

Repertoires, Performances, and Institution Creation: Comparing Regime Consolidation in China and Taiwan, 1949-1954

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Much of the scholarly literature that focusses on statebuilding has its origins in a Weberian perspective. This focusses on the creation and solidification of state institutions, particularly those bureaucratic institutions concerned with external defense, internal order, the extraction of sufficient resources to fund the state apparatus, and the recruitment and socialization for the state bureaucracy itself.¹ Other literatures in a more rational choice vein, particularly those associated with Robert Bates' work on Africa², instead stress how incentives for individuals within state bureaucracies often lead to rent seeking behaviour that undercuts the wider state building project. Both of these literatures presume that interests – either of the individual ruler, the elite groups whose acquiescence is necessary for state building, or simply those inherent to the state making process itself such as ever increasing tax revenues– are what matters. Yet there is relatively little in the literature that explains the mechanics (the “hows”) employed by aspiring state builders. How do political leaders form preferences for what ought to be done in the light of their circumstances, mobilize lower reaches of the bureaucratic instruments of the state into what should be done, form new coalitions with key sectors in society, and communicate a new set of norms about the new rules of the game (and their general legitimacy) to society at large? In practice, particularly in deeply riven societies coming out of periods of militarized conflict through either civil war or invasion, it is often impossible for aspiring state making elites to embark on these activities in the following sequence: elite preference formation, coalition building, bureaucratic mobilization, and finally more general norm dissemination. It is often imperative for aspiring state builders to engage in all of these activities at the same time, and to attempt to do so under conditions of weak capacity, bureaucratic organizations of questionable loyalty, sectors of society that need to be defined and organized in order to be favoured, and norm dissemination to societies at large that are suspicious, fearful, and cynical about the deployment of state power.

I suggest that there are two key modalities to which aspiring state makers have recourse in pursuing these simultaneous tasks: the campaign and the bureaucratic. The former is defined

¹The literature on state building and state making is vast, and it is not possible to offer a full bibliography at this juncture. For particularly influential or formative works, see Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975), which prompted a large subsequent literature on the topic, followed by Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Theda Skocpol *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge, 1985). For a sophisticated analysis of how different patterns of state-society relations led to different outcomes throughout early modern Europe, see Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997); for a general assessment of how these patterns so frequently do not hold outside a European context, see Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-society relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton 1988), and for a remarkably sophisticated analysis that also looks at variation in regime outcome by focussing on the existence (or lack thereof) of protection pacts between the state and elites in Southeast Asia, see Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge, 2010).

²Robert Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies* (University of California Press, 1981) stands as the classic in this intellectual lineage.

by a period of extraordinary and intensive focus on the pursuit of a particular program or set of goals that originates with state organizations and then spreads to varying degrees into society; the latter is hierarchical, rule bound, precedent oriented and typically takes society as an object to be acted on in such diverse areas as tax collection, service provision, infrastructure building and so on. The impetus for both campaigns and bureaucratic modalities begin with a series of decisions by state leaders and are in the first instance implemented by the state's administrative organizations. Empirically these two modalities come together in the government's institutions of the state. A campaign's timing, subject matter, scale, spread beyond its original focus, and degree of popular mobilization all vary. As a general rule the medium to long term campaign modalities or extraordinary, intensive push typically undercut bureaucratic, procedural and rule bound modes of state building. But in the short term, a highly charged, focussed campaign has the potential to be an extremely effective method for condensing and fusing the normally sequential tasks (preference formation, coalition creation, bureaucratic mobilization, and wider norm dissemination) into one multi-faceted extraordinary push. And insofar as there is an elite consensus in favour of greater social equity, the implementation of a successful campaign of redistribution may well be able to do far more to simultaneously expand the reach of the state, create new coalitions, and disseminate norms conducive to wider legitimacy than, for example, campaigns that are trained on marginal or despised groups (e.g. opium addicts and prostitutes), or campaigns aimed at promoting behavioural change unmoored from material incentives (anti-spitting campaigns). **Add in the key argument ...**

The Setting: The "Two Chinas" in 1949 and passim

This article focusses on a particular juncture in historical time some four to nine years after the conclusion of World War II, in two particular places: 1) China's Sunan region south of the Yangzi River centered on Shanghai, which was then (as now) the wealthiest area of the People's Republic of China, and 2) the island of Taiwan, to which the vanquished Nationalist (Guomindang - GMD) government had just retreated following its defeat in 1949. This was a time in which much was very open, both in the two Chinas and in the developing world more generally. Deepening mutual suspicion between Western liberal democracies and Leninist party-states became entangled in much of the developing world, which was at that point in historical time at some point in the process of decolonization. Much was in flux. The geopolitical and highly charged ideological environment was one in which nearly all actors were either insecure or perceived that they had good reason to be.

