites seemed to be marked by the latter's domination (NXZZH 1915, zizhi. 31-33); at the least we can say that the local elites were more active than the officials in promoting local self-government.

Along with the consolidation of elite leadership in the Local Self-government Association, development in Nantong began to be transformed from piecemeal improvements to structured planning in three main areas: economy (mainly industry), education, and philanthropy. While the functions of industry and education were obvious, Zhang Jian sought to use philanthropic programs to fill in the social needs industrial and educational projects could not cover (Zhang Jian 1965, 1854). More programs were created in this period (see the six tables in Chapter 2). The land reclamation projects were initiated to reform Nantong's rural areas. Modern sectors of the economy, such as factories, continued to develop. A universal school system was designed between 1904-1906 and gradually implemented afterwards. Social and public institutes for education, such as a deaf and dumb school, a museum, and a library, among others, were also established. I have in previous chapters examined the systematic development of these public projects. Here I will focus on a rhetorical innovation

which reflected and shaped the systematic development in light of the New Policies in general and the constitutional reform in particular.

Rhetorical Innovation

Rhetoric as a literary concept has been defined and redefined over centuries from Aristotle and Cicero, to George Campbell and Hugh Blair, and to Kenneth Burke, Jonathan Culler, and M.J.T. Mitchell, and many other literary critics. The core meaning of the concept, however, remains unchanged--rhetoric is the art of persuasion, deliberately or unconsciously. A certain kind of rhetorical style and strategy help either contribute to the credibility of the speaker or the writer, or support his arguments, and therefore influence people's minds (Harris 1992, 337-341).

Lynn Hunt has explained how rhetorical analysis as literary theory can be applied to the analysis of political language (Hunt 1984, 25). She has further pointed out that the language of the French Revolution was rhetorical, and "was a means of persuasion, a way of reconstituting the social and political world" (Hunt 1984, 24). Hunt's study of the rhetoric of revolution sheds light on the functions of political language.

While the French Revolution's rhetoric was marked by its radical break with the ancien regime and its enthusiasm for a complete new nation, the rhetoric employed by Zhang Jian in

the New Policies period with regard to local self-government in Nantong was to focus on a structured development which was consistent with the constitutional movement.

As Rankin has suggested, the local self-government programs promoted in the New Policies period partially dealt with old areas of elite concern, such as education and general supervision of local affairs (1986, 206). Zhang Jian in 1908 compared what had been done in Nantong with the expected accomplishments set out in the official local self-government regulations, and found that Nantong had already started many of the officially-listed programs (Zhang Jian 1965, 1818-1819). One thing which was new after 1908 was that Zhang interpreted and reinterpreted the existing and ongoing programs in light of the constitutional framework. In many of Zhang's writings and speeches during this period yubei lixian (preparation for a constitutional government) became a catchword, and all the programs in Nantong were thought to be related to it.

As Zhang explained, politically, preparation for a constitutional government needed a great deal of talent (rencai) in areas such as law, politics, surveying, and police work, and this talent could only be trained through education; this was why Nantong had developed and would continue to develop schools.

Economically, Zhang emphasized, all the schools and other programs needed to be financed, otherwise the preparation of

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a constitutional government would become empty words; this was why Nantong had created factories, including the Dasheng Cotton Mill. Obviously, industry and education for Zhang Jian were the foundation for a strong local self-government system and for the successful preparation of a constitutional government (Zhang Jian 1965, 1821).

Zhang at this point took education as seriously as industry, and sometimes even gave priority to the former in his speeches. His idea of fujiaoyu mushiye (education is the father and industry is the mother of a strong country) was developed around this time, in part because education became an extremely important matter during the constitutional movement. One of the reasons the Qing court used to justify the nine-year length of the preparation period was that the people were ignorant and that it took a long time to educate and prepare them for constitutional government. Zhang Jian in a 1907 work on funding local projects, including schools, pointed out that if schools in Nantong were not well developed, the government would blame the people for prolonging the process of preparation for constitutional reform, "How can we afford to be held responsible for such a matter?" Zhang asked. He then emphasized that Nantong had to implement the entire reform system, including education, industry, and philanthropy, as soon as possible, so that a constitutional government could become a reality (Zhang Jian 1965, 1819, 1854).

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Interestingly enough, in order to shape the current systematic development, Zhang even reinterpreted the past as if he had the overall planning for Nantong in mind as early as around 1896. First he used a rhetorical device to reinvent the reason for his resignation from the Hanlin Academy. According to his explanation after 1904, his resignation was due to his need to implement in Nantong the "village-ism" reforms which he had urged for many years. He said that he had seen how the world was confusing and how the court was hopeless, and realized that the only way to save the people was to develop a self-governing system in his hometown (Zhang Jian 1965, 1875, 1899).

To be sure, Zhang Jian's disappointment with the court did contribute to his resignation, but it was also because of his father's death in 1895, which obligated him to stay at home for a certain period of time. He did not really have a local agenda at that point. Zhang Jian was involved in erosion protection for six months in 1895, and later upon Zhang Zhidong's request in the building of the Tongzhou local militia for another several months (Zhang 1986, 44). His village-ism at that point was hardly visible.

While emphasizing the importance of both industry and education for the current movements after 1904, Zhang Jian also employed a rhetorical device to reinvent the origins of the Dasheng Cotton Mill. As I have noted, Dasheng was an officially-sponsored project and Zhang's involvement in it was

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initially because of Zhang Zhidong's request. This action indeed laid the foundation for the development of Nantong, but in 1896 it was not at all clear to what this would lead. In fact Zhang Jian almost quit in the most difficult years of founding the Dasheng mill. But Zhang later stated that his motivation for taking the project was to finance the normal school. He said that he had long wanted to set up a normal school to promote educational development in Nantong, and that being a poor scholar he had no money to do such a thing. Zhang explained that both the court and local officials were unable to fund this project. "I thought again and again," Zhang Jian said, "and finally figured out that only industrial undertakings could provide the necessary funds for the school project. That was why I started the Dasheng mill" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1636, 1645).

The two myths--the reason for his resignation and the origins of the Dasheng mill--were presented again and again in many of Zhang Jian's public speeches and writings at that time. What messages did Zhang Jian intend to give to the public?

Some scholars have taken Zhang's words at face value, especially concerning the origins of Dasheng, while others have had doubts. Chu, for instance, concluded that for Zhang Jian, "business served as means to attain the end of education" (Chu 1965, 89). But for Bastid, Zhang Jian's idea of developing education and industry simultaneously was "imposed

on his action after the fact." She pointed out that there was no reference before 1901 in Zhang Jian's writings to the scheme of emphasis on both education and industry equally. She also noticed that Zhang Jian's famous statement--"the power and wealth of a country will have education for the father and industry for the mother"--appeared in the entry of April 1896 in his autobiography but was written much later (Bastid 1988, 23).

The question of when Zhang Jian started to give equal importance to industry and education has been an issue of debate among Chinese historians on the mainland (Liu & Du 1962, 23; Cao 1962, 33). Cao Congpo has suggested that Zhang Jian did not mention education while undertaking the Dasheng project, and that it was only later that Zhang made up the story that the Dasheng mill was a means to meet the needs of funding the normal school. In fact, Cao believed that many of the early projects started as separate undertakings, and that only later did Zhang Jian present a planned system to incorporate them (Cao 1962, 33).

It is true that there did not yet exist a reform system for Nantong before 1904, but an overall plan which aimed at a constitutional government had been developing since then. Zhang Jian wanted to convince the people that he had a complete system, not just unplanned piecemeal change, for Nantong's development as early as 1896.

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The rhetorical device used in reinventing the past made Zhang Jian's current plans all the more persuasive. For one thing, a systematically planned experience in the past could be better connected in perception to the present planning, and therefore support the current projects. Also, past success was often an index to future success. If Zhang Jian's calculation in the past had worked, as implied in the rhetorical device, his current designs would succeed as well, so they should be accepted and supported. The rhetorical device thus improved Zhang Jian's credibility and appearance of trustworthiness, which could be useful in implementing the local self-government system and gain public recognition.

Furthermore, the invention of this rhetoric was part of the creation of a reality in which Zhang Jian needed a platform to frame and to advertise his plans for local development. The rhetorical device thus helped transform the image of a piecemeal-improving Nantong into that of a structurally-developing Nantong.

This image was also valuable capital for strengthening Zhang Jian's leadership position in the constitutional movement beyond Nantong and for putting pressure on the government. For one thing, Zhang Jian treated self-government in Nantong as a miniature constitutional government, whose success would illustrate its practicality in China and allow him more convincingly to promote constitutional reform. By establishing a systematically-developing Nantong, Zhang proved

that a solid local basis for a constitutional government could be successfully established through local self-government, so that there should be no doubts that the constitutional movement was necessary.

Zhang Jian also used the Nantong case to press the government. He often sent updated information about Nantong to the court. In 1908 when the Ministry of Interior (neizhengbu) was discussing plans to conduct a national land survey, Zhang Jian immediately sent the regulations and some of the results of the Nantong Surveying Office to Beijing so that Nantong could be considered a "model" in this regard (NXZZH 1915, zizhi, 30).

Also, as early as 1907 Zhang already urged the court to convene a parliament immediately by using the Nantong case to illustrate that the development of local government programs needed overall budget planning at the national level, and that it was the responsibility of the national parliament to make such plans (Zhang Jian 1965, 1815-1821). Later when the constitutionalists attempted to pressure the court to reduce the nine-year preparation period, Zhang again pointed out that the development in Nantong showed that the people and local society were ready for a constitutional government, implying that the court now had no excuses to prolong the preparation process (Zhang Jian 1965, 1831).

Obviously, the rhetoric Zhang Jian developed during this period reflected the mutual impact the local self-government

and the constitutional reform had on each other--the former served as a basis for the latter and the latter provided direction and focus for the former.

Local Media

The close connection of the two movements was also evident in the media field in Nantong. For example, it was not an accident that Xingbao, the first of the ten local newspapers developed in Nantong from 1907 to 1930, appeared in 1907 during the heyday of the constitutional movement. According to Guan Jingcheng, a respected Nantong historian and scholar, Xingbao was created and controlled by the brothers Zhang Jian and Zhang Cha as their propaganda instrument. Its main tasks were to support Zhang Jian's activities, to promote constitutional reform and local self-government using Nantong as an example, and also to circulate and respond to news from outside Nantong (Guan 1983, 11-12). At the local as well as the national levels, Zhang Jian demonstrated himself to be a politician with vision who paid special attention to utilizing mass media.

Xingbao was edited and printed weekly by the Hanmolin Publishing House. Zhu Zhongyuan, the chief editor of the publishing house, was also the chief editor of the Xingbao. Every week three to four hundred copies of the newspaper were distributed to governmental offices, organizations, schools, companies and stores in Nantong, and a small portion of the

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copies were also shipped to areas outside Nantong. Today these copies no longer exist in either the Nantong Library or the Nantong Museum, but there are still some materials available about the newspaper.⁶

Xingbao was modeled after Shanghai Shenbao. It printed documents on constitutional reform issued by the Qing court and also reprinted some articles and news from Shenbao. But the main task of the newspaper was to report big events (dashi) taking place in Tongzhou regarding activities of local elites and the self-government movement. Zhang Jian's activities were always the focus of the Xingbao. It had special columns on news (jingshi) in Tongzhou (Nantong), Haimen, and Rugao, but this kind of news was regarded as of secondary importance. Because Xingbao was so much a part of the constitutional movement and was imbued with its spirit, it had to be closed down after the 1911 Revolution, or at least the name had to be abolished, since the outcome of the Revolution automatically declared the ultimate failure of the constitutional reform (Guan 1983, 12-13).

At the same time, the Hanmolin Publishing House printed many books in addition to school texts. In fact, Nantong in the early twentieth century witnessed a proliferation of locally published works, more, perhaps, than any other Chinese

⁶ During my research trip to Nantong in 1992, I found out that the earliest local newspaper the Nantong Library has is the Tong-Hai New Newspaper created in 1913. The Library has collections of this newspaper from 1913 to 1929.

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counties at that time could produce. According to an incomplete list of Hanmolin publications, there were a total of sixty-nine books published during the period from its establishment in 1903 to 1930, of which eighteen were printed before 1911 (Liang 1993).⁷

The eighteen books included collections of personal writings, such as the Collection of Gui Zhihua's Poetry. There were works by Nantong natives as well as Taixing and Taicang writers, and also by a Korean scholar Kim Changkang (Kim Taikyoung), jìnshi degree holder and also a writer and poet, with whom Zhang Jian had become acquainted on his mission to Korea in 1882. Apparently, they immediately impressed and admired each other at their first meeting. Korea lost her sovereignty to Japan after the Sino-Japanese War of 1905, and Mr. Kim, filled with grief and indignation, left Korea for Shanghai with his family. Zhang Jian welcomed his homeless friend and offered him a job in the Hanmolin Publishing House, in which capacity he was able to publish his writings on Korean history and literature, expressing his patriotic feelings (Yu 1988, 24-25).

A considerable portion of the eighteen books printed by the Hanmolin Publishing House, however, were related to the local self-government movement in Nantong, included Zhang

⁷ The list was made by Liang Zhan, a librarian of the Nantong City Library, upon my request and sent to me in November 1993. According to my knowledge, this list is by no means complete, but it is safe to use it as a reference to the types of books published during that period of time.

Jian's Diary of Travels to the East, a set of textbooks with a special focus on local history and geography, The Key Aspects of Promoting Education by a person named Bian, The Documents of the Establishment of Tongzhou Industries, A History of the Tong-Hai Land Reclamation Company in the Past Ten Years, The Results of Nantong Surveying, The Establishment of the Erosion Protection Society, Evaluation of the third internship of the Tongzhou Normal School, Evaluation of the fifth Internship of the Tongzhou Normal School, Evaluation of the first Intership of the Tongzhou Women's Normal School, and other items.

These books were not all written by Zhang Jian. Most of them were edited or written by different bureaus of the Local Self-government Association, such as the Educational Association, Surveying Office, Erosion Protection Society, Land Reclamation Company, and schools. There were, generally speaking, two types of materials in these books. One type was made up of accounts of history and results in a specific area over a relatively long period of time, such as A History of the Tong-Hai Land Reclamation Company in the Past Ten Years, The Results of Nantong Surveying, and The Documents of the Establishment of Tongzhou Industries. A second type of books were records of special events, including The Establishment of the Erosion Protection Society, Evaluation of the 5th Internship of the Nantong Normal School, and other events of this sort (Liang 1993). These two types of books were all about

local events, projects, and activities, past as well as current, in regard to the different aspects of the local self-government movement in Nantong.

These materials were not simply printed to document the local self-government movement, but were themselves part of the movement. They had certain underlying purposes. Just as Zhang Jian's Diary of Travels East was published to spread his impression of Japan in order to promote the constitutional reform, these books, by focusing on Nantong's results from local self-governing, were intended to establish Nantong as an example persuasively to shape the local self-government and the constitutional reform. It was indeed powerful persuasion when these books and also newspapers produced in Nantong were sold in Shanghai, Nanjing, and other cities or sent to other libraries. The functions of the local media were therefore much like the rhetorical innovation. Both of them targeted at the same purpose and direction.

Local Self-government in Nantong after 1911

The 1911 Revolution shattered Zhang Jian's dream to establish a constitutional government, but not his dream to implement village-ism. Although the political ties between local self-government and constitutional reform were broken, what had been built in Nantong during the New Policies period was unshakable at this point--a solid foundation of and for local self-governing both in terms of materials and elite

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leadership, which was an intended result rather than an accident.

In 1909 Zhang Jian talked with his business partner Liu Housheng with regard to Zhang's new plans for a major expansion of local establishments in Nantong. Liu was worried that it was too ambitious. Zhang Jian said: "I Know this is difficult, but I have to do my best to build a basis for Nantong when I am still healthy and have the status to do so." He emphasized that if the political situation (zhengju) changed, he might not be able to build new programs; but if he had already started them, then it was likely that they would continue (Liu 1965, 251).

Obviously, Zhang Jian's deep involvement in the constitutional reform did not mean that he was single-minded; he felt the uncertainty and prepared for the failure of the movement. In light of these concerns, Nantong, and only Nantong, had to be the single most important matter for Zhang, because this was where his power base was located. In March 1911 he optimistically declared that the local development would serve as the "blueprint for a new world" (xinshijie de chuxing) in Nantong. This new world for Zhang Jian would be locally-autonomous and have the institutions and public works embodied in the Japanese jichi model (Zhang Jian 1965, 1310).

The blueprint remained intact through the 1911 unrest. In fact, the revolution brought favorable conditions for the elites to pursue more local autonomy. With the fall of the

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Qing, many rules and restrictions, including the "rule of avoidance," were gone. The newly-established Republican government was too weak efficiently to administer local affairs, which were therefore largely left for the elites to deal with. Local development in Nantong during the early Republic was detached from concrete higher national goals. This tendency was most evident after 1915.

Zhang Jian after 1911

Like many of his constitutionalist friends, including Tang Shouqian (who became the first Republican governor in Zhejiang), Zhang Jian became a republican after 1911 and soon accepted Sun Yat-sen's appointment to be the Minister of Industry and the Liang-Huai Salt Commissioner, in which capacities he helped the new government to deal with its financial difficulty. At Yuan Shikai's request, Zhang Jian joined the Xiong Xiling cabinet in 1913 as Director General of the National Water Conservancy and the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce (Chu 1965, 69-87).

At this time, Zhang Jian placed his hope of restoring a central government to stabilize China on Yuan Shikai and hoped to contribute to the good cause. To this end, local self-government was still meaningful. The pre-1911 pattern in which he used the Nantong case to influence the central government with regard to local self-government, emerged again. One example was the publication of The Achievements of Nantong

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Local Self-government in the Last Nineteen Years, which was edited by the Nantong Local Self-government Association in 1914 and printed in 1915.

The force behind the publication of the book was in the Forbidden City in Beijing. In 1914 Yuan Shikai required the State Council to dismiss self-government institutions at the local level. According to Yuan, there were too many self-government organizations in the more than one thousand counties in China. Yuan believed that these organizations were not only useless, but also obstacles to official administration. Yuan suggested that it was a waste of money to keep them in operation, and that they should therefore be abolished.

However, prime minister Xiong Xiling seemed to disagree with Yuan. He needed some convincing materials to prove to Yuan that the local self-government institutions could actually be fruitful. Moreover, he wanted to set an example for other parts of the nation to show how the local institutions could work. Xiong therefore came to Zhang Jian, one of his cabinet members, and suggested printing a book on Nantong's results and distributing it nationwide. Zhang immediately took action in hopes of saving the local self-government movement. He instructed Jiang Qian, once the president of the Nantong Normal School, to handle this matter. The book covered the nineteen years since 1896, when the Dasheng Cotton Mill had started production. There were four sections in the book: industry, education, philanthropy, and the self-govern-

ment movement. More than sixteen local writers were involved in the project. It was treated as a high-priority task and the authors were constantly urged to speed it up.

Unfortunately, the book was not printed until late 1915 due to the limited capacity of the Hanmolin Publishing House, by which time the Xiong cabinet had collapsed, and Yuan Shikai had ordered all the local self-government institutions to close down. As a result of this political change, more than one thousand copies of the book sat unsold in the warehouse of the publishing house. It was a big financial loss for the publishing house (Fei 1962, 30-31).

Yuan Shikai not only closed down local self-government institutions nationwide, but also dismissed the provincial and national parliaments. In addition, he showed his intention to revive the monarchy, with himself as the new emperor. All of these developments greatly disappointed Zhang Jian, who resigned from his post as the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce and left Beijing in 1915, before Yuan Shikai had approved his resignation (Chu 1965, 86).

1915 was a turning point in Zhang Jian's life. From this point on to his death in 1926, Zhang Jian held positions such as the presidency of the Chinese Banking Association and the Chinese Science Society and remained active in social activities, but never again did he take official positions in Beijing. He was not only disappointed with the government, but also disappointed with politics as a whole. With the death of

Yuan Shikai in 1916, China was virtually in disintegration. The future for a central and stable government seemed bleak. Zhang Jian began to concentrate on Nantong's development and to protect it from outside destruction. If the element in Zhang Jian's village-ism which advocated local self-governing as a basis for the central government prevailed, or apparently prevailed, during the constitutional reform, now it was time for the other element of the village-ism which focused on local self-government as an independent and separate unit to dominate.

New Emphasis on Village-ism

Yuan Shikai's order to abolish local self-government institutions in 1914 did not substantially damage the local self-government movement in Nantong. What was done away with were the forms and names of local self-government institutions, but not the local projects and elites' power (Fan 1922, 9. 23a). Nantong indeed witnessed a mushrooming growth in local establishment after 1911 (see Table). At the same time, local elites such as Zhang Cha and Liu Yishan became all the more powerful due to the power vacuum left by the shift of central power, as we have discussed in Chapter Two. Zhang Cha created Tongbao in March 1912 to further expand his influence. When the local self-government movement was once again institutionalized in 1918, Zhang Xiaoruo, supported by his father and uncle, began to play a leading role in it. Follow-

ing the footsteps of his father, Zhang Xiaoruo organized the Preparatory Committee for Local Self-government in Nantong in 1919 and made regulations for it. He also created Nantongbao as an instrument to promote his activities and establish his reputation (Guan 1983, 13-16).

The history of local self-government seemed to repeat itself in Nantong from the activities of Zhang Jian in the 1900s to those of Zhang Xiaoruo in 1920s. But the concept of local self-government, more specifically the idea of village-ism, in Nantong after 1911, especially after 1915, was cast in a much more detached manner as far as local-central relationships were concerned.

What manifested this tendency was Zhang Jian's constant emphasis on the local orientation of Nantong's development with local sources and efforts and for local purposes. In this regard, he stressed local initiative. For instance, in a 1919 speech addressed to the students at the Traffic Police Training Center of Nantong, Zhang said that "You have to know that all of the programs in Nantong are carried out by initiative instead of in a passive position by the local elites." For example, he continued: "This training center is not created because of the promotion of the government and society" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1874). In other words, what took place in Nantong did not have much to do with the government. Compared with Zhang Jian's rhetoric in the mid-1900s which put

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local self-government in the constitutional framework, the open emphasis on local initiative was definitely a change.

In light of this, Zhang Jian pointed out that Nantong's development did not depend upon either the government (zheng-fu) or the society (shehui). Zhang Jian did not really define what "society" meant in this context, but it is clear that he did not mean the local elites or the people, for he said that the local elites (difang renshi) were contributors to Nantong's development, and that the people were crying for help. The people for Zhang were the object of his mission, which was to help and save them. "Government is so stubborn and society is so corrupt," he said, that "village-ism is our only hope and we must hold on it" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1874, 1889).

The true spirit of village-ism, Zhang explained, indeed focused on local sources and did not even need outside help. "It would be nice if the provincial governor wants and is able to assist us; but if he cannot or does not want to, we can depend on ourselves," because village-ism meant that local people dealt with local affairs, and "if everyone focuses on his own locality, outside help is not needed" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1887-1991). Zhang Jian called it "pure self-government"-depending and focusing on nowhere else except the locality (Zhang Jian 1990 [1924], 27).

The key point of village-ism, that of native people governing local affairs, gained great attention in 1920 because of the recrudescence of the conflict between military

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factions, especially the outbreak of war between the Zhili and Anhui warlord cliques in 1920, which jeopardized national peace and unity. A national wave of local people governing local affairs, or a federalist movement, as some scholars have called it, was on the rise, reflected in such popular slogans as "Suren zhisu" (Jiangsu people governing Jiangsu) and "Zheren zhizhe" (Zhejiang people governing Zhejiang) (Gray 1969, 105). To protect Jiangsu, especially Nantong, from the destruction of the war, Zhang Jian initiated the Sushe (The Jiangsu Society).

The Sushe held its inaugural meeting in Nantong in May 1920. Sushe delegates, a total of 145, were from all sixty counties in Jiangsu province. There were also seven American guests present. According to the special report on the inaugural meeting published in the Nantong Journal, the initiators of the Sushe believed that the local self-government movement needed the united force of all counties in Jiangsu to strengthen it, and that the Sushe would serve this purpose (Wei 1920, 1). Its more specific purpose was to keep Jiangsu, or at least the Tong-Hai area, out of the war, by suggesting the idea of Suren zhisu (Zhang 1986, 311).

In a sense what Zhang Jian expected was to expand what Nantong had accomplished to the whole province through the Sushe. In his opening speech at the conference, he emphasized that the Sushe was a self-government organization which would focus on village-ism to stabilize the situation in Jiangsu and

to provide opportunities for future regional development (Zhang 1920, 5-6; Zhang Jian 1965, 1889-1892). Sushe regulations listed development of local industry, education, waterworks, and transportation as its central tasks, much like what Nantong had practiced in the past twenty years (Wei 1920, 4, 6).

Zhang and his son Xiaoruo both were elected to its directorate and Zhang Jian was elected as the chairman. The event was also much publicized outside of Nantong. The Sushe editorial office printed a Sushe Special Issue on the meeting in Shanghai (1922, 1-37). In 1921 the Sushe held its second annual meeting in Wuxi and Zhang Jian resigned his position as chairman due to his age (Zhang Jian 1965, 1939-1940).

The event of the Sushe and the emphasis on "pure self-government" demonstrated that village-ism could mean complete local autonomy which separated localities from the outside and from China as an entirety. By the same token, Zhang Jian tried to keep Nantong students away from being involved in the May Fourth Movement. He frankly told the students that China might have problems, but that Nantong's situation was hopeful: "If the government remains corrupt forever and diplomacy fails forever, can you hold a strike indefinitely?" Zhang asked (Zhang Jian 1965, 1680). He used his own experience to discourage students' interest in politics, "I was once involved in politics, but none of my suggestions were accepted by the government. [I saw no hope to work with the government, so] I

thus decided to develop Nantong instead" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1684).

There were of course other reasons for Zhang Jian's objection to the students' movement, but one of them was that he wanted to detach Nantong from destructive outside influence. In doing so, he sometime had to emphasize Nantong as an entity separate and independent from the large picture of China. In this regard, Zhang, though using pacific means, was much like the warlords of his time.

For Chu, all of Zhang Jian's efforts in Nantong were not designed to build up Nantong at the expense of the nation as a whole; on the contrary, Chu argued, "he was firmly convinced that only through the improvement of each locality could the nation as a whole be effectively strengthened" (1965: 162-63).

But the "whole nation" was sometimes beyond Zhang's concern and the similarity between him and the warlords has been noticed by other scholars. For instance, Bastid made an analogy between Zhang and the warlords and pointed out that just like the latter, Zhang Jian took advantage of the preponderance of centrifugal forces after 1911 to build a stronghold in Nantong. She considered Zhang a "cultural lord" (xuefa) (1988, 162). Zhou Qiang, a Nantong scholar, also called Zhang Jian "wen junfa" (cultural or civilized warlord who does not use military force) and suggested that what Zhang Jian practiced in Nantong was "fenli zhuyi" (separatism) (Zhou n.d.). It seems clear that local autonomy embodied in the

concept of village-ism implied separatism in Nantong, especially after 1911.

Summary

A number of issues can be discussed regarding this chapter. One of them is the relationship between constitutional reform and local self-government. As Esherick has pointed out, there was indeed no more important political development in the last years of the Qing dynasty than the constitutional movement (1976, 91). The Nantong case allows us to see its impact on the local self-government movement at the county level.

It was the constitutional reform that gave local self-government purpose and direction in the 1900s. It energized and mobilized local elites and incorporated their activities into a unified course for the change of government structure. The nature of the local self-government movement was politicized. The proliferation of new programs, new institutions, new media, network contacts, and other venues indicated the degree of elite mobilization at local levels and changed the ways in which local politics were practiced. Politics no longer merely meant vertical control through administrative channels and yamen offices, but rather featured new political instruments such as newspapers and other publishing activities, new concepts and institutions, and new methods of elite mobilization.

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While the Nantong case might be atypical with regard to the relationships between the constitutional and local self-government movements because of the dominance of Zhang Jian, and while the impact of the constitutional movement varied from one locality to another, it is fair to say that there was a consensus among educated Chinese in the early 1900s that constitutional reform and local self-government were two inseparable movements, and that the parallel development of the two movements would complete the process of preparing for a constitutional government.

The irony of this perception was that the two movements in fact could be separated. Local self-government could be shifted to different directions to prepare for something other than a constitutional government; the "something" could be in fact the opposite of a constitutional government, such as localism or even separatism. This was basically what happened in Nantong. When the constitutional movement and the New Policies reform encouraged local development and institutionalized local self-government organizations, the latter developed a political identity of its own, which had the flexibility to be the basis of a constitutional government or the basis of centrifugal forces of the local elites, as reflected in the concept of village-ism and in the practice of local self-government in Nantong.

Scholars have described how provincial elites gained great political strength of their own through the constitu-

tional movement. The Nantong case shows how this process took place in a county where the elites, or rather the elite Zhang Jian, while moving upward and leading the constitutional reform at national and provincial levels, also prepared for its failure and built a solid base in Nantong for local purposes.

This sheds light on the nature of the New Policies period in general and on the constitutional movement in particular. By focusing on the fact that the Qing court adopted a Japanese reform package and promoted institutional and intellectual changes, Reynolds has suggested that the fourteen years of the Xinzheng reforms, and especially the ten years from 1901-1910, was a revolution instead of a reform. Although whether the New Policies was a revolution can be argued perhaps indefinitely because of the various definitions of the concept, Reynolds's work does bring scholarly attention to the significance of the New Policies.

However, the adoption of a reform package does not necessarily bring substantial or revolutionary change, or it brings change in some areas and levels but not necessarily in others. The Nantong case suggests that the impact of the New Policies should be looked for at different levels. It indeed had a revolutionary implication in terms of the development of local society, but it failed to establish a strong national government to utilize local society as the basis of the government, which was what the movement had set out to

achieve. This failure is especially evident in light of state-building theory.

The New Policies has been viewed as a government attempt to build a modern state, an effort which included fiscal reform, military reorganization, legal reform, bureaucratic rationalization, and social mobilization through education, communication, and other fields (Wright 1968; Fincher 1981; Rankin 1986; Thompson 1988). This sort of process, according to Tilly, led in Europe to the expansion of the state structure and the elimination of local autonomous forces.

The New Policies reforms indeed began with the intention to regain state control of local society, and they touched upon almost all of the state-building programs. In fact, the Meiji model of top-down state-building was clearly reflected in the New Policies period. However, the Japanese model was marked by the combination of apolitical local self-governing units and a strongly centralized government.

In the case of China, as Rankin has suggested, local self-government was politicized and outweighed the central government in the New Policies and the constitutional movement. In other words, the Qing court failed to expand state structure through the movement, let alone destroy or prevent the politicization and autonomy of the local society, thus pushing the already existing central-light and local-heavy tendency further. This result was the exact opposite of the official purpose of the New Policies.

Some scholars have suggested that if the 1911 Revolution had not come so soon, the New Policies reform might have had a chance to succeed (Wright 1968). We can of course speculate what could have happened if the revolution hadn't taken place in 1911. The point is that the Qing court which initiated the New Policies had lost its initiative in the process, which meant that it lost control of the movement as well. The fact that local elites became a force to pressure the court in the movement was an indication that they had taken the initiative and seized control of the movement. Local elites capitalized on this opportunity to pursue further local autonomy in their own regions.

Another interesting phenomenon that emerged in this period was the active role media played in politics. Elites exercised their power and influence through publishing houses, newspapers, books, and other printed words which served their interests and political needs. On the other hand, professionals such as publishers, journalists, and editors were also politicians, who, allied with the elites, defined the constitutional movement and the local self-government movement as they wished. In fact, media had become one of the defining elements of local as well as national politics.

It was not a coincidence that in Nantong, Zhang Jian, Zhang Cha, and Zhang Xiaoruo all created newspapers individually at different times to serve different political purposes. The Hanmolin Publishing House was also under their control.

Editors such as Zhu Zhongyuan were indispensable figures in local political activities. There also existed newspapers in Nantong owned by Chen Chen and Bao Siyu which served their particular political needs, as I have mentioned in Chapter Three.

Generally speaking, the local media in Nantong appeared to be controlled political instruments instead of forums for free discussion, as Habermas's Europe-centered media model of the public sphere would have it. However, scholars such as Robert Darnton have outlined a much more complicated picture of an early print market in Europe which was "controlled not by freely discoursing intellectuals in search of public enlightenment but by booty capitalists in search of a quick profit" (Garnham 1993, 359-360). Obviously, Habermas studied some aspects of the print market but left other aspects out.

Media can be open forums for public discussion as part of a democratic development, as in Habermas's theory of the public sphere. They can, of course, also be commercialized and consumer-oriented, giving priority to making profit, as Darnton sees. Media can also be political instruments for which making money was not an immediate concern, as in the Nantong case, in which media were aimed at political markets rather than economic ones. Compared with Habermas's media model, one significant difference in the Nantong media was that they lacked the democratic elements which were so essential to Habermas's theory of the public sphere, such as free-

dom of speech and judgement. However, media in Nantong contributed significantly to the development of elite power and of local autonomy.

The development of local autonomy was indeed one of the marked features of the period under consideration. Some scholars consider local autonomy to be a complete local self-governing system without any dependent relationships with the central government. For instance, Wakeman has argued that the Hankou merchant organizations that Rowe has studied were not autonomous, because they asked for government funds (1993). The fact of the matter is that government funds may also be used to develop local autonomy, if the local elite society is strong enough.

Zhang Jian, for instance, never openly broke with the central government. Before 1911 he placed his hopes of strengthening China on the Qing court, though not completely. He had close connections with the central government and officials. Even after 1911 when his village-ism was more local-oriented and he was emphasizing pure self-government, he still wrote letters to Beijing asking for government funds for local projects.

Did all of these activities make Nantong less autonomous than it was or it could be? The answer is no. Of course, local autonomy in Nantong was more emphasized after 1911, but even during the New Policies period when the political and rhetorical discourse seemed to tie the local self-government and

constitutional movement together, local autonomy was still developing in Nantong.

The point is that the local system, more specifically the systems of industry, education, and philanthropy which basically covered the general aspects of life in the community, was so well developed or developing that it had the full potential to operate on its own. Also, even then Zhang Jian purposely wanted to build a strong base for local advantage. In other words, the system itself, once formed and controlled by the elites, became the most powerful source or basis of local autonomy, regardless of whether or not the government funded or initiated specific Nantong programs such as the Dasheng Mill. That is why Zhang Jian put so much emphasis on building a complete local system consisting of a full range of political, economic, cultural, social, and public service programs.

In Nantong, there was no turning point in 1911 as far as local autonomy was concerned, especially not under the chaotic circumstances under which both the imperial and then the Republican government operated. It was therefore not surprising that after 1911 the Nantong system began to show its full potential in local self-governing with or without the local self-government institutions. At the same time, the concept of village-ism was recast to emphasize pure self-government, which explicitly expressed a rhetorical assumption that Nantong could succeed in local self-governing independent from

the central government and separate from China as a whole; the assumption not only implied that the government was useless, but also needless. This separatism-oriented self-government assumption and the development of local programs reinforced each other to create a strong image of a successfully reformed Nantong due to the independent leadership of local elites and local autonomous practice.

In the first decade of the Republican period, while there was not so much state power to contest, the main concern of Nantong elites was to advertise this distinct image of Nantong, to protect Nantong from outside destruction, and to maintain local autonomy and elite control of the locality. New symbols and positive publicity were created to endorse the independent status of Nantong in the society, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Seven

SYMBOLS AND PUBLICITY

This chapter takes us to the symbolic world of Nantong. In the chapter, we will examine how local elites maintained their power and preserved local autonomy by advertising the achievements of local self-government through manipulating symbols and publicity.