These worries were particularly salient in East and Southeast Asia. Throughout these two regions there were Communist dominated movements of national liberation: Communists either had just or were on the verge of taking power in China, Korea, and Vietnam. In 1949 nowhere was the tension more bitter, or regional security more up for grabs, than in the two Chinas. The young People's Republic of China was proclaimed in October 1949 by the overtly revolutionary Chinese Communist Party after having decisively won a bitter civil war against their competitors, the Guomindang (Nationalists). The PRC's erstwhile competitor: the Republic of China, had been decisively defeated but not completely vanquished, as in 1949 its paramount leader, Chiang Kai-shek, led the shocked and demoralized rump of the Guomindang (Nationalist) ruling party on a tactical retreat to the island of Taiwan as a last stronghold. In 1949 both regimes were highly militarized and ruled primarily by coercion. By 1953-1954, each was well consolidated, solidly aligned on opposite sides of the bipolar international system, and on an accelerating trajectory that made it a poster child for either revolutionary state making from below or conservative and controlled state making from above.

This piece is part of a larger monograph on comparative state building in the two rival "Chinas" on the opposite sides of the Taiwan Straits in the early 1950s. While the complete project explores three quite different paired comparisons: terror/ domestic security, land reform,

and rice supply, this essay focusses on the processes by which these two Chinese regimes launched its distinctive redistributive land reform campaigns in the early 1950s. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first in depth comparison of this type. There are of course good reasons for the relative paucity of this kind of paired comparison. The PRC was enormous in scale, explicitly revolutionary, animated by Marxist-Leninist principles, and immediately aligned itself with the Soviet Union. The ROC/ Taiwan was small, explicitly conservative, and was utterly dependent on the protection of the United States. Each territory had experienced very different 20th century political histories (China underwent decades of civil war and invasion: Taiwan was a directly administered colony of Japan).³ In addition, for nearly two generations, the question of the legitimacy of each of the two Chinas was such a partisan political issue that it was deeply problematic to retain analytical sympathy and even-handedness towards both of these regimes, for fear of being called an apologist for one or the other.

Despite these obvious differences in scale and political history, a current generation of historians who are delving into the early history of the People's Republic of China are making discoveries that suggest that there may be fruitful grounds for comparison between the two Chinas after all. Contrary to the PRC's claims of popular support and bottom up social revolution throughout the country in 1949, it is now clear that the patterns of regime consolidation and state building in the People's Republic of China were utterly different when the People's Liberation Army moved out of its core base areas in northwest and northeast China in 1949. Our received wisdom about the Chinese revolution tends to posit that the Chinese Communist Party won because it was more successful at attracting the poor peasantry and intellectuals, better at engaging social mobilization and revolution from below, and more adept at addressing China's crying need for better governance and implementing a less predatory and stagnant set of rural economic relations. And indeed, in the key accounts that we have of this process, the CCP's base areas were characterized by long years of social revolution and ultimately successful bottom-up mobilization.⁴ However, for the majority of the China (central, southeast, southwest and west), the People's Liberation Army did not come to power through bottom up mobilization and popular demand for social revolution: it took over territory in the wake of the sudden collapse of the Nationalist Army. When the Chinese Communist Party took power in the majority of the country south of the Yangzi River, it did so as an alien regime of occupation in which the hand of coercion was not so terribly hidden.

Vastly different scale notwithstanding, the PRC's early experiences of state building in central, southern and western China were broadly similar to those of the Republic of China on Taiwan. The island of Taiwan had only been "returned" to the Republic of China in late 1945 after a half a century of Japanese colonization. The occupying Guomindang (GMD/Nationalist) government proved to be so inept in the governance of Taiwan that within 18 months the island erupted violently in the 2-28 uprising of 1947. The GMD's brutal suppression of the uprising, in combination with the transfer of the Nationalist central government, core military, and air force in early 1949 meant that the island was under military occupation by a de facto government in exile from then onwards.