To be sure, there did not exist a clear-cut distinction between the establishment and the maintenance of power in terms of either time period or the means involved. Previous chapters have indicated that in the approximately ten-year period from 1894 to 1912 local elites, especially Zhang Jian, had built indisputable influence in the locality. It is therefore appropriate to consider the relevant post-1912 factors which contributed to the maintenance of this influence. However, to maintain power it is often necessary continuously to build it. In other words, only through constant construction can positions of power be sustained. On the other hand, the establishment of elite influence in the period before 1912 also involved the establishment of means to maintain their power. Therefore, while mainly focusing on the

post-1912 period, we will nevertheless see some overlaps with pre-1912 events.

After ten years of extraordinary effort to develop political, economic, cultural, and social programs, the image of a distinctly advanced Nantong due to local self-government was under construction, a process paralleling that through which the elites' leadership status was built. At this point, to maintain elites' power to a great degree it was necessary to continue to build and publicize this distinct image and to instill it in the public mind. In order to do so, the emphasis was put on highlighting the local achievements of self-government. As a matter of fact, Nantong in the 1910s and early 1920s gained considerable fame and was made a national showcase where every positive result was carefully collected, displayed, celebrated, and therefore magnified by the means and resources available in that era.

The means and resources were, however, largely symbolic and cultural practices, which played a crucial role in shaping the local political culture in Nantong. Without careful study of the symbolic character, or, to use Habermas's words, the "representative publicness," of the public domain (Habermas 1993, 9), Nantong's political life in the first two decades of this century would remain obscure.

Geertz points out that at the political center of any society, "there is both a governing elite and a set of symbolic forms expressing the fact that it is in truth

governing." The elites "justify their existence and order their actions in terms of a collection of stories, ceremonies, insignia, formalities, and appurtenances." Symbols of "crowns and coronations, limousines and conferences" mark "the center and give what goes on there its aura of being not merely important but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built." In other words, political authority requires "a cultural frame in which to define itself and advance its claims." The possession and practice of power thereby works through the possession and practice of symbols and symbolic representations, which can be either inherited from tradition or be invented (Geertz 1983, 124, 125, 143).

Geertz is not alone in thinking this. David Kertzer also recognizes that "political reality is in good part created through symbolic means,...for the hallmark of power is the construction of reality." He emphasizes that people perceive the world through symbolic lenses which make them recognize "who are the powerful and who are the weak, and through the manipulation of symbols the powerful reinforce their authority" (1988: 4-5).

Pierre Bourdieu sees that power, though sometimes exercised as physical force, in most cases is transmuted into a symbolic form which is endowed with a kind of legitimacy that it would not otherwise have. Furthermore, he points out that the symbolic form is misrecognized as only symbolic but is recognized as legitimate and objective (1991, 23). In other

words, symbols' functions as signifier are concealed and they function as the signified. The crown is conceived not as a symbol of the throne, but as the throne. For Bourdieu, this is where the power of symbols rests--they become objectified instruments of ruling--Bourdieu calls it "objectified political capital." The struggle, Bourdieu calls it a "game," between modern professional politicians and parties is after all the struggle for the monopoly of the use of objectified instruments of power--the symbolic power of "making people see and believe, of predicting and prescribing, of making known and recognized." In this "game," whoever possesses the most capital, not only political but also cultural, economic and social as well, usually assumes dominant power in the society (1991, 181).

Geertz's "cultural frame," Kertzer's "symbolic means," and Bourdieu's "symbolic capital" all overlap with Habermas's term "publicity of representation." Habermas first studied the "representation of courtly-knightly publicity" in the feudal society of the High Middle Ages. For Habermas, the ducal seal, certain rhetorical forms (forms of address and formal discourse), personal attributes (such as insignia, dress, and demeanor), and the surroundings of the church, were all "part and parcel" of this publicity of representation, which, as an "aura," surrounded and endowed the authority of lordship. All of these forms of representation, Habermas emphasized, had to

bear the virtue of being capable of public representation for the code of "noble conduct" (Habermas 1993, 7-9).

Habermas further pointed out that the forms of the representation of publicness changed over the course of history. For instance, in the fifteenth century the lord's authority as the source and center of public representation was reshaped by the humanism of the Renaissance (Habermas 1993, 7-9). From then on to the end of the eighteenth century, while the feudal powers disintegrated in a process of polarization and split into private elements, the representation of courtly publicity also disappeared (Habermas 1993, 11). At the same time, according to Habermas, new forms of representation arose with the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere, which constituted open forums, rational and critical public discussion, inclusive and accessible public participation, and so forth (Habermas 1993, 37).

Obviously, symbolic representation exists universally, though its forms vary historically and geographically. Language, of course, is one of the most recognizable symbolic forms. It functions as a signifier of power relationships and as an instrument to reflect and transform social reality. But there are a variety of other symbolic forms, such as, to list a few, rituals, ceremonies, theater and performances (Kertzer 1988; Turner 1986), festivals and parades (Ozouf 1988; Ryan 1989), art and architecture (Aguilhon 1981; Starn 1989), conferences, coronations and limousines (Geertz 1983, 124),

and even such specific events as the now-famous "great cat massacre" (Darnton, 1984). As a matter of fact, any social, political and cultural practice which endows individuals or groups with power, status and resources of various kinds can be considered as symbolic practice.

A history of Nantong in the late 1910s and 1920s can be written in terms of a collection of ceremonies and an endless flow of events and speeches. The central theme embodied in all these activities was the image of a successfully reformed and distinctly advanced Nantong which was regarded as a noteworthy product of local elite activity. To make and advertise this image, concepts of space and time were reframed to reinforce the perception of a new Nantong. National and international celebrities were invited to campus to give lectures and make speeches. Plays and dramas were considered even better vehicles than formal schools to reform social customs, and consequently some then-eminent actors were brought to Nantong to perform. At the same time, regional- and national-level workshops and conferences were held in Nantong, which put the county and the city in the mass media spotlight. Nantong also claimed many "firsts" in the nation--the first normal school, first county-wide modern school system, first museum created by the Chinese, and the first deaf-and-dumb school. All of these "firsts" were frequently mentioned and well utilized in the process (Zhi 1987, 15).

Around these events were occasions like school- and theater- opening ceremonies, welcome ceremonies, birthday and other special events celebrations, compositions and recitations of poetry and antithetical couplets, sporting events, festivals, performances, spring and autumn outings, and banquets. These occasions could hardly go by without contributing some glory to the recent history of Nantong and its local elites. The notables, professors, scientists, actors, celebrated scholars, and educators who came to Nantong for conferences, workshops, and lectures were very much a part of all these activities. These celebrities decorated Nantong and added fame to it. Moreover, they were the professional and cultural brokers who not only kept Nantong open to the outside world, but also conveyed the message of a remarkable Nantong to the outside circles.

This chapter is concerned with how these symbolic representations were created to fashion local politics and elite power and to advocate local autonomy.

The Reconfiguration of Space and Time

Space and Politics

Nantong's local self-government achievements were shaped and highlighted by a new physical appearance--Nantong city was rearranged into a spatial public representation of the results of self-government. Spatial change can greatly affect people's thinking. In her study of festivals during the French Revolu-

tion, Ozouf pointed out how spatial configuration and reconfiguration influenced people's minds and how they created and imposed specific power and images in the Revolution. Political arrangement, she believed, involves arrangement of urban space. In France the geographical symbols of the ancient regime had to be destroyed, for instance, and certain spaces had to be opened and broken. According to Ozouf, this "rational program of spatial occupation" in the Revolution included, among other things, renaming of squares and streets and the numbering of houses. While emphasizing the characteristics of festival space, such as the importance of open air and uninterrupted views, and colossal columns and square central altars (Ozouf 1988, 126-27, 129, 133), her insights help us understand the spatial program carried out in Nantong and how it became part of the testimony to local achievement and elite authority.

The Old Nantong

Before 1894 Nantong (then named Tongzhou) was a typical small city like many in remote areas of China. The limited scale of the city could be illustrated by the fact that while most cities had four gates, Nantong only had three. Ji Xiufu, who in his childhood once climbed to the top of one of the city gates, said that it took less than one hour to circumnavigate the city. There was a folk rhyme popular then which reflected the city in general: "Rich Western Gate; poor

Eastern Gate; begging Southern Gate." Outside the Western Gate gathered officials, wealthy merchants and their stores. The space around the Eastern Gate was occupied by stands selling handicraft and farm products. Before sunset these stands would disappear and the place became quiet. Outside the Southern Gate were temples, cemeteries, and fields. Homeless people and beggars spent nights there. The prefectural yamen was located in the center of the city, as also were three other big buildings and a Confucian temple. Together these buildings constituted the downtown area. One of the three buildings was the yamen of the Langshan General Commander, the highest military office in Nantong, held by an official of the second rank. Fifth-rank officials had to get out of their sedan chairs to walk when passing this building--a symbolic way to show their respect and to reinforce the sense of hierarchy (Ji 1991, 44-45).

Spatial Expansion

Nantong city and its suburbs witnessed a great deal of spatial expansion and reconfiguration in the early twentieth century. According to "The List of Nantong's Major Construction Works from 1898-1947" provided by Sun Zhixia, the much-accomplished native architect, there were important construction works undertaken every year from 1898-1926. More than a dozen factories, schools, banks, a library, a museum, the Hanmolin Publishing House, orphanages, old people's homes,

hospitals, career training centers, parks, stadiums, companies, bridges, dikes, warehouses, new markets, orchards, theaters, highways, hotels, clubs, and private villas were added to Nantong's map. At the same time, the old city walls and gates were demolished and replaced by a circum-city highway. A new city plan redefined the downtown area with the new buildings of the General Chamber of Commerce, Taozhihua Hotel, and the Gengsu theater as centers (Sun 1984, 172-175). All of these dramatically changed the outlook of the area and its implications. For instance, the area outside the Southern Gate which used to be a beggars' gathering place now became the educational and cultural center with the creation of the Nantong normal school and other educational institutions. The yamen of the Lanshan General Commander located in the old downtown which used to represent the imperial hierarchic order now became a forgotten corner.

The spatial rearrangements progressed in an order paralleling the rise of Nantong as a famous county. During the thirteen years from 1898 to the 1911 Revolution Nantong's local projects were chiefly industrially- and educationally-oriented, with a minor portion devoted to charitable institutes. Some road and port projects were also started during that period only as necessary accessories to serve manufacturing needs. At that time the local elites did not deliberately advertise Nantong as much as they did later. This was for practical and political reasons, for on the one hand the

elites themselves were busy building their own economic and educational supports, and they were largely confined to them themselves; on the other hand, the Qing court was still nominally in power, and as much as the court encouraged industrial and educational undertakings, it was nevertheless politically unwise to advertise Nantong excessively.

New Directions

After 1911 things were different. The Qing state collapsed and China was in search of direction. After almost a decade of effort Nantong as a unique and accomplished area of local self-government started to take shape and gain national attention. During that period, factories and schools were still included in new construction work, but social and philanthropical institutes increased. Projects such as the Vagrant Workshop, Nantong Hospital, Nantong Library, Langshan Forestry Nursery, Poor People's Workshop, the First Old People's Home, the first kindergarden, Home for the Disabled, reform prison, and the Langshan Deaf and Dumb School were all set up in 1912 and 1913. The Prostitute Reform Bureau was established in 1914 to get rid of the ugly side of Nantong.

In addition, scenic arrangement and entertainment projects carried more weight in the spatial reconfiguration in order to accommodate increasing visitors, ceremonies and other social activities. In 1913, the first public sports stadium was constructed. In 1914 and 1915, six parks were brought into

existence. Before and around that time, efforts were made to build Langshan (Wolf Hill) as a major scenic spot. With the highway system planned in 1915 and the abolition of the old city wall in 1922, the old Nantong soon became open to the outside world and outsiders were invited to witness Nantong's progress. While contributing to the economic development of Nantong, the highway system in and around the city provided transportational convenience for many social events and elite activities and also impressed elite celebrities from outside Nantong (Zhang & Zhou 1984, 169-71).

Spatial reconfiguration in Nantong continued to stress scenic and entertainment development in the early 1920s. In 1919 the Gengsu Theater and an acting school were established. In 1921 a club was built for the gathering of Nantong's prestigious elites and their distinguished guests. In 1924 a new market was set up (Sun 1984, 174-75). In 1925, Zhang Jian's enterprises were declining, but the indisputable power and influence Zhang Jian and his brother Zhang Cha had built up in the past twenty-odd years did not vanish right away. They constructed a new building for the general chamber of commerce.

The general chamber of commerce used to share a building with the peasant association and other organizations in 1902. From 1904 to 1919, the office of the chamber of commerce moved twice and expanded. The period around 1920 was the heyday of Nantong's local self-government movement and of the influence

of Zhang Jian and Zhang Cha. The chamber of commerce had become the center of local politics. To meet its due influence and further to enhance its power, Zhang Cha and other merchant elites decided to build a tall office building for the chamber of commerce by imposing levies on the merchants and people. A total of 21,000 yuan was collected and the construction work was finished in 1925. This office building was even bigger than the office of the Shanghai chamber of commerce. It has remained as the political center and government office in Nantong ever since.

The chamber of commerce now was on the western side of the town. The new downtown was chosen to locate closely to this building, while the old downtown on the central-northern side seemed no longer important. To develop the new downtown area, Zhang Cha used his seventieth birthday gift money, 18,000 yuan (silver), to build a twelve-span-long bridge--Yulongqiao (Dragon Jumping Bridge)--which provided better connection between the new downtown and other parts of the city. This bridge was said to be Huainan's longest bridge (Yu 1982, 46; Sun 1984, 172-75; Sun 1991a, 8).

Private Villas

Zhang Jian also started constructing his private villas after 1911. Prior to this date, he often stayed in the museum and other places when he came to Nantong since he did not have a residence in the city. The first one was finished in 1914,

two more were completed in 1915, another two were added in 1919, and yet another two were in the process of construction in 1921 (Sun 1984, 173-75). All of Zhang Jian's private villas were carefully designed with specific stylistic requirements. For instance, the first one built in 1914 was, according to Zhang Jian's special instruction, modelled after one of the Empress Dowager Cixi's chambers in Beijing--an action which could have been considered implicitly rebellious in the imperial period (Sun 1991a, 8). These villas were not only places to host Zhang Jian's guests and visitors, but also instant tourist attractions. Nantong's scenic and entertainment projects were so well developed along with Nantong's increasing fame that the Nantong Tour Guide was prepared in the late 1920s and published in 1931 (Liang 1994).

Names as Symbols

Giving names to streets, roads and buildings in Nantong was also part of the power play. During the period under consideration, some existing construction works were renamed and new ones of course had to have names. A name is a mark, a statement, and a show. It not only reflects something, but also says something. Street and building names are expected to be seen and heard by the public on a daily basis for a long time, even for generations to come. Therefore, naming is very much a game of history- and image-making. For one thing, not everyone has the right to name or rename a project, or it

would not mean anything. To make a name legitimate, the person who gives the name has to have a legitimate status, or to be considered and accepted as having a legitimate status for it. If a peasant saw a new street in Nantong and gave it a name (though it would be very unlikely for a peasant to do something like this in the first place), people would think that he was a big fool and the name would be laughed at and forgotten right away. But if Zhang Jian gave a name, even the same one as the peasant's, it would be immediately accepted and cherished, and even formalized through a ceremony. In a sense, what matters is not only the name, but also by whom and in what manner the name is given.

In Nantong, naming and renaming a project was certainly treated seriously. For instance, when the Dasheng Cotton Mill was planning to build a new apartment for the workers, a formal report was sent to Zhang Jian to ask him to decide on a name for the apartment. He named it "zheng" after one of his concubines' names, because on the very day before he received the report, Zhang Jian and the concubine got lost on their way to visit a friend in the countryside, and the concubine gave him some ideas which helped him find his way home safely. This apartment name was used until the 1980s (Chun 1991, 37).

When naming small and relatively insignificant projects like the workers' apartment required formal and written procedures, we can only imagine how serious a matter it was to name some landmark works in Nantong. As a matter of fact, the

names of the Dasheng Cotton Mill, Hanmolin Publishing House, the Nantong Normal School, and many local factories were all given by Zhang Jian. The stories behind and meanings in these names have been talked and written about again and again (Guan 1982, 77; Liu 1990, 18; Chun 1991, 36-38).

Some of these names were extended to become street or road names, such as Dada Street, Dasheng Line, Xinglong Street, Fuxing Street, Guangsheng Street, Zisheng Street, Zesheng Street, Tongshu Street, and Guoyuan Road. Dada was the name of Zhang Jian's ship company; Fuxing, Guangsheng, Zisheng, Zesheng, Tongshui, and Dasheng were all factory names. These factories were founded by Zhang Jian, Zhang Cha, and other local merchants and elites. "Guoyuan" means orchard. In 1912 Zhang Jian was the Industrial Minister and Water Conservancy Director in the Republican government. His Dada Ship Company also started business, bringing guests and visitors from all over China. It was said that they enjoyed Nantong's scenic beauty but felt one shortage--fresh fruit, which Nantong did not produce. Zhang Jian decided to change this, and in 1913 more than ten mu of waste land was opened up for an orchard and many types of Jiangnan fruit were transplanted to Nantong. The road to the orchard from the city was called "Guoyuanlu" (Chun 1991, 36-38).

Zhang Jian also left his calligraphy together with poems, inscriptions and antithetical couplets on many of Nantong's construction works, such as the "Youfei Hotel" built in 1913

and the "Long-life Chamber" constructed to celebrate Zhang Cha's seventieth birthday, to name a few (Huang 1988, 24). As a matter of fact, the Nine Records of Zhang Jian included Zhang's antithetical couplets for 135 construction projects in the region, from temples, schools, academies, and factories to towers, tombs, chambers, halls, villas, theaters, and parks (Zhang Jian 1965, 3267-3277). His writing was in high demand, because he was admired for his calligraphy and writings and his zhuangyuan title made every piece of his work valuable. His work in turn earned him more credit and carried his name further and further.

The reconfiguration of Nantong city's space had a great impact on reframing people's minds. Gone were not only the city walls and the old prefectural yamen, but also the old force of domination. The redefinition of a new downtown area compatible with the new political center--the chamber of commerce--symbolized the rise of new groups in charge of the community. All of the new buildings, new road names and decorations on construction constantly reminded those who lived in the spatial arrangement of the central force and its capacity and stature. They together created the representation--an objectified symbolic world--where the center stage of political life could be easily identified. Everything with which one came into contact, including the air one breathed, the things one saw and talked about, and the people one met, indicated who was in power and who was not. Living in this

environment, people's minds could not help but be framed and controlled by the overwhelming power hidden in the spatial arrangement.

Time and Politics

Related to the concept of space is the concept of time. According to Ozouf's study of time and its relationship with festivals in the French Revolution, the rearrangement of time, just as the rearrangement of space, signified and created the new revolutionary era. She pointed out "the irrational hold the calendar had over people's minds" (Ozouf 1988, 159,) which in fact is a historical and universal phenomenon. We need only to mention the complicated rituals to redefine the calendar at the beginning of each new dynasty and the countless new reign periods in Chinese history. Ozouf noted that in the French Revolution the first thing the reformers wanted to do was:

To manifest the discontinuity brought about by the Revolution in the flow of time, to signify...that the era of the Republic was no longer the era of kings, and to mark this absolute beginning. The next stage was to divide time up with new festivals: which required choosing objects or events worthy of being celebrated (1988, 159).

Ozouf studied events and phenomena at the national level and described a complete process of time arrangement in a year, which had a much more far-reaching impact than any experience of this sort at local levels. Nantong, obviously, was not in a position to make a new calendar or to decide new holidays and festivals for the nation. But this did not mean

that the Nantong elites did not also work on time as "raw material" to influence and reframe people's minds.

The New Calendar

After the 1911 Revolution the Western calendar was adopted to replace the Chinese lunar calendar, though there was some debate over its adoption (Yuan 1987, 169). A Republican calendar was also set up to mark the end of the imperial era and the beginning of the Republican period; 1912 was the first year of the Republic. Nantong had nothing directly to do with this symbolic change of time, but the local practice of the new calendar, and more importantly, the choices of local festivals and events to celebrate, had much to do with elite influence in the community.

Nantong did not adopt the Republican calendar immediately after it was declared, nor did local elites like Zhang Cha cut their queues right away (Cao & Lin 1981, 146). Nantong waited for a month to declare its independence. As an alternative, the calendar of Huangdi (Yellow Emperor) year 4609 was used at the ceremony to declare Nantong's independence. To adopt the Yellow Emperor calendar was of course always a politically correct move, though the people felt a bit strange since they usually did not use it (Guan 1991, 4). The sensitivity to the calendar and the symbolic queue reflected the wait-and-see attitude which was shared by many during this uncertain period. The elites were not sure if the result of the Revolu-

tion was final or if the monarchy would be restored. In fact there were two attempts made to restore the monarchy after 1911. The local elites who were on the way to establishing themselves before 1911 did not want to rush into anything which could jeopardize their status later. Only those who had nothing to lose supported the Revolution immediately and fervently.

But when the dust gradually settled, the Republican calendar was practiced and the Revolution's anniversary was observed in Nantong. In addition, the day (8 November) when Nantong declared independence was also celebrated. 10 October 1912 was the first anniversary of the Revolution. All circles of Nantong together held a large lantern festival to celebrate it, centering in the hall of the Wushu Public Middle School. The hall was decorated with many colored lanterns and antithetical couplets, some of which were written by Chen Shizeng. The students created two songs in memory of the 1911 Revolution in Tongzhou which emphasized the bright future the Revolution would bring about to the "new citizens" and "new students" (Sun 1988, 22-23). Hereafter various activities were organized to observe the National Day of 10 October. On every New Year's day of the Western calendar, the students at the Nantong Normal School would put on a play which brought a jubilant mood to the city (Tang 1988, 25).

Celebration of Festival-like Events

The celebration of opening events and the anniversary of local projects somehow also assumed the significance of festivals and outweighed traditional holidays in Nantong. While most traditional Chinese holidays were family-oriented, these celebrations were public events and they drew tremendous attention in the community. Among all of Nantong's local establishments, the Nantong Normal School and the Dasheng Cotton Mill stood out as the most important ones. They were directly initiated and funded by Zhang Jian under extremely trying circumstances. They symbolically marked the beginnings of the modern educational system and industrial development and represented the self-government system in Nantong. More than anything else, they both contributed to the future well-being of Nantong--the profits of Dasheng became a financial source, at one point seemingly an inexhaustible source, for many other local projects; the Normal School prepared teachers which enabled Nantong to universalize primary education. To the outside world, the Normal School and Dasheng Cotton Mill were examples of Nantong's unique advancement.

Celebration of the two undertakings and their anniversaries therefore was not only constantly to remind people of Zhang Jian's contribution, but also to advertise and reinforce the concept of local achievements. Between the two projects, Zhang later tried to convey the idea that education was more important than industry to him, so while the tenth and

twentieth anniversaries of Dasheng were celebrated, the real showcase was the normal school.

The opening ceremony of the normal school on 18 September 1903 was a big event in the local community. First there was a ceremony to pay homage to a Confucian monument, which was followed by a ceremony to pay respect to the teachers, and then students met each other. Important officials and local elites all presented themselves to honor the event. Zhang Jian and Fan Dangshi made speeches. Zhang's speech was posted and the students were asked to read it before dinner on that day (Cao 1987, 38). At the end of the first semester, Zhang went to the school and made another speech.

In the following decades, Zhang tried to appear at every important event taking place at the school. The Nine Records of Zhang Jian collected more than eighteen of his speeches addressed to the normal school students for anniversaries, sports events, graduation ceremonies, and alumni association meetings. In these speeches Zhang often reviewed the difficult process of the founding of the school and expressed his expectations that the students would study hard and serve local society (Zhang 1965, 94-95).

The school's anniversary was celebrated every year and big anniversaries were accorded grand ceremonies. A special sports event was held on 18 September 1918 at the normal school as part of its fifteenth anniversary celebration. Zhang Jian involved himself in every detail of the preparation of

the event. In one of his letters to the teachers concerning the sports event, he talked about what kinds of games were suitable and what were not during the season, how to select the students, when and where the participants should go to register, what songs to sing at the ceremony, and so forth. Evidently, he had watched the students rehearsing, because he mentioned in the letter that the students had learned to sing the song and that they could sing it on that day (Yang 1987, 195-196).

Why was Zhang Jian so concerned with these details? He revealed the reasons in his speech at the opening ceremony of the games:

This sports event is to test and encourage your competitive spirit as a preparation for the 1922 celebration, when we will invite people from all over China to visit. It will be shameful if our future guests think that you are only so-so (Zhang Jian 1965, 1675).

Zhang was thinking about the twentieth anniversary of the normal school, on which he planned on having a celebration on a much larger scale. The fifteenth anniversary for Zhang was a rehearsal of the future event.

The intended greatest celebration of all was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the local self-government movement in Nantong, which was aborted due to extensive flooding. There were ambitious and detailed plans which showed how much the anniversary was treated as a major festival event. As has been pointed out earlier, there did not exist a formal beginning date for Nantong's self-government movement. A local reform

system in fact did not appear until around 1904. Zhang Jian nevertheless wanted to move up the time to as early as around 1896. In 1921 he decided to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the self-government movement in 1922 by holding a series of public lectures (baogaohui). It would be a misunderstanding to think that all this was about was some boring lectures.

Zhang in 1921 sent two reports to the government concerning this anniversary celebration. According to Zhang, the activities would last "only" three months from 1 March to 30 May in 1922, due to limited funds. A preparation committee had already been set up in July 1921 which constituted several departments and groups in charge of industry, education, and other subjects, respectively. Items such as the products of the Dasheng mills and students' work were supposed to be put on display, and a major exhibition center was under construction. Also under construction were a lecture hall, guest houses, a large sport stadium, and a new market. On-the-spot investigation would be arranged for projects which could not be put in the hall, such as the land reclamation activities, highways, and waterworks.

The government was asked to send some officials to Nantong to "give instruction" when the event took place. Invitations were going to be sent to all provinces, counties, and companies in China, and also to America, Britain, Japan, France, Germany, Holland, and other countries. All partici-

pants from outside Nantong were expected to bring their products for display as well. Zhang Jian requested the government to provide a special duty-free policy for the display items brought to Nantong. Zhang also asked those who wanted to celebrate his seventieth birthday for him to donate the money to support the anniversary activities instead.

Had the event taken place, it would have been the biggest celebration ever in Nantong history. Unfortunately, in August 1921 severe floods invaded Nantong and destroyed crops and damaged houses, highways, fields, and waterworks. The anniversary plans had to be cancelled, because there was not so much to show off any more, and also funds were much needed to rebuild these damaged works. Zhang therefore announced postponement of the celebration to 1927, when the self-government movement reached its thirtieth anniversary (Zhang Jian 1965, 1916-1919, 1924-1927), which did not take place.

Machine-Made Clocks

While the anniversaries of the self-government movement and the normal school had become local festival events to celebrate, the concept of time was also changed and reformulated. With the development of modern schools and factories in Nantong, the age-old concept of time associated with the agricultural life was no longer suitable. Peasants for thousands of years had not had to count time in minutes and seconds, simply because it did not matter. But in 1917 a woman

worker in the Dasheng Cotton Mill lost her job for four months because she was one minute late for work. She cried and bent her knees to beg for forgiveness, but she was punished nevertheless. Workers on the early morning shift would run to the factory madly as soon as they heard the siren. Fearing being late yet having no clock at home, female workers on the night shift often had to leave home much earlier to wait for their shift to start at midnight, carrying their children in one arm and lunch baskets in the other (Liu & He 1991, 147, 150). It was indeed a tough transition for peasants to become workers in modern factories.

To establish the authority of modern time concepts, machine-made clocks were introduced to Nantong. The first one, reasonably enough, appeared in 1899 above the front door of the Dasheng Cotton Mill (Sun 1991b, 20-21). In 1914 Zhang Jian stressed that every undertaking in Nantong should begin with "understanding and making sure of the time." He suggested building a clock tower in the very center of Nantong city. In five months at a cost of 6,000 yuan (silver), a four-story clock tower, the very first in Nantong, was completed. A large machine-made clock purchased from Shanghai for 35,000 yuan was installed on the third storey. The clock tower was modelled after the London Clock Tower. On the second story was inscribed an antithetical couplet made by Zhang Jian which highlighted the political change Nantong had gone through in the past twenty years. This tall construction was a sensational

undertaking at that time (Sun 1991a, 8; Sun 1991b, 21). While generating much curiosity and excitement, the clock tower had a mysterious yet powerful hold over people's minds--it told them when to do what.

The clock tower benefited the city residents most. For Dasheng workers living in rural areas, the authority of modern time concepts was represented by the siren sound from the factory which struck according to Dasheng schedules. The siren sound manipulated and affected the workers' as well as all other people's lives in the area. It was said that the people made their daily arrangements according to the siren sounds and that the sounds became very much a part of their lives (Sun 1991b, 21-21).

Zhang Jian and other elites, of course, were closely associated with the modern Nantong establishments, such as schools and factories, in which timing had become crucial. The emphasis on time concepts therefore in a way was reinforcement of elite authority. It unmistakably led the people to see who was in control of life in this community.

Professional Brokers

While the reconfiguration of space and time became part of the course to shape the new outlook of Nantong, professional and cultural brokers were responsible for widely spreading the self-government image and also for further defining and decorating it with their own distinct status and characters.

Nantong frequently hosted celebrities in the late 1910s and 1920s. In fact, mingren shenghui (big gatherings of celebrities) was another representation of publicity Nantong possessed at that time. The celebrities were professors, scholars, scientists, actors, and other professionals, who came to Nantong for presentations, research, conferences, performances, and other business. In the remainder of this chapter we shall examine how these people, who were themselves already media notables, helped Nantong gain more publicity for its local achievements.

Professors

Education was the primary area which brought many of the celebrities to Nantong. Some of them were hired to work at Nantong schools and some came to visit and give lectures. Nantong during the period under consideration indeed displayed a deep passion for excellence and famous people. Among the professors who taught at Nantong, Chen Shizeng and Wang Guowei were the most notable ones.

Chen Shizeng, a naturalist, taught natural science at the normal school and conducted research projects for the Nantong Museum. Chen Shizeng was Fan Dangshi's son-in-law and Chen himself was from a highly recognized official elite family in Hunan. His grandfather Baozhen, once the Hunan governor and a famous reformer, was the one who recommended four of the "six gentlemen"--Tan Sitong, Yang Rui, Lin Xu and Liu Guangdi--to

the Guangxu Emperor. They were all sentenced to death by Empress Dowager Cixi during the Hundred Days of Reform. Chen's father Sanli, a jìnshì degree holder and Minister of Ritual, was also a well-known reformer and poet, while his younger brother Yinke was one of the most respected historians in China, a scholar who excelled at Sanskrit, Turkish, Huihe and several other ancient languages.

It was said that Chen Shizeng gained his reputation as a poet, artist, and calligrapher at age the of ten. In 1909 Zhang Jian invited Chen to teach at the Nantong Normal School and he accepted the job. He taught mineralogy, zoology, and natural science there. According to the recollection of Guan Jingcheng, one of Chen's students at the Nantong Normal School, the students felt intimidated by Chen's daming (big name), though in fact he was an easy-going person. Before Chen left Nantong, Guan and other students asked Chen to write antithetical couplets for them. Chen Shizeng said: "My painting was excellent. Why didn't you ask me to paint for you?" Guan Jingcheng did not know what to respond because he never thought Chen Shizeng would paint for the students. Apparently, Chen Shizeng had no difficulties relating to the students (Guan 1982, 84).

The Nantong Museum then had collected 3,000 samples of animals, plants, and minerals which needed to be examined and catalogued with Latin names for exhibition. Chen Shizeng and a Japanese teacher undertook the work and finished it in 1914.

The first museum catalogue in China was printed and distributed to other libraries as a result of local cultural program. He left Nantong in 1914 for a post in the Ministry of Education in Beijing where he could visit Lu Xun more often.

Chen Shizeng had shared a dormitory with Lu Xun when studying in Japan in 1902 and the two had become friends. Chen was also responsible for introducing Qi Baishi, who later became an accomplished contemporary artist, and his work to the artists' circle of Beijing when no one there had really noticed Qi yet. When Chen Shizeng died in 1923 the Beijing Palace Museum immediately edited and published ten volumes of Shizeng Yimo (Scrolls of Painting and Calligraphy of Chen Shizeng), which only included a small portion of his art work (Sun 1988, 21-23).

We can only imagine the implication for Nantong to be associated with the name of Chen Shizeng. His family background, his learning and reputation, and his social circle were all powerful decorations to Nantong and its elites. After his years in Nantong, his resume would include his Nantong experiences and he therefore carried the words of the county and his friends there with him wherever he went.

Wang Guowei was another "big fish" in the "small pond" of the Nantong Normal School. As Luo Zhenyu's personal secretary, Wang was sent to study in Japan and later established ties

with Zhang Jian.¹ He taught Chinese and ethics in Nantong in 1903. Ethics was a new subject at Chinese schools and there were no established textbooks on it. Wang Guowei therefore had to create the textbooks himself. Apparently, the students at that time did not pay enough attention to Wang Guowei. At age twenty-six, he was younger than most of the students and was not as famous as Chen Shizeng yet. In addition, he only taught at the school for six months. But later he became one of the nationally-acclaimed Chinese textual researchers and professors of Beijing University. It was after that time that the Nantong Normal School considered Wang Guowei a great asset. In 1912, eight years after Wang's departure from Nantong, the Journal of Nantong Normal School Alumni Association published one of Wang Guowei's articles written during his stay in Nantong. His name was referred to as part of the school's glorious past (Guan 1982, 83; Zhang 1992, 48).

Celebrity Visitors

Nantong in the late 1910s and 1920s attracted many scholars and educators to visit because of its advanced school system. Nantong schools also promoted and encouraged celebrity appearances and lectures. In fact, it was made part of the regular educational activities at the Nantong Normal School that celebrities were invited to lecture from time to time.

¹ For more information on Luo Zhenyu, see Bastid 1988, 167-68; Bailey 1990, 66, 69-70.

The purpose for this was to inculcate the students with moral quality and personal integrity by using successful celebrities as role models (Chen 1938, 49).

Personal integrity as part of the educational goals had its root in Chinese tradition and also in the concrete circumstances of early twentieth-century China. The Chinese since Confucius had believed that education could mould a person's character and breed proper behavior. In early twentieth century China, as we have discussed, education was also expected to train a patriotic, hard-working and united citizenry to be the source of national strength (Bailey 1990, 2). As part of the means to serve this end, celebrities were brought to the Nantong campus. It was hoped that their successful stories would inspire the students to learn and to become disciplined, hardworking, and productive citizens, because when the students saw with their very eyes those famous scholars, they would admire them and further model themselves after them (Chen 1938, 49).

Most of the guests of the Nantong schools were educators. Huang Yanpei came to Nantong five times from 1917 to 1923. In 1917 Huang, then the vice director of the Jiangsu Educational Committee, came to Nantong to promote his idea of vocational education. In 1918 he examined land reclamation in the Nantong region and wrote an article to introduce the results. In 1920 and 1923 he came to Nantong three times to give presentations. One of his lecture topics was "The Ideal Woman," which he

addressed to the students of the Nantong Women's Normal School. Huang Yanpei's lectures sometimes drew an audience of six hundred. As a recognized Chinese educator, he was also one of the five persons who accompanied John Dewey to visit Nantong in 1920. Huang's interest in Nantong came from his ties with Zhang Jian. He worked with Zhang on the Jiangsu Consultative Committee and some educational committees. Their ideas of education apparently influenced each other. For instance, Huang's idea of vocational education promoted the development of vocational research activities in Pingchao (Lu 1991, 12).