In pursuing this comparison between the state building strategies of the "newly liberated" areas of the PRC and the territory under the control of the ROC/Taiwan, this project focusses on the one particular area of China that was "more like" Taiwan in 1949 than most

³ Taiwan was smaller than any of the provinces of mainland China and its population of roughly 6,000,000 in 1949 was dwarfed by that of the PRC's estimated 550,000,000; thus the population of Taiwan at best was under 1% of that of the People's Republic of China.

⁴ For a somewhat romanticized, but still pertinent "thick description" of land reform in a particularly impoverished base area of North China in 1948, see William Hinton, *Fanshen* (Basic Books 1966); the Crooks *Three Mile Village*, Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China ... fill in full references*

other regions; Sunan (South Jiangsu)⁵. Sunan, which comprised the counties south of the Yangzi River, in what is now the province of Jiangsu, had at its center the industrial, commercial, and trading power house of Shanghai. Its fertile countryside had for the previous 1000 years been the economic heartland of the Chinese Empire through its surplus rice, luxury handicrafts such as silk, and high degree of specialized commodification. By mid-20th century it held well over 90% of China's factories, many of its paved roads, and the lion's share of its railroads, electrification, and running water: in short, the bulk of China's modernized economy was heavily concentrated in and around Shanghai. While Taiwan was nowhere near as industrialized as Shanghai, Taiwan had also undergone a process of development in its 50 years under Japanese rule. The Japanese colonial administration built roads, railways, harbors, electrical power plants, and the beginnings of light industry. In Shanghai and its immediate environs, roughly one half of the working population had moved out of agriculture; a similar proportion to Taiwan.

More importantly from a state building perspective were the political and social circumstances of these governments vis a vis their populations. In 1949 each of these governments of occupation was either fundamentally illegitimate (the ROC on Taiwan) or was at best unknown quantity (the PRC in the majority of its territorial outside its historic base areas in North China). Both ruled by coercion but were eager to rapidly build up alternative sources of legitimacy. Both were also quick to realize core state building initiatives and implement important programs that contributed to those ends. In so doing, each managed to silence real or presumptive enemies, garner the acquiescence (if not outright support) of core social groups, and in the countryside, fundamentally reorder rural relations. Each consolidated its existence and rendered itself fundamentally secure over the course of the early 1950s, despite the reasonable doubt that one might have had at the time over whether this would happen. In 1949 there was little in the recent history of the Chinese Communist Party to suggest its successful transition to governing large urban areas in regions where it had had very little in the way of presence for over 20 years. Before the early 1950s, there was virtually nothing in the recent experiences of the Guomindang to suggest that it would be able to snatch even a partial victory from the jaws of its complete collapse in China.. Indeed in 1949 and early 1950, it was widely expected that the rump Guomindang regime would not survive an anticipated PLA amphibious invasion of Taiwan in the summer of 1950, until the outbreak of the Korean War prompted the overnight decision of the US to include the ROC under its "security umbrella". For its part, the new revolutionary regime of the PRC had good reason to be deeply hostile, even paranoid about the West's intentions. The outbreak of a major hot war with western involvement on China's border, led by a notoriously loose lipped US Commander in Chief given to making public pronouncements about rolling back Communism, bombing the Yalu River, and using nuclear weapons certainly gave the young revolutionary regime a fair amount to be paranoid about. In this context of deep insecurity and fragile roots in local society, the sheer, unexpected successes of the PRC and ROC, and *how* each pulled together crudely effective state institutions in these years bears explanation.

The answers to this question undoubtedly lie in each regime's assessment of its regional (in)security in combination with its shallow roots in society. Both subscribed to remarkably similar state building agendas. These comprised: 1) the necessarily violent removal of all sources of real or potential opposition to regime initiatives, 2) a significant expansion in the size of the state bureaucracy 3) a range of state institutions that systematically subsidized and privileged the urban over the rural, and 4) the communication of a new political language and set of norms to the population at large. Both regimes considered it fundamental to re-ordering power and

⁵ I use the geographical terms "Sunan" (South Jiangsu), Jiangnan ("South of the Yangzi River"), and the Yangzi River Delta to mean the same geographical area; the city of Shanghai, its outer districts, and the counties that comprised the Sunan District between 1949-1953.

property relations in the countryside, which in turn required state penetration down to the grass roots of rural and urban society. Thus in terms of broad state building agendas, the “revolutionary” People’s Republic of China and the “conservative” Republic of China (now shrunken down to the island of Taiwan) had much more in common than has commonly been understood to be the case, and certainly more than either of these mortal rivals was ever willing to acknowledge. These core goals were deeply authoritarian and fundamentally transformative, even when they were draped in rhetoric of either the PRC’s popular mobilization and mass revolution or the ROC/ Taiwan’s restorationist conservatism.