Other celebrities and scholars such as Zhang Taiyan, Tao Xingzhi and Liang Qichao also lectured in Nantong (Guan 1981, 114). In most cases Zhang Jian accompanied and introduced them to the audience. They often started their speeches by praising Nantong's achievements (Chang 1987, 38; Lu 1990, 13). Tao Xingzhi once enrolled in a doctoral program at Columbia's Teachers College and returned home in 1917. At Columbia University he became one of John Dewey's followers and shared Dewey's idea that educational reform should be part of political and social change, though later Tao found himself in conflict with some of Dewey's educational principles.

In the mid-1920s Tao developed a formulation called "the union of doing, learning and teaching" which was supposed to reform the traditional teacher-student relationships (Keenan 1977, 82-83, 87). Later he applied this principle to educate

the peasants and became the best-known advocate of rural education in China in the 1920s. Under extremely difficult circumstances, Tao created the Xiaozhuang Normal School in suburban in Nanjing as an experiment in rural education. In order to realize his ideal to "train one million rural teachers, to create one million rural schools, and to reform one million rural areas," Tao resigned from his position as a professor and worked with the students bare-foot to build the Xiaozhuang campus (Si 1989, 99-101).

Tao's idealism and his promotion of rural education had some impact on Nantong's education and students. According to the reminiscences of a Nantong student, the Nantong Rural Normal School created in 1928 was a direct result of Tao Xingzhi's advocacy of rural education. Besides other courses, every student at the school had to read Tao's book On the Reform of Rural Education in China, which was considered a guiding light of the movement (Zhang 1989, 148-149). Huang Zhicheng, a student in Nantong, preferred to attend the Xiaozhuang Normal School rather than the prestigious Nantong Normal School, because he was convinced by Tao's idea, even though he had to carry wood from home to help build the Xiaozhuang school. Huang also brought three of his younger brothers to enroll in the Xiaozhuang normal school (Si 1989, 99-101).

Foreign Visitors

Foreigners' appearances in Nantong in the early 1920s were nothing abnormal. Besides the foreign experts, such as teachers and engineers, who worked in Nantong, other foreign scholars and potential investors also frequented the area. For instance, Tokuzoo Komai was one of the potential Japanese investors. He visited Nantong several times with regard to a loan request made by Zhang Jian (Komai 1924). In 1924, the Japanese Youth Association sent a delegation to Nantong to visit. They stayed in Nantong for several days and investigated Nantong's local programs, such as schools and libraries. Zhang made a speech to welcome them, in which he compared local self-government in China and Japan, pointing out that the Japanese government supported local programs and the Chinese government did not, and that all the development in Nantong was therefore the result of "pure self-government" (Zhang Jian 1990 [1924], 27).

In 1920 John Dewey visited Nantong as part of his China lecture tour. Dewey went to China for a short visit in 1919, and this trip was extended to a two-year stay after he was offered a visiting professorship at National Peking University. Like Tao Xingzhi, many of Dewey's former Chinese students at Columbia University had now become important young professors and professional educators in China. These "returned students" not only worked out an invitation for Dewey to teach at Peking University, but also arranged for him a national

lecture tour to Shanghai, Nanjing, Taiyuan, Changsha, Nantong, and other cities. Because of the promotion of these returned students and the hunger for Western ideas among young Chinese, Dewey became an instant fad and his lectures were enthusiastically received everywhere. Some students even followed him from city to city to attend his lectures. To these students, Dewey represented Western ideas and modernity, and he was regarded as a modern-day sage, or saint. His lectures and visits in every city were highly-publicized events (Keenan 1977, 3, 11, 34-35).

Dewey was a visiting professor at Nanjing Teachers' College in the spring and summer of 1920, during which time he took a six-week tour in Jiangsu province (Keenan 1977, 231). It was during this tour that Dewey visited Nantong. Considering Zhang Jian's sensitivity to student agitation and his rejection of the Western concepts of freedom and equality, it seems that the reason for Dewey's visit was more for Dewey to see Nantong as a showcase of China's development than for Nantong students to listen to Dewey. Of course the facts that Dewey's popularity was high and that there were returned students from Columbia University in Nantong could also have been reasons for Dewey's visit. Apparently local newspapers had printed materials on Dewey's background and ideas prior to his arrival. He made a speech to the students at the provincial Seventh Middle School and the speech was translated into

Chinese by Li Boming, the president of the Nantong Agricultural School.

Zhang Jian introduced Dewey. Zhang emphasized that Nantong was an isolated place, so it was very important for the teachers and students to have the opportunity to meet Dewey, who "as a great philosopher and educator understands global trends as well as politics and education in China." Due to the fact that the May Fourth Movement had taken place only a little more than one year earlier, Zhang emphasized that the students' task was to stay at school and seek knowledge; otherwise they would be useless for the society in the future, and they would also be seen as evidence of the school's failure. Then Zhang said that Dr. Dewey must have some ideas to guide the students in this regard (Zhang Jian 1965, 1701-1702). The underlying message of this introductory speech was to warn Dewey not to say anything radical to provoke student movements in Nantong.

Whether Dewey got the message was questionable. But as one of the students in the audience later recalled, Dewey did not talk too much about freedom or equality directly. He instead emphasized the relationship between knowledge and freedom. He pointed out that democratic government needed the support of educated people and that schools were the source of such people. Dewey also talked about the school system in America. The students did not necessarily understand his

lecture, but they were very excited about meeting such a famous American scholar (Xiang 1987a, 22).

Impact of Celebrity Visits

The presence of these scholars and their lectures had indeed served as an inspiration for Nantong students and contributed to moulding their character. Some of the students themselves later became highly celebrated for their achievements in education, science, and other fields. Forty years later they still remembered how the experience of meeting these celebrities affected their thought and lives (Xiang 1987b, 22; Chang 1987, 38; Lu 1990, 13; Lu 1991, 12).

At the same time, these celebrities were political and cultural middlemen, who, consciously or unconsciously, exercised their influence to shape Nantong's image and highlight its results by bringing new ideas to Nantong and introducing Nantong to the outside world. Their lectures in Nantong were often printed for circulation. Liang Qichao's speech in Nantong was published, in which he called Nantong the "birthplace of the local self-government movement in China." Liang at that time had just returned from his tour in Europe. He said that he was eager to visit Nantong and that he headed for Nantong as soon as he arrived in Shanghai from Europe, because he saw in Europe that the key to European success was self-government. Liang Qichao further pointed out that it was precious for China to have someone like Zhang Jian

who believed in village-ism, and to have a locality where self-government had been accomplished. To conclude his speech, he said that he saw in Nantong endless hopes for China's future (Liang 1920, 1-5).

Obviously, Liang Qichao had a shared commitment with Zhang Jian to fashion a new China, in this case, a new community; and his speech did just that. The facts that he was a well-known reformer and used examples from the West with which he had direct contact made Liang's opinion on Nantong all the more convincing, and the publicity Nantong gained through Liang Qichao and other celebrities in displaying local achievements was therefore extremely powerful.

Conferences

Besides lectures, conferences also brought celebrities to Nantong and created big gatherings of celebrities for the city. In Chapter Five, we have already mentioned a workshop on Nantong's water projects in 1914 which invited more than ten engineers from five countries to gather in Nantong. Song Shangxi, a Nantong native who studied in the United States and later became one of Zhang Jian's biographers, pointed out that it was very rare for a small county to be able to hold an international symposium on its waterworks (Song 1963; Xu 1991, 22, 24).

We have also discussed in Chapter Six the inaugural meeting of the Sushe held in Nantong in 1920. It was a

celebrated event for Nantong to host the meeting and to gather almost all Jiangsu elites together. The fact that the provincial self-government society was founded in Nantong further confirmed the Nantong model and attested to its leading role in the movement. The event was also much publicized outside of Nantong and contributed to the reputation of the elite society in Nantong (Zhang Jian 1965, 1939-1940).

One of the most publicized conferences held in Nantong was the seventh annual convention of the Chinese Science Society in 1922. The society was established in 1914 by a group of Chinese students in the United States, and relocated to Nanjing in 1918. The Ministry of Finance at first only allowed the society temporarily to use a building in Nanjing, and the director of the society felt unsettled and wrote to Zhang Jian for help. Zhang wrote to the Republican President Xu Shichang to request a permanent office building for the institute. He listed three reasons for the request and the problem was solved (Yang 1987, 215-216).

Zhang Jian also supported its other activities. When the society encountered financial difficulty in 1918, Zhang donated 10,000 yuan, while Xu Shichang only donated 2,000 yuan, and the Ministry of Education provided 1,000 yuan. The Science Society expressed its appreciation by electing Zhang to be its only honorary member in China; its other honorary member was the great American inventor Thomas Edison. Zhang's support of the Science Society came from his understanding of

the importance of science to China's economic development. He once pointed out that Chinese scientists and capitalists should cooperate to contribute to China's economic development, that the latter should trust the former, and that the former should help the latter make more money by applying their scientific learning to practical matters (Zhang Jian 1965, 1700).

In 1922 the Science Society originally planned on holding its seventh annual convention in Guangzhou. Considering the unstable situation in Guangzhou, Zhang invited the Science Society to have the convention in Nantong and the invitation was accepted. It was a historical moment for Nantong to be the gathering point of more than two hundred nationally-recognized scientists. Zhang gave considerable thought to preparations for the event. A special committee headed by Zhang Xiaoruo was formed and worked for two months to get things ready.

On 19 August 1922, a warship brought all of the delegates of the Science Society from Nanjing to Nantong. The convention was held in the building of the chamber of commerce. It was a time of public display for Nantong elites. At the welcome ceremony Zhang Jian made an opening speech, in which he acknowledged that this convention had "added lustre to Nantong" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1699). Zhang Cha, Zhang Xiaoruo, and a Nantongbao representative all made welcome speeches. During the five days of the conference, the scientists visited Nantong's factories, schools, land reclamation companies, and

the Langshan scenic spot. One of the meetings was held in the Nantong Museum, the first museum created and managed by Chinese (Huang 1987, 13). In addition, they were treated to plays, dances and music in the Nantong club and Gengsu Theater performed by the students of the Nantong acting school, and also to movies about and made in Nantong. The delegates were very impressed by what they had seen in Nantong and they highly praised Zhang Jian's accomplishment.

A photo of Zhang Jian and forty-two famous scientists together was enlarged and printed in many newspapers and journals. Zhang was elected to be on the board of directors of the Science Society together with Cai Yuanpei, Wang Jingwei, Liang Qichao and five other celebrities. Later, the Chinese Agricultural Society held its twelfth annual convention in Nantong in 1929 and the Chinese Textile Society also chose Nantong to have its third annual conference in 1933. But none of them was as publicized as the 1922 conference of the Chinese Science Society (Cai 1989, 36-37; Lu 1990, 13).

Theater and Performance

New Attitude toward Actors

Among the celebrities who frequented Nantong in the 1920s, there were some famous actors. Acting was not considered a noble profession in traditional China. Chinese elites often took actors lightly. They had no problem enjoying their performance but did not want to be closely associated with

them. In the novel Dream of the Red Chamber, the main male character Jia Baoyu had to hide his friendship with some actors from his father and grandmother, since this kind of relationship did not quite fit the Jia family stature and therefore was forbidden. In early twentieth century China feelings of this sort had changed somewhat, but still very few people with elite status would do what Zhang Jian did--he not only welcomed actors into his social circle, but also publicized his friendship with them. Ironically, whether by accident or intent Zhang's biographers, including his son Zhang Xiaoruo in the 1930s and several contemporary authors on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and in the Western world, have largely overlooked this aspect of Zhang's life, especially its political implications.

Reform the People

The very reason which brought the actors to Nantong was to reform the people and train a new citizenry. It was especially important for Nantong to reform its people so that they could fit into the image of the citizens of a "model county." China's educated elites believed that to reform the people it was necessary to reform social customs and popular culture, especially to get rid of its "corrupt," "superstitious," and "insanitary" aspects. Formal schools alone obviously could not successfully accomplish this mission. Social education (shehui jiaoyu) was therefore called upon for

the purpose. Reform of music, dance, drama, and literature were all part of the plans to change social customs and popular culture. As a consequence, early twentieth century China witnessed a tide of criticizing traditional drama and literature and promoting new ones (Bailey 1990, 3, 69, 73).

Zhang Jian was convinced that nothing could be more effective than drama to reform social customs and to improve people's character. He believed that theater was an indicator of social customs and popular culture. Once he paid a visit to the Gengsu Theater just to investigate whether or not social customs in Nantong had made any progress by watching how the audience behaved. Did they take seats according to the numbers on their tickets? Were they civilized and disciplined? These were the aspects Zhang wanted to observe. After the visit, he wrote an essay addressed to the public in Nantong city with his impression and suggestions for change (Zhang Jian 1965, 1931-1932). For Zhang, reforming the people should start with theater (Zhang 1965, 229; Yang 1987a, 49-50).

The Acting School and Gengsu Theater

To put his plans into practice, Zhang Jian in 1919 created the Nantong Acting School and a new theater--the Gengsu Theater. "Gengsu" means change of customs. The theater was designed by Sun Zhixia based on the model of the China Theater in Shanghai, with 1,200 seats and a large backstage. It was said that it was one of China's first-class theaters

then. It cost more than 60,000 yuan (silver) to build it (Xu 1983, 83; Xiang 1987b, 36; Tang 1988, 25).

Zhang invited his actor friend Ouyang Yuguan to teach and manage the acting school. While studying in Japan, Ouyang had organized the "Chunliushe" (Spring Willow Society)--an acting group. Some of their performances were well received by the Japanese. Ouyang gradually established himself as a master actor representing the southern school of Chinese opera. He performed in Nantong in early 1919 and impressed the Nantong audience, for he put dances in the Chinese opera which the Nantong people had never seen before.

From late 1919 to 1922 Ouyang, as the manager of the acting school, made new regulations to create a civilized environment for performance. For instance, spitting and eating sunflower seeds were not allowed in the theater and everyone had to take one's seat according to the number on the ticket. He also promoted modern as well as traditional operas. A number of Ouyang's students from the acting school later became famous actors (Yang 1987b, 44).

Although Ouyang helped train Nantong students and made more contribution to the cultural life of Nantong, he was somehow overshadowed by his competitor and later his friend Mei Lanfang (Zhang 1965, 229; Xu 1983, 86-87).

Master Performance

Mei Lanfang, the master Chinese actor of all time, was considered a representative of the northern school of Chinese opera. But his reputation then and now has outweighed Ouyang's. Mei Lanfang was also Zhang Jian's actor friend. As a matter of fact, their relationship was somehow like a nominal father and son. Invited by Zhang, Mei performed in Nantong three times, in 1919, 1920 and 1922 respectively. He stayed three to five days each time. Mei's every visit was treated as a festival event because he caused such a sensation in the Nantong region. People came from all over the Jiangbei region to watch his acting.

First-class tickets cost three yuan (silver) and the ticket-holders would get gifts--Mei's stage photos with Zhang Jian's inscriptions on them. The Gengsu Theater was decorated with big lanterns and colored paper to honor the events. Zhang sent express ships to meet Mei and his thirty to sixty staff in Shanghai, Hankou or wherever Mei was acting. In November 1919 Mei visited Nantong for the first time. Zhang sent the theater manager to welcome him at the port and they took photos together, while Zhang led other Nantong elites and a local band waiting for them at a special chamber (hou ting, which literally means "waiting chamber or tower") near the port for a formal welcome ceremony. Pictures of Mei and Zhang and other elites were taken in front of the chamber. Then all the cars drove through the crowd of curious Nantong townspeo-

ple to Zhang's villa for a banquet. The same procedure was practiced in reverse order when Mei left Nantong (Xu 1983, 85; Tang 1990, 41; Li 1991, 32). Zhang also composed poems or couplets to honor all of these activities and occasions (Zhang Jian 1965, 2744, 2755).

Prior to Mei's arrival, Zhang Jian named a room in the Gengsu Theater the "Mei-Ou ge" (Mei-Ou Chamber) to show his respect to Mei Lanfang and Ouyang Yuqian. The room was decorated with Zhang's antithetical couplets and calligraphy, photos of both Mei and Ouyang, photos of them at different Nantong localities with Zhang Jian and other local elites, and poems composed for their visits and performances. To ease the inevitable tension between the two master actors, Zhang also arranged for them to perform in the same play and on the same stage. It was said that the two became friends in Nantong and this much-told tale was quickly spread all over China (Xiang 1987a, 37-38; Li 1991, 33).

The other publicity aspect of Mei's visit was that Zhang Jian invited locally renowned men of letters and elites to compose poems with Mei Lanfang and Ouyang Yuqian. These poems were published every day in the Park Daily. In one of Mei's poems, he said that he was very proud of Zhang's friendship and that his Nantong trip was more valuable than gold, because his returning luggage was full of Zhang's poems (Li 1991, 33). In the Preface of the Record of the Mei-Ou Chamber Poems, Zhang discussed how these poems and Mei's and Ouyang's acting

could help nurture good behavior and exert an edifying influence on people's minds (Zhang Jian 1965, 2258).

In 1922 Mei came to Nantong for the third time to act and celebrate Zhang's seventieth birthday. An abundance of rich and famous people from the Nantong region and other parts of China gathered in Nantong to honor the event. Banquets were set in Zhang Jian's private villas and Nantong's parks day after day. Mei performed a special play about birthday celebrations. There were, of course, more poems (Li 1991, 33-34). Zhang had in fact composed poems for Mei Lanfang and his family members every year since 1911 (Yang 1987, 61). In the Nine Records of Zhang Jian there were couplets Zhang wrote to honor Mei Lanfang's grandmother's eightieth birthday and Mei's mother's sixtieth birthday (Zhang Jian 1965, 3296, 3297). Upon Mei's request, Zhang also made poems for Mei's friends which were also collected in the Nine Records of Zhang Jian (Zhang Jian 1965, 2744).

Zhang built a villa in Nantong for Mei Lanfang, named "Meicha," which was decorated with thousands of plum trees and sitka deer (plum blossoms are called meihua and sitka deer meihualu in Chinese. They all share the character for Mei Lanfang's family name "Mei") (Ji 1989, 29-30). This villa added more publicity to Mei's visit.

Nantong and Mei Lanfang and Ouyang Yuqian apparently enhanced each other. Mei Lanfang later recalled the excitement and encouragement he felt when he saw the "Mei-Ou Chamber" during his first visit to Nantong. He also got to know many other artists and actors in Zhang Jian's circles, and thereby expanded his social connections (Yang 1987a, 59, 62). Later when a warlord tried to make trouble for Mei during his performance in Hankou, Zhang immediately sent a telegram to the warlord and claimed that Mei was his nominal son. This telegram ensured Mei's safe departure from Hankou. Ouyang Yuqian also benefitted from Zhang's high regard. He once said that because of his connection to Zhang, no elites took him lightly, and that he was able to make many friends in Nantong (Yang 1987a, 61).

As for Nantong, all these entertaining activities did somehow have an impact on people's behavior, at least when they were in the theater, because they had to obey the rules there. Nantong was known for its polite audience and orderly theater at that time (Yang 1987a, 62). Modern drama became popular and Nantong has remained an active place for drama performance since the 1920s. Many amateur acting groups appeared in Nantong city and rural areas in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Ji 1988, 57-58; Tao 1989, 10-11). The Xiaoxiao Jushe (Small Acting Society) formed by a group of students bred one of the most celebrated master actors in contemporary China--Zhao Dan, who was eight years old in 1923. In 1930 a

group of actors led by Tian Han, a Communist playwright, came from Shanghai to perform in Nantong, which further stimulated local people's interest in drama (Tao 1989, 10). All of these developments could in one way or another be attributed to the heyday of Nantong drama in the early 1920s.

More important, however, was the publicity Nantong received. It is true in today's society as well as in early twentieth century China that celebrities' lives and activities are closely followed by the media, though the intensity has dramatically increased in recent years. Mei Lanfang's performances in Nantong were reported daily in newspapers all over China. Mei Lanfang was of course a sensation; but the fact that Mei performed three times in a small city like Nantong was an even greater sensation, which made Nantong a very special place in the public eyes. It created much admiration and even jealousy toward Nantong, especially from bigger cities which did not always have the honor Nantong did. Shanghai Shenbao once used the caption "Lucky Place and Lucky People with Special Honor" to report on Nantong and Mei Lanfang (Li 1991, 34).

For other actors, Nantong suddenly became a super-hot place they must visit. Words about the treatment Mei and Ouyang received, Zhang Jian's reputation, the first-class theater, and the disciplined and enthusiastic audience spread widely. It seemed that by acting in Nantong and having their names connect with Nantong the actors would somehow get

gilded--they would share the glory and honor and therefore enhance their social status. Some came with a small entourage and performed only one or two plays (Xiang 1987b, 39). The real purpose was obviously not so much to act but to be in Nantong, to be seen in Nantong, and to be talked about as having been in Nantong. Most of the popular actors at that time visited: from 1919 to 1922 more than seventy famous actors performed in the county. Second-class actors with no fame at all also tried to make names for themselves in Nantong.

Pay was evidently not a main concern; what was really important for the actors was to get Zhang Jian's poems, couplets, and calligraphy which they could show off later. They often referred to Mei as a precedent when asking for Zhang's poems, and Zhang usually satisfied them. Zhang was fully aware of the impact of his poems on those actors' careers. In one of the poems he composed for an actor, he wrote: "Your name is waiting for my poem to spread it and you will be well known in the nation" (Yang 1987a, 60-63).

What Zhang did not mention was that when his poems did these actors credit, these actors also helped make Zhang and Nantong more well known. Their profession required them to travel from one place to another, to cities as well as towns and even villages. When they shared their stories with people, they were in fact participating in the image-making business for Nantong.

The "Model County" Consciousness

The Label of "Model County"

I have in several places mentioned that Nantong was a model county but have not explained where the term came from. As this chapter shows, what was happening in Nantong, especially after 1912, was no longer only a local affair, but also attracted attention from outsiders. In fact, from the late 1910s on Nantong received Chinese and foreign visitors on a daily basis. Those we have mentioned in this chapter were only a few of them. With the increasing number of people who came to visit, word about the advancement of Nantong spread widely. Local newspapers reported their visits and published their comments, which often praised Nantong. These visitors also wrote and talked about the county after they left (Zhang Jian 1965, 1916). Information on Nantong thus circulated among China's educated people. Nantong had become quite a phenomenon, and a novelty in a sense. While outsiders were attracted to Nantong, they also became vehicles through which local elites advertised Nantong's results. It was under these circumstances that the concept of Nantong as a "model county" (mofanxian) was formulated.

It is not at all clear how and when Nantong gained the label of "model county," though it was evident that Zhang Jian had made every effort to have Nantong singled out as a model of local self-government since 1907, during the constitutional

movement. For instance, when the Interior Ministry considered a nationwide land survey, Zhang immediately sent the regulations and results of the Nantong Survey Office to Beijing as a "model" for the nationwide survey and the Nantong survey model was indeed adopted by the Interior Ministry (NXZZH 1915, zizhi. 30). In one of his reports regarding a budget for the Survey Office, Zhang emphasized that the Nantong Local Self-government Association had initiated land surveying in the nation and the project must be carried through so that other regions could follow the Nantong example (NXZZH 1915, zizhi. 28). The printing in 1915 of The Achievements of Nantong Local Self-government in the Last Nineteen Years was yet another example which showed Zhang's intention to establish Nantong as a model in the local self-government movement. But these activities did not directly put the label "model county" on Nantong.

Sources indicate that the earliest appearance of the term "model county" in Nantong's newspapers was in 1919 (Mu Xuan, letter to the author, 24 November 1993). The English newspaper Milleshih pinglun bao (Millard's Review) published in Shanghai called Nantong a "model district" and a "paradise on earth in China" in the early 1920s (Chen 1938, 1-2). Zhang Jian in a 1920 letter addressed to the Judicial Ministry mentioned that "investigators from the central state and province and Chinese and foreign visitors have all considered Nantong a model county" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1884).

In 1917 Nantong started to reorganize the Local Self-government Association after Yuan Shikai had banned it in 1914, and the association was formally reestablished in 1921. Many of Nantong's institutions, including the county administration, schools, newspapers, police department, and the chamber of commerce, delivered speeches to celebrate the founding ceremony of the association, at which they had frequently used the term "model county" (NXZZH 1921, wen 18, 19). Qian Xuesen, a renowned Chinese physicist, recalled that he read about the model county of Nantong in his elementary school textbooks in the 1920s (Xu, Mu & Yao 1989, 4). Yet school textbooks in the 1930s no longer contained this material on Nantong (Mu Xuan, letter to the author, 24 November 1993).

According to the information above, it appears to have been around the late 1910s and early 1920s that the term "model county" began to be applied to Nantong. It was not an honor formally awarded by the government, but rather a product of informal channels, including visitors' oral and written comments, journalists' reports, editorial reviews, and school texts. Considering the other publicity Nantong received through celebrity visitors, actors, and Nantong's new spatial appearance, it is not surprising that Nantong was considered a model county. On the other hand, local elites picked up the term and made it a formal hallmark for Nantong. The label stood as a testimony to the success of local self-government

and was an ultimate means for persuasion and advertisement-- Nantong had already implemented a local self-government system, and its achievements had been publicly recognized.

The title of "model county" thus became the rhetorical representation of publicity for Nantong. It was used, for instance, to welcome visitors and encourage them to come to Nantong, or to ask for government money to fund local projects, such as prison reform. Sometimes the term "model county" did not directly appear in a speech or writing, but the same meaning never failed to come across (Zhang Jian 1965, 1883-1884, 1934).

Model County Consciousness

Local elites were extremely self-conscious about preserving the model county image. They paid a great deal of attention to effectively presenting the image of Nantong to the visitors and hoping the latter would receive it well. Efforts were made to please the visitors and guests and to accommodate social activities. For instance, the building of the Nantong Club, as we have mentioned, was mainly for hosting celebrity guests, and the development of an orchard was to satisfy visitors' needs for fresh fruit.

Prison reform had been advocated since the Xinzheng reform (Reynolds 1993, 172-173). For Nantong, it had dual purposes: to reform prisons per se and to make Nantong look good. In Zhang Jian's proposal on local prison reform sent to

the Judicial Ministry, he especially mentioned that the need to reform the local prison was also because "visitors came to Nantong in an endless stream." (Wang 1987, 28) A backward prison system would obviously damage the image of the "model county" in the eyes of the public.

In 1919, a Traffic Police Training Center was set up in Nantong mainly for the convenience of the visitors. The future policemen were required to learn not only traffic regulations, but also English. It was indeed very rare for county police at that time to have to speak foreign languages, since even today policemen in major Chinese cities do not necessarily speak any language other than Chinese. But the concern in the Nantong case was that foreigners were among the visitors, and English was the most popular language among the foreigners. In his speech at the opening ceremony of the training center, Zhang Jian said: "if the foreign visitors have questions and our policemen do not understand them, it will shame the Nantong local self-government movement." He also had an interesting theory about why Japanese language was not a requirement for the students, though Japanese also came to Nantong, "You [the police] can talk to the Japanese in English as well, because they shall know English; if they do not, that is their shame, not ours" (Zhang Jian 1965, 1874).

Zhang also instructed his staff to keep visitors in mind and to make it their job to impress the visitors in every respect. Once he visited a land reclamation area and saw many

trees. He asked the manager of the area how old these trees were and how many kinds of trees there were, and the manager did not have the answers. Zhang told the manager that he needed to know these little things, because when visitors asked these questions, he had to give them answers. On another occasion, Zhang found out that one of the office managers in the land reclamation company had no idea of the size of his office building. Zhang said: "Visitors will ask questions like these and you need to be prepared" (Qiu & Yao 1991, 60).

When negative information about Nantong came out, Zhang often acted quickly to control the damage. In 1921 some visitors criticized several aspects of Nantong. Zhang immediately wrote an open letter addressed to the "Nantong visitors," in which he expressed his apology and appreciation for their critical comments, and promised to do better (Zhang Jian 1965, 1933-1934). In 1925 a rumor about a Nantong student rape case spread even to Nanjing, and it involved the women's normal school and the commercial school. Zhang considered it a plot to destroy Nantong's image and he was incensed. At the age of seventy-two, he worked like a detective investigating every detail of the story, and later wrote a six-page report to clarify the rumor (Zhang Jian 1965, 1776-1781).

Summary

All these symbolic practices and forms of publicity we have described in this chapter, including the term "model

county," the reconfiguration of space and time concepts, the celebrity gatherings, public lectures, conferences, ceremonies, celebrations, entertaining activities, and literary exchanges, were "part and parcel," to use Habermas's phrase, of the publicity of representation of local self-government's achievements in Nantong.

These symbols and publicity had the virtue of being capable of publicly representing a positive image of Nantong, because they were socially-recognized, therefore legitimate, signs of progress and influence. While the label "model county" gave Nantong a rhetorical frame and the spatial rearrangement provided it with a new look, the celebrities decorated Nantong and further defined Nantong's success, because they were in a position to pass judgement and to have others listen to and believe in them. Liang Qichao's praise of Nantong self-government, for instance, was more persuasive than an ordinary visitor's comments. Events like the Sushe meeting and the Science Society convention helped Nantong's local events to assume national publicity and importance.

At the same time, the fact that the rich and famous came to Nantong and that these conferences were held in Nantong alone were already powerful ornaments for the county and its elites. These practices made people both outside and inside of Nantong see and believe in the county's unique progress, thereby promoting and reinforcing the concept of local self-government. They constituted an "aura" which endowed the local

authority with influence and power, creating a world which was decorated with not only material richness, but also a sense of success, distinctiveness, glamour, excitement, and sophistication.

The reason that Nantong in the post-1912 period witnessed an intensity of activities which targeted visitors, especially celebrities, and aimed at positive publicity was that it was the visitors and publicity that kept the image of an advanced Nantong, and therefore the power of the elite, alive. The highlighting of local achievements was thus transmuted into a means of power maintenance. As long as the elites were in control of the locality, they could continue to enjoy the local autonomy they had gained and expanded in the past twenty-some years and run things in Nantong as they wished. In other words, to secure and maintain local autonomy, the elites had to hold on to and continue to build the image of a distinctively advanced Nantong under local self-government leadership and to prove that local self-governing worked, especially when the image was widely spread outside the locality.

Symbolized by the Gengsu Theater and the master performances of Mei Lanfang and Ouyang Yuqian, the elites thus turned Nantong into a theater whose main function was to perform, to put on shows for the public and to satisfy their needs. In this big theater of Nantong, the "effect" of the "performance" was the main concern. Only symbols which

represented progress and influence, such as the words "model county" and the celebrities, were allowed to be presented and publicized. Things such as corrupt prisons, rape incidents, and ignorant staff which were associated with perceptions of backwardness, ugliness, and incapability had either to be eliminated, concealed, or clarified.

Just as the ducal seal embodied the lord's authority and the open forums shaped the bourgeois public sphere that Habermas described, the image of a "model county" and all the symbols which surrounded it were the defining elements of local politics in Nantong. It was precisely through possession and manipulation of symbols and publicity that the Nantong elites practiced politics, persuading the public to recognize local self-government achievements and maintaining their autonomous status. Nantong at this stage was a place firmly controlled by the elites and used to advance their influence and local autonomy. These symbolic representations therefore further defined the line between the state and local society, and kept Nantong a vital space relatively separate from the state.

then. It cost more than 60,000 yuan (silver) to build it (Xu 1983, 83; Xiang 1987b, 36; Tang 1988, 25).

Zhang invited his actor friend Ouyang Yuqian to teach and manage the acting school. While studying in Japan, Ouyang had organized the "Chunliushe" (Spring Willow Society)--an acting group. Some of their performances were well received by the Japanese. Ouyang gradually established himself as a master actor representing the southern school of Chinese opera. He performed in Nantong in early 1919 and impressed the Nantong audience, for he put dances in the Chinese opera which the Nantong people had never seen before.

From late 1919 to 1922 Ouyang, as the manager of the acting school, made new regulations to create a civilized environment for performance. For instance, spitting and eating sunflower seeds were not allowed in the theater and everyone had to take one's seat according to the number on the ticket. He also promoted modern as well as traditional operas. A number of Ouyang's students from the acting school later became famous actors (Yang 1987b, 44).

Although Ouyang helped train Nantong students and made more contribution to the cultural life of Nantong, he was somehow overshadowed by his competitor and later his friend Mei Lanfang (Zhang 1965, 229; Xu 1983, 86-87).

Eight

EPILOGUE

The elite-dominant autonomous status of Nantong was challenged in the mid-1920s. Just as its rise was due to the interaction between economic, social, political, and cultural factors between the late 1890s and the early 1920s, its fall also resulted from these factors and their interaction in the mid-1920s. The history of Nantong from that point on was different from the period we have examined.

The Evolution of Dasheng

The Dasheng cotton mill had been very successful before 1921. According to Chu, Dasheng was the only one out of sixteen Chinese-owned cotton mills established between 1896 and 1913 which was still operating without changing its ownership by the time of World War I (Chu 1965, 33). Dasheng experienced a steady decline after 1921 due to various causes. The end of World War I allowed foreign economic forces to reenter the China markets, which partially contributed to the collapse of the Dasheng capital system. The Chinese economy and industry as a whole were generally declining, which affected the markets of Dasheng products as well. During the

years of Dasheng's prosperity, the profit Dasheng made was not mainly used to reinvest in the factories, but was declared as high dividends and used to support land reclamation companies (2,5000,000 taels) and local projects (630,000 taels). From 1923 on Dasheng went further into debt, and its stockholders turned on Zhang Jian for its failure.

Unable to manage the six million yuan debt Dasheng owed and to deal with the pressure from the stockholders, Zhang Jian was forced to request loans from the Japanese. After two years of negotiation, the loan request was denied for reasons unknown (Komai 1982 [1924]). Zhang Jian then turned Dasheng over to a consortium of banks in Shanghai in 1925. The new-style entrepreneur Li Shengbo from Shanghai represented the consortium to take over Dasheng and became its manager. Zhang Jian apparently supported Li's plans to reorganize Dasheng. Through reorganization Li was able to regain control over Dasheng's production and marketing to a degree, and kept it in operation into the 1930s in the shadow of increasing debt. The Second Dasheng Cotton Mill, however, was forced to close down in 1934 due to huge debt (Chu 1965, 35; Walker 1986, 340-341; Li 1983, 109-112; Dasheng xitong qiyeshi Writing Group 1990, 248). Therefore, after 1925 the Dasheng enterprises, which had financially sustained local development in Nantong for over two decades, were no longer controlled by Zhang Jian.

In 1937, the war between China and Japan broke out and Nantong's cotton industry temporarily benefited from it. While

the Japanese sealed the Yangzi River and cut off the transportation line between Jiangnan and Jiangbei, outside cotton products could not enter the Jiangbei markets, which now were controlled entirely by Dasheng products. To avoid being the target of Japanese air attack, Dasheng was registrated with a German company in early 1938 and hung Nazi flags and painted Nazi signs everywhere.¹

However, the Japanese took over Dasheng anyway after they occupied Nantong in March 1938. The period from 1938 to 1945 was a time in which the Dasheng enterprises were severely damaged. The Japanese forced Dasheng into "cooperation," which meant that the Japanese would give orders to Dasheng, including closing it down whenever they thought it was necessary. In 1939, the Japanese declared military control of Dasheng and the factories were forced to shut down for two months. When they reopened, only one tenth of the workers returned. The factories during that period were like military camps, with newly-built high walls, iron doors, electrified wire netting, and of course the presence of armed Japanese soldiers. They were basically dysfunctional due to the destruction of the Japanese occupation. For instance, no regular maintenance service was available and fewer and fewer machines were in operation. Moreover, in the early 1940s the

¹ During the Anti-Japanese War years, it was not uncommon for a Chinese company to be registrated with a foreign company in order to protect its property from being attacked or taken over by the Japanese (Dasheng xitong qiyeshi Writing Group 1990, 261).