Despite their very different political stances and scales, the cases of the People’s Republic of China (at least in the majority of the country) and the Republic of China on Taiwan in the early 1950s present two cases of unusual success. Both were extraordinarily successful in consolidating their regimes, and both even managed to implement explicitly redistributionist core tasks of land reform. In their very unusual degrees of success, these two regimes stand as near exemplars of “revolutionary” and “conservative” types of state building. What, then, are the critical factors that made it possible for these two ideologically opposed regimes with such shallow roots in local society able to decide on a policy such as land reform, successfully expand state capacity to make such a program possible, and bring into existence new social coalitions to support both the policy and the government? And what, if anything, of these two experiences of “success” is translatable to other regions, and other states in the developing world?

Campaign and Bureaucratic Modalities: Repertoires of Intensive Implementation Practices

The term *yundong* (运动) is fraught with ambiguity. It is variously translated into English as either “movement” in the sense of “social movement” or “campaign”. This ambiguity of translation reflects the extraordinary changes in the concrete phenomena to which *yundong* referred in the fifty-six years between the May Fourth Movement of 1919 to the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution in 1976: a trajectory that moved from the broadly based social movements of protest in the Republican era (1911-49). Since the PRC’s revolutionary culture insisted on visible public support for its policies, it proudly announced and glorified its *yundong*. Even now, at a time when there is so much criticism of the excesses of the Mao years, the early period of regime consolidation from 1950 to 1953 continues to be described in gazeteers’ glowing official histories as the years of the “three mass movements” (The Aid Korea/Resist America campaign, the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries, and land reform) that united the mobilized masses and government deemed goals. In sharp contrast, the ROC/Taiwan never defined openly its actions as *yundong* [campaigns or movements], either at the time or in the present. The very term was anathema and to the best of my knowledge were never used publicly, although in Guomindang party circles the term would occasionally crop up to denote a particularly concentrated push for training or mobilization within the GMD party.⁶ Publicly, the ROC/Taiwan party-state defined itself in terms of rules, procedures, precedent, and sober regularity – at least in part to carve out a distinctive position and set of norms to distinguish itself practically and normatively from its bitter rival on the other side of the Taiwan Straits.. But the ROC/Taiwan’s official reluctance to use the term *yundong* did not mean that it did not conduct campaigns. Nor was the public unity of government and masses nearly as universal as the official PRC gazeteer accounts would suggest.

Rather, if the notion of a “campaign” (*yundong*) is broadened to consider it as a period of extraordinary government intensification, deployment of a repertoire of practices to enable intensification, geared towards a range of different specific outcomes, then it is clear that both the PRC and the ROC/Taiwan frequently launched campaigns. In so doing they drew on a venerable lineage from the late imperial state as well as the specific practices of Leninist

⁶ Find reference or two here.

(re)organization from the 1920s.⁷ The 1950s were characterized by many different types of campaigns that fell on different points on a spectrum, from minimal to maximal. A minimalist campaign involved the simple gearing up of the bureaucracy itself, and the extraordinary deployment of the resources (both technical and human) to the rapid achievement of a particular bureaucratic policy goal, but with little expected in the way of altered behaviour in society (i.e. a campaign to tax the annual harvest or swap fertilizer for rice requisitions). A maximal campaign aimed for a close to universal mobilization of society that was geared towards broad fronted social revolution (e.g. PRC's campaigns against landlords, counterrevolutionaries, and the later Great Leap Forward of 1958. In-between the two extremes were a range of bureaucratic campaigns whose goals included either very short term changes in behaviour on the part of key sectors in society (e.g. campaigns to drain swamps or distribute sleeping nets to wipe out malaria), or whose relevant target groups in society were expected to exhibit major behavioural changes but whose numbers were relatively small and/ or easily delimited relative to the population as a whole (e.g. campaigns to wipe out prostitution or opium use). At their most limited