Japanese disassembled many Dasheng textile machines and other iron and steel equipment to make weapons. Although the Dasheng Board of Directors and the consortium made combined efforts to establish a committee to protect Dasheng property, the factories were unable to operate when the Japanese finally "returned" Dasheng to its Chinese Board of Directors in July 1943 (Dasheng xitong qiyeshi Writing Group 1990, 260-266).

After the anti-Japanese war, the GMD's attempt to take over Dasheng met resistance from the Dasheng Board of Directors, of which Zhang Jingli, one of Zhang Cha's sons, was now in charge. In the following years, the history of Dasheng was marked by the constant struggle between the GMD official representatives and the Dasheng Board of Directors over the power to control the enterprises, while the CCP, on the other hand, was successfully developing its organizations among the more than ten thousand of Dasheng workers. On the eve of the CCP's liberation of Nantong, the GMD representatives in Dasheng tried to persuade Zhang Jingli and other Dasheng directors to relocate the factories in Taiwan and Hongkong, and Zhang Jingli visited Hongkong to investigate the possibility of moving. Some of Dasheng's machines and equipment had already been shipped to Taiwan. But in January 1949, six thousand Dasheng workers, organized by the CCP, went on strike and lived in the factories to prevent Dasheng property from being moved away. At the same time, Nantong dockers sealed the

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the local police. The principal of the middle school, under student pressure, promised to offer salary raises to the teachers and more freedom to the students. Other Nantong schools, including the normal school, participated in the strikes (Chu 1965, 98-99; Guan 1982, 84).

Zhang Jian, as always, was against any social unrest which could scare away his investors, or jeopardize his enterprises and the image of a peaceful and prosperous model county. He was especially hostile to Western political ideology, whether it was bourgeois freedom or Marxist Communism (Zhang 1965, 1679-1688). Zhang therefore suppressed the student movement by closing down the textile school, expelling the students, and punishing the principal (Zhang 1965, 1682-1683). At the same time, he made public speeches at Nantong schools, wrote to the provincial and central educational bureaus, and even sent an open letter to all Chinese students, hoping that government pressure and rational persuasion would calm the students down. He especially hoped that the students in Nantong could focus on their school work and Nantong only, paying no attention to what was happening outside of Nantong, so that social order could be preserved in the area (Zhang 1965, 1679-1688).

But times had changed. The developments in the normal school, more than anything else, illustrated the diminution of Zhang Jian's influence among the younger generation in Nantong. Zhang Jian considered the normal school his precious

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asset and his authority at the school had been undisputable, especially because the school was managed by people Zhang Jian appointed. Because of Zhang's pressure, the normal school acted conservatively during the May Fourth Movement and was the first school to resume classes (Guan 1982, 84). But the May Fourth era could hardly leave a place like the normal school untouched. The school's reputation in China and Nantong, and the extensive social connections built by its graduates and faculty over the years, made the school a focus of attention. Different political forces tried to penetrate this ivory tower.

The CCP became active in the school as early as 1924. In 1925 a student named Wang wrote to the CCP leader Yun Daiying requesting to join the Communist Youth League, and in 1926 the Youth League was formally established in the normal school (Nantong CCP Committee 1991, 8). If Nantong was the "hub of early Chinese Communist Party activity in North Jiangsu" (Barkan 1983, 461), the normal school was the very focus of the hub which not only produced many CCP activists for the region (Barkan 1983, 462), but also some famous party leaders, including Liu Ruilong, the secretary of the CCP Nantong county committee in 1929 and the founder of the Fourteenth Red Army (Zhuang 1989, 5-6).² Students named Wang, Xu and Cong were

² Barkan guessed that Communism spread from Nantong to Rugao in the early 1920s (Barkan 1983, 461). The sources I have reviewed disclose that the earliest Communist spark in the region was brought from Nanjing by a Rugao student named Wu Yalu. Wu joined the CCP in Nanjing in 1922 and returned to

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activists at the normal school. They organized the Nantong Student Union and led 4,000 people to protest the May Thirtieth Incident of 1925, and they also attended the convention of the National Student Union in Shanghai in the same year. The principal and teachers of the normal school, especially Yu Chen, sympathized with the students and tacitly supported the student activities on campus despite Zhang Jian's warning (Guan 1982, 163; Lu 1987, 32; Cao 1987, 84-85).

Xu, Cong and other activists in the May Thirtieth Movement were later expelled by Zhang Jian, but they remained at the school and established its first CCP branch in 1926. At the same time, student societies, such as Chengshe (Honest Society) and Chenguangshe (Dawn Society) and their magazines were developing. The students also went to rural areas to mobilize peasants and help organize peasant societies (Nantong CCP Committee 1991, 8-9; Guan 1982, 85; Guan n.d. 53-58). All of these developments led to the school being referred to as "Hongse tongshi" ("Red Nantong Normal") (Cao 1987, 85). The change at the normal school represented the rise of Nantong youth who were searching and shaping their own identities out

Rugao with several other students in August 1922. They organized a "Pingminshe" (Common People's Society) and published the journal Pingminsheng (Common People's Voice). Their activities first influenced students at the Rugao Normal School. At that time many Rugao students attended the Nantong normal school. It was through these Rugao students that Communism was introduced to Nantong Normal School. The fact that Rugao spread Communism to Nantong instead of the other way around did not change the fact that Nantong later became the center of CCP activities (Nantong CCP Committee 1991, 8).

of the shadow of the old elites. They broke the ideological boundaries the elites set for them and no longer subjected themselves to the force of local authority. The fact that all of these activities took place in the very normal school which Zhang Jian valued most and controlled most tightly symbolized the erosion of his influence in the locality.

The "Red Nantong Normal" was a main target of the GMD force in Nantong after 1927. Several of the GMD's Nantong branch members entered the normal school in 1927 to keep an eye on the students and also to offer courses on GMD doctrines. Once they arrested a student who happened to have a book with the letters "C.P." on the cover, and he was sent to a GMD special court in Zhenjiang. This incident angered the teachers and students at the normal school, and they fought for six months and forced the GMD to release the student. In revenge, the GMD Educational Association created difficulty for the graduates of the normal school in the job markets, which turned more students into CCP sympathizers (Li 1982, 157-159).

The CCP not only found followers among the students, but also penetrated the factories and rural areas in Nantong. In 1926 an independent CCP branch was formed with six members in Tangzha, the industrial town and the birthplace of the first Dasheng Cotton Mill; a Dasheng staff member named Qiu was the head. In spring 1927 organizations such as "peasant associations" (nongmin xiehui) appeared in many districts of Nantong,

and they successfully led some rent-resistance actions against the landlords. In fall 1927 the CCP established a county committee in Nantong (and also in Rugao and Haimen) which engineered worker strikes and peasant riots in 1927 and 1928. The armed actions led by the CCP increased with the creation of the Fourteenth Red Army in the Tong-Hai region in 1930. Being defeated by the GMD troops in October 1930, the Fourteenth Red Army left the area and the CCP force was at a low ebb in Nantong until 1937, when the war with Japan broke out (Nantong CCP Committee 1991, 9-10; Zhang, Ding & Fei 1987, 126-127).

The Anti-Japanese War period witnessed the revival of the CCP forces in Nantong. Prior to the war, there were no formal CCP organizational activities in the Nantong area and some of the local CCP and pro-CCP members had been out of touch with their supervisors for years. The establishment of the "Anti-Japanese United Front" between the CCP and GMD in the early stages of the war provided a legitimate opportunity for the CCP to come back. The Jiangsu CCP Provincial Committee began to send its members to work in the GMD armies right after July 1937. Some of the CCP members joined local anti-Japanese militia. In 1938 the CCP Jiangbei Special Committee was set up. It held meetings in Nantong and re-connected with the local party members. From this point on, the CCP organizational activities started in Nantong again, with attracting more people to join the party and developing the CCP's own military

The GMD and the Local Elites

During the 1920s, while the CCP was staging sideshows among the workers, students, and peasants, the GMD came to redefine the central stage of political life in Nantong. In 1927 when the Northern Expedition swept the warlord Sun Chuanfang's army away, the GMD took over Nantong and reorganized the county administration. New offices were created and some office names were changed. For instance, the Police Department (jingchaju) now was called the Public Security Department (Gonganju), and the Office to Encourage Education (Quanxuesuo) was changed to the Educational Bureau (Jiaoyuju). In 1928, city, town, and rural directorates were all abolished and replaced by administration bureaus (Xingzhengju). In 1929 Jiangsu province started training ward heads (guzhang) and Nantong's twenty-one districts became eighteen wards. The GMD in 1931 promoted the local self-government movement (difang-zizhi), during which time town and rural heads had to be elected. In 1934 this zizhi was replaced by the baojia system and the eighteen wards were further reduced to thirteen (Yan 1988, 196-197).

The last three years of the 1920s were full of uncertainty and chaos for both the GMD and the local elites, and the relationships between the two were subtle. They first had to get acquainted with each other, so to speak, in order to find out the boundary between them. The circumstances, however, did not permit smooth interaction. For one thing, the post of

county magistrate in Nantong was held by five different persons from 1927 to 1928, which indicated the degree of political instability (Yan 1988, 196-197).

Before the arrival of the Northern Expeditionary Army in June 1927, Nantong elites led by Zhang Cha had a relatively easy relationship with Sun Chuanfang's army as long as Zhang managed to provide supplies for it. Zhang Cha was in fact still able to control the locality. Despite the fact that Zhang Cha no longer controlled the Dasheng company, the chamber of commerce and other local institutions remained in his hands, he was rich and had a reputation, and his social ties were still functioning. Moreover, it was through Zhang Cha that the warlord army got local supplies, and that merchants and people in Nantong could also somehow avoid the army's direct harassment. When Sun's army fled the county and the Northern Expeditionary Army (Beifajun) marched toward Nantong in May 1927, Zhang Cha, scared by the Northern Expedition slogan "Dadao tuhao lieshen" (Down with Local Bullies and Evil Gentry), resigned from his post in the chamber of commerce and fled to Shanghai.³ Zhang Xiaoruo stayed in Nantong, for he did not think that he would be a Northern Expedition target. Other prominent local merchants

³ Local tyrants were the targets during the early phase of the Northern Expedition, but the leaders of the GMD (which included CCP members during the period of the first United Front) had different goals in social revolution. After the open split between the GMD and CCP and the anti-Communist purge of April 1927, the GMD's attack on local tyrants declined (Wilbur 1983, 65-68, 77-85, 99).

and elites either stayed put or went to Shanghai, waiting for new developments.

The first county magistrate appointed by the GMD army was a young man named Zhong, who had no experience, no money, and no knowledge of the county. Naturally enough, Zhang Xiaoruo came to help him and played the role of the preeminent elite in Nantong. Zhang Cha returned to Nantong in July since he did not see any danger of being arrested or sentenced, though his properties in his Haimen home were closed down in 1927 by the GMD county magistrate Shi Shuzhi (Wang 1987, 12). In mid-August rumors about Sun Chuanfang's reinvasion of Nantong spread everywhere, which excited the local elites.⁴ Nantong newspapers publicized Sun's advance daily to create the conditions for the reestablishment of local elite power. Even the GMD county magistrate Zhuang (Zhong had left along with the army for Jiangnan), a political opportunist, changed his tone and prepared to welcome Sun's arrival. Zhuang held a meeting in the chamber of commerce with local elites to raise funds as gifts for Sun Chuanfang, with a projected amount of

⁴ Because the conflict between the GMD's Nanjing and Wuhan factions intensified in mid-1927, Nanjing sent troops against Wuhan in August, which weakened its northern front. Seizing this opportunity, the northern military coalition of the warlords attempted to recover their old base. Sun Chuanfang drove toward the Yangzi delta in mid-August and successfully crossed the Yangzi river fifteen miles east of Nanjing. At one point both Nanjing and Shanghai faced the danger of being recaptured by Sun. Sun's invasion was finally defeated by the Nationalists in six days, and the situation in the Yangzi delta was stabilized at the end of August (Wilbur 1983, 156-157).

30,000 yuan. Eighty-five elites from all over Nantong attended the meeting, and they decided to borrow the money from public funds for education and other local projects.

Looking forward to the restoration of his domination in Nantong, Zhang Cha became active again. He regained control of the chamber of commerce and tried to operate in Nantong as he used to. The names of offices and institutions were changed back to those used before 1927. For instance, the Police Department now was called Jingchajiu again. But Sun did not come and Zhang Cha's hopes were in vain. The performance of county magistrate Zhuang in this process, especially his handling of public funds, caused much anger among Nantong people, and they complained against him. Zhuang was arrested by the GMD provincial government for collaborating with the warlords and embezzling local public funds. Zhang Cha quickly fled the county again and later died in Dalian (Guan n.d., 1-13).

As for Zhang Xiaoruo, before he was accidentally shot to death in his bed by one of his bodyguards in 1935, he spent most of his time after 1930 in his Shanghai home working on a biography of his father and editing his father's writings.⁵ Zhang Xiaoruo still gave instructions to his followers in Nantong and had influence in some of Nantong's public institu-

⁵ The bodyguard had argued with Zhang Xiaoruo's concubine and intended to shoot her; by mistake, he killed Zhang Xiaoruo instead.

tions, such as schools, but the Zhangs' direct control of Nantong declined after 1929.

Like the Zhangs, many other local elites were also affected by the events of 1927. Take the field of education as an example. Appointed by the GMD, a person named Cao became director of the new Educational Bureau in 1927. Within two months, Cao broke the elites' monopoly of Nantong schools by replacing more than 250 principals. He first removed Zhang Cha and Zhang Xiaoruo from their posts as principals of the Lusi Primary School and the Women's Normal School, respectively. One elite named Sun was principal of several dozen schools, and he was dismissed as well. After getting rid of the elite principals, Cao appointed some teachers to be principals. At the same time, he formed a committee comprising mainly teachers to manage school properties, which used to be under the control of the elites. What Cao did was a heavy blow to the local elites, who had been in charge of local schools and school properties for more than two decades. Cao was forced to resign in August 1927, when the elites were preparing the restoration (Guan n.d., 14-15).

It was indeed difficult for any force to penetrate the elite realm. As determined as Cao was, he had to compromise as well. When he first appointed a person named Yuan from Qian area to be principal of a school in Xiting, the elites in Xiting burst into an uproar and insisted on naming a Xiting native to fill the post instead, which compelled Cao to

retract his already-issued appointment. In the following years, none of the principals sent by the Educational Bureau could stay in the Xiting school longer than one year, and they were all squeezed out by the local forces in one way or another (He 1987, 141).

Shi Shuzhi, the county magistrate of Nantong in late 1928 and 1929, knew very well how difficult it was to deal with the elites. Unlike his predecessor Zhuang, Shi was a Nantong native and somewhat idealistic, trying to rejuvenate Nantong. He was one of the earliest members of the Alliance League and a GMD leftist. Shi was also familiar with the county's power structure. In 1911 Shi had been an assistant director of the Self-government Council in Yuxi town. Criticizing Zhang Cha and the Chamber of Commerce for imposing levies on the people, Shi was forced to flee the county. He participated in activities organized by the Alliance League in Shanghai and elsewhere. In 1927 Shi became the county magistrate of Haimen, in which capacity he arrested some local tyrants and was almost killed by the latter. Shi also sealed off Zhang Cha's properties in Haimen. After Shi was appointed to the post of county magistrate in Nantong, he destroyed opium and other drugs smuggled from the infamous Huang Jinrong in Shanghai, released a CCP student from jail, and also tried to restrain some of the GMD's rightists whose activities had caused great discontent among the local people (Wang 1987, 175-177).

At the same time, Shi Shuzhi made an effort to centralize the management of local enterprises into the hands of the county administration. When he tried to take over privately-owned and -managed institutions and enterprises, the elites rejected him with "excuses." To persuade the elites to cooperate, Shi pointed out that the reason why Nantong's enterprises were declining was that the elite practice in the past had been promoted only by "one or two persons" (referring to Zhang Jian and Zhang Cha). Shi said that now it was time to utilize the resources and talents of the entire county. But still, the elites were not convinced (The Bureau of Nantong City Administration 1929, 2). Shi left Nantong and broke off his relations with the GMD in 1930 because of the revenge from the GMD rightists (Wang 1987, 175-177).

During the Nanjing decade, the GMD apparently dominated Nantong with its Nantong County Party Committee (xiandangbu) established in 1930 as the headquarters, but there did not exist a coherent leadership. The inner circle of the Nantong GMD was marked by constant factional conflict and struggle, which was partially rooted in the split of the GMD's central leadership between Jiang Jieshi and Wang Jingwei. Nantong had a total of 423 GMD members; the active ones belonged either to the Jiang clique or to the Wang clique, and they attacked each other constantly.

Sources do not disclose whether these clique conflicts were also caused by different interest groups among Nantong's

elite, or among the elite and other local groups. But the local elite was definitely involved in the conflict. In fact, the GMD's Jiangsu Provincial Committee tried to reform the Nantong County Party Committee by sending a working group consisting of outsiders to Nantong, but the factional conflict remained. Sources do indicate that most of the active members of the GMD were from landlord and merchant families. They graduated from the Western-style schools and joined the GMD to become the newer elite of Nantong. For instance, Zhao Jianhua, son of a Nantong merchant, graduated from the Nantong Normal School and became a GMD member. Upon his completion of a training course in the Jiangsu GMD Training Center, he returned to Nantong to direct the Civil Administration Branch of the County GMD Committee, in which capacity he, together with other GMD members from local landlord and merchant families, manipulated county affairs and controlled rural districts, while the GMD-appointed county magistrate Zhang Dong engaged himself in literary activities. Later Zhao resigned when his corruption was exposed, but managed to hold a position in the Nantong Relief Association, which granted him a great deal of financial power. Zhao was able to continue to influence local affairs until 1937, when the Anti-Japanese War erupted (Ji 1983, 123-125).

In the 1930s, the Green Gang (Qing bang) organization of Zhenjiang was introduced to Nantong through some of the leading GMD members in Nantong who had contact with the gang,

which attracted the Nantong GMD members as well as those who worked in hotels, teahouses, restaurants, and bathrooms. A total of several hundred people joined the Green Gang. Among them there also existed hierarchies and factions. Since many of the active GMD members in Nantong became Green Gang members, the two organizations were merged to influence Nantong affairs. For instance, when the Nantong Branch of the China Industrial Bank refused to make contributions to the GMD County Committee, the latter managed to have all of its members (the Green Gang members as well) cash their savings in the bank at the same time, attempting to bankrupt it (Ji 1983, 125-129). During the Anti-Japanese War years, the GMD's influence was of course gradually reduced with the rise of the CCP force in the Jiangbei region.

Summary

This brief description shows that the picture of Nantong changed significantly because various new forces began to test their strength after the mid-1920s.

The years between 1924 to 1930 was a transitional period for the different social groups in Nantong. The old elite authority, represented by Zhang Jian, was definitely challenged and threatened by both internal and external forces. Internally, the generational gap between the local elites and the students became open. The elites who had dominated Nantong for the past two decades were aged and became more conserva-

tive, in the sense that they wanted to preserve the existing order and resist new social development. The younger generation, on the other hand, were influenced and attracted by current trends: new ideologies, nationwide student movements, new political parties, new journals, new social organizations, and most of all the new goals, with which the younger generation could identify themselves, which included overthrowing the warlords and unifying China. Apparently, the political discourse had changed. While the younger generation were searching for their own identities and establishing their own positions in the society, the old elites could no longer control the locality as they had before.

Externally, with the penetration of the CCP and GMD forces, Nantong could no longer remain a relatively isolated and independent unit as the elites wished. Separatist-oriented village-ism did not fit into the era's trend toward national unification. The rhetorical assumption that an autonomous and prosperous Nantong could succeed regardless of the outside environment had to face the hard reality of mid-1925, when the warlords were attacked and a centralized government had once again become possible.

However, the elites at this stage still had considerable control of the locality physically. They tried to block the GMD's penetration and did not give up their political control of the locality. The uncertainty of the period in fact gave the elites time and opportunity to catch their breath and

fight back, and they were further encouraged by the GMD, since the latter was not sure how to handle the elites. The outcome in Nantong in this period reflected the different personalities of the GMD county officials rather than the GMD's policies. While there was a trace of an attempt to centralize local power into the hands of the GMD officials, it made a great difference whether it was Zhuang, the political opportunist, or Shi, the reformer, who was taking charge of the county as far as the elite-GMD relationship was concerned.

This situation therefore confirms the point both Geisert and Barkan have made that the GMD did not have a coherent policy to deal with local elites before 1930 (Geisert 1979; Barkan 1983). Concretely, the Nantong case does not suggest the pattern Barkan found in Rugao, where the leftists controlled the county from May-October 1927, and reform-minded county magistrates were in power from October 1927-1930. But again, circumstances and personalities were in play--while the GMD county magistrate and elites in Nantong were enthusiastically looking forward to Sun Chuanfang's return in August 1927, top officials of Rugao county fled in fear (Barkan 1983, 204). The fact that personalities and circumstances could make such differences further proves that the GMD was still in search of a coherent policy to deal with local society.

However, the 1930s did not bring much change to Nantong as far as the establishment of the GMD's local authority and of local order was concerned. It was true that the GMD

successfully forced the CCP to retreat after 1930, but it was unable to put the local society firmly under its control, because the constant factional struggle among the leading party members consumed much of its energy. The new generation of the Nantong elite, while not producing a Zhang Jian-like representative, were nevertheless able to make use of the GMD party conflict and still control local affairs to a degree, as Zhao Jianhua did. The Anti-Japanese War proved to be fatal for the GMD and it was during the war years that the GMD finally lost its ground to the CCP.

Nine
CONCLUSION

The preceding pages have given us a guided tour of Nantong's experience during the period under consideration. Some of the elements which constituted and shaped the local political culture in Nantong included the expansion of elite activism in the arenas of public service, political domain, and symbolic world; the making of locally-centered cultural concepts; the constant search for new symbols and methods of publicity; the creation of new political instruments; the proliferation of public, social, and political institutions; the development of a locally-oriented political, economic, and cultural system; and the rhetorical assumption that a purely self-governing county could be and had been achieved regardless of the outside political situation.

It is clear that Nantong had changed dramatically in this period. But what does the Nantong experience tell us about more general questions in the field of modern China? What does the cultural approach employed here suggest about ways to look at the changing state-society relationship and its legacy in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century China?

One of the general issues involved in this study is whether a public sphere in Habermas's terms existed in Nantong. The present study reveals both similarities and differences between the elite public domain in Nantong and the bourgeois public sphere in early modern Europe. Obviously, state-society tension and conflict, shared economic interest among the local elites, the coming together of private people, and a critical discourse targeting the state were some of the elements the elite public domain in Nantong shared with the European experience. In other words, these aspects of Habermas's theory fit the Nantong case well.

There were, however, also marked differences between the two situations. For instance, the press in Nantong did not function as a free and open forum for public debate, as has been claimed in Europe, but rather as a controlled political instrument. The critical discourse which developed in Nantong was associated with elite public institutions and projects rather than with a free press and salon-like institutions.

This difference indicates, for one thing, that there was more than one method of elite public participation and that the European-style open forum was not the only practice which could affect and manifest tension in state-society relationships. For another thing, it illustrates the lack of democratic practice in the elite public domain of Nantong.

This point can be further demonstrated by the existence of hierarchical relationships in the elite society. Zhang Jian

and Zhang Cha, especially the former, were clearly in dominant positions within elite society. To be sure, other members of elite society contributed significantly to the development of Nantong in the three decades. In fact, what happened in Nantong was a collective undertaking and could not possibly have been achieved by any individual effort. But Zhang Jian's forceful personality, his leadership ability and his determination, and his possession of tremendous social, political, economic, and cultural resources, allowed him to control elite society to a considerable degree. Obviously, neither freedom of speech nor social equality, which were essential both as concepts and practice in Habermas's theory, were manifested in the elite public domain of Nantong.

In light of this, the case in Nantong indicates a public sphere which was in the process of being made. Putting it another way, there did not exist a full-blown public sphere yet. Yes, a foundation and some of the elements of such a public sphere had emerged, most notably state-societal tension and shared economic interests among elites which gathered them together. But elites were yet to become a bourgeois class in terms of both economic strength and ideological persuasion. Democratic ideas and practices were yet to be appreciated as significant developments and yet to have a transformative impact on structural changes in Chinese society.

The Nantong case sheds light on the general pattern of the development of the so-called public sphere in China and on

the recent scholarly debate on the issue. Although scholars have used the concept "public sphere" to characterize elite public management in local society, citizen participation in public affairs, and political debate through mass media (Rankin 1986; Strand 1989; Rowe 1989; Judge 1994), what they have described for China has only been some of the elements embodied in the public sphere theory, and represent processes through which such a public sphere was evolving, rather than a fully-constituted bourgeois public sphere. Some scholars have asked and tried to explain why the public sphere in modern China did not have a transformative impact on structural change of the society, as the European public sphere did (Rowe 1989; Strand 1989); in my opinion, the lack of such impact was due to the absence of such a public sphere in the first place.

I would be surprised to see evidence of a full-blown public sphere as Habermas has described presented for any part of China during this period. On the other hand, I would not be surprised to see the existence of forceful personalities and hierarchic relationships within most elite public institutions and professional associations, including fatuan in Beijing. The difference in this regard is one of degree. In fact, some scholars have revealed personal domination by strong elites in local society in different areas (Averill n.d.; Schoppa 1990; Bell 1990; Barkan 1990).

It is therefore useful to employ Habermas's theory in the China field if we treat it as an approach for examining the extent of an evolving elite public domain, but it is perhaps fruitless to employ the theory as a full-blown phenomenon and try to identify an exact counterpart of the European public sphere in modern China. On the other hand, this does not necessarily mean that the Chinese experience had nothing in common with the European public sphere.

The non-democratic nature of the elite public domain was conditioned by and reflected in the nature of the local self-government movement, since, as most studies have confirmed, the expansion of elite public functions was achieved during the local self-government movement. Some scholars have confused local self-government with democracy. Mark Elvin once used the term "gentry democracy" to characterize the development of the Shanghai City Council, which for him was the first formally democratic political institution because it was elected (Elvin 1969). John Fincher used Chinese Democracy as the title of his study on local self-government. He suggested that elections of provincial and local assemblies indicated and promoted the development of local democracy (Fincher 1981).

Some years ago, however, Philip Kuhn wrote an essay in which he drew a distinct line between local self-government and democracy. He cautioned that one ought to "dissociate the historical reality of local self-government from the heteroge-

neous body of ideas that became attached to it, particularly that of political democracy." For Kuhn, local self-government had little to do with democracy, which was "an irrelevant standard" against which to judge it (Kuhn, 1975, 257).

The uncritical use of Habermas's concept of public sphere in the China field in recent years seems to have overshadowed Kuhn's insight, and to have created an impression that local self-government was somewhat democratic. The Nantong case reaffirms Kuhn's conclusion. The experience of the thirty-odd years in Nantong under consideration indeed did not have much to do with democracy. We should keep this point in mind when evaluating both the public sphere theory and the local self-government movement.

The other issue is whether Chinese society in general and state-society relationships in particular had changed throughout the period under investigation, and if so, whether the change has had any significant impact on subsequent history. Some scholars conceive of the history of modern China in rather static terms. For instance, Paul Cohen has argued that the processes of decentralization and centralization in modern China in the last century have not brought any fundamental change and that Chinese society has basically cyclically repeated itself.

Other scholars, including Rankin, Strand and Barkan, have identified a considerable degree of change in state-society relationships in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries, change which was marked by the expansion of elite power and the decline of state authority. However, to them this change seemed to come to an end with the establishment of the central government under the GMD. What they have focused on is the public and local self-government institutions and elite activities related to these establishments, which changed or disappeared with the administrative recentralization under the GMD. These studies have not yet spelled out the profound and lasting legacy this era left. The other static view about the history of modern China is represented by Philip Huang, who can find no real change in Chinese society because the economy was "involutionary."

The cultural approach employed in the present study allows us to see change in this period in a different light, because the approach is process-oriented, taking into consideration not only the making of institutions but also the making of cultural concepts and symbols. This study reveals that in Nantong along with the establishment of local self-government institutions and elites' activities involved in them, a local political culture was taking shape which changed notions about local politics. Politics was no longer practiced mainly through vertical administrative channels. Public service (especially water control and educational projects), the local self-government movement, and the interaction of network contacts mobilized local society, including elites, teachers and even some townspeople.

Local politics was hence refashioned by broad elite participation, by new political instruments such as mass media, by new concepts such as independent elite capacity and pure local autonomy, by new symbols such as the label "model county" and the new look of Nantong city, and by publicity such as conferences and celebrity visits. The concerns with publicity and image, with theater and performance, with celebrations of local events, with time and space concepts, and with such seemingly insignificant events as naming local projects were all essential to the definition of local politics and were all part of the local self-governing experience. The source of coherence and unity in all these developments was the rhetorical assumption that a separate and autonomous local realm governed by local elites could succeed and indeed had succeeded.

In the process, politics had indeed become an instrument to refashion the community. Nantong during these thirty-odd years was transformed from a relatively backward and desolate area to one which had gained a new identity, which, to use Zhang Jian's words, was "the blueprint of a new world" in both practice and perception. Elites acted on the conviction that if the concept of village-ism was implemented and the local community was well developed, it could survive on its own as a peaceful island in the stormy ocean, and that if China as a whole was going to sink to the bottom of the ocean, Nantong at least would remain above water. In practice, this conviction

led elites to concentrate on Nantong's overall development and on preserving Nantong as an autonomous unit from both state penetration and warlord harassment.

To be sure, such conviction was only an ideal. Just as the French revolutionaries whose "lofty ambitions" in establishing a complete new national community without any reference to the customs of the past were idealistic, as Lynn Hunt notes, an independent Nantong could no longer exist when a central government once again came to power and when national reintegration was in process. Institutionally, Nantong was incorporated into the national system in the mid-1920s. But the story of local self-government did not end, because the local political culture created in the three decades since the 1890s sustained itself and influenced coming generations.

As Hunt points out, the French Revolution, while bringing relatively little long-term change to social and economic structures, nevertheless invented a new political culture (including the concept of republicanism) which had enormous impact on subsequent history. In other words, the political culture bred in the revolutionary process gained a life of its own and did not disappear at the end of the revolution. It is of course inappropriate to compare the Nantong case with the French Revolution in any concrete terms, since the change in Nantong was by no means as radical as in the French Revolution, and the Nantong elites were different from the French revolutionaries. But it is clear that in both cases, the

political culture, once formed, appeared to be an ongoing force independent of institutional developments.

We should therefore see change in state-society relationships in light of this political culture, which was the true legacy of the local self-government experience in Nantong. The locally-centered political culture had a more far-reaching historical significance than any one or even the total of the social and public undertakings and local self-government institutions implemented in Nantong. It represented order in a chaotic era, and it brought hope to the community and beyond in what were otherwise very discouraging years.

Local self-government has also become an enduring option to a centralized government. This political culture has sustained itself and survives down to this very day in Nantong. It would require another work to detail the manifestations and functions of this local political culture since the 1930s, such as the heroic effort the local people made to protect and restore the two major symbolic projects of Nantong--the Dasheng Cotton Mill and the Nantong Normal School--during and after the Anti-Japanese War. But we can here sketch the impact of the local culture, especially in the 1980s, when local initiatives were again encouraged and Nantong again quickly popped up to gain fame as a "star city" (mingxinshi).

Today's Nantong belongs to the Shanghai economic zone. Since 1980 the city has established joint enterprises with

more than twenty foreign companies. The textile industry still claims great importance in Nantong's economic domain, along with many new developments. Since 1980, the annual total industrial output and per capita income in Nantong have led China's middle-to-small cities.

This locally-focused development has made the culture of the 1920s centered on local capability and autonomy seem all the more relevant. For instance, Nantong people constantly refer to their glorious past to draw inspiration for their current adventures. Somehow they feel that they can do better than people of other regions in local development since "Zhang Jian has done it." It seems that they have prepared for the 1980s since the 1920s. When they face problems in the reforms, they are confident in their ability to solve them; "just think about the difficulties Zhang Jian had to overcome," they say (Fan 1989, 8). The people also believe that what is special about Nantong is the high value its people place on culture, knowledge, and education, and its ability to achieve and to be distinct. They are extremely proud of these local qualities and of their local roots, which they attribute to the elite establishments of the 1920s.

The Nantong experience of thirty-odd years from the 1890s through the 1920s indeed has become a vital part and a symbol of Nantong's cultural heritage. In the 1980s, local people often use it not only to inspire themselves in the reform process, but also to attract outside investors, especially

overseas Chinese, to whom Zhang Jian is very appealing. In the early 1980s the Nantong city local gazetteer writing group put emphasis on promoting local culture and tradition in the writing of the history of modern Nantong. In the first draft of this new Nantong gazetteer, which was completed in 1992, a significant portion was devoted to the history of Nantong in the early twentieth century. Other books on Nantong written by the Nantongese also never fail to tell the successful story of the 1920s. In 1987 the Nantong Textile Museum, designed by engineer Zhang Xuwu, the grandson of Zhang Jian, was built with 5,000 exhibits, most of which were related to the history of the Dasheng mills. Obviously, the reform of the 1980s has created great needs to keep the vitality of the political culture of the 1920s, and also to reinvest in this cultural symbol. The critical tone adopted by local scholars studying Zhang Jian in the 1960s has been replaced by a much more positive approach.

Half a century after his death, Zhang Jian's presence can still be felt in Nantong. International conferences in memory of Zhang's birth and death anniversaries have been held in Nantong and Nanjing since the mid-1980s. The Zhang Jian Research Center in Nantong continues to collect and publish source materials on the first two decades of the current century. Recollections of Zhang Jian and the 1920s have become the inexhaustible supplies of local periodicals, which have grown in numbers since the 1980s. Local newspapers still

tirelessly pursue stories of Zhang Jian's descendants. Every year there are Chinese and foreign visitors and scholars, including overseas Chinese, who come to Nantong for its past rather than its present. Just like fifty years ago, media attention and visitors help to maintain Zhang Jian's influence and reshape his image.

The physical appearance of Nantong city continues to speak silently yet powerfully of the 1920s. When my first research trip took me to Nantong in 1992, I vaguely wanted to write something about the local self-government of the 1920s for this project. In Nantong, as I visited the library, the publishing house, the parks, the museum, the theater, and Zhang Jian's villas, talked with the people, and wandered the streets and bridges while enjoying Zhang Jian's calligraphy on various buildings, I was overwhelmed by some kind of force from the past which I could not then clearly recognize. Later I realized that though the institutions and elites of the 1920s were long gone, what I had felt was the force of the culture of local power, which has survived. I therefore decided to write about the making of this cultural force, which penetrates the historical deposits of more than a half century not only to speak of its own existence, but also to shape today's Nantong.

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JWSZL: Jiangsu wenshi ziliao (Materials on the Culture and History of Jiangsu). Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Jiangsu sheng weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui. Nanjing.

NTJG: Nantong Jingu (Nantong's Today and Yesterday). Nantong jingu Editorial Department, Nantong: 1987-

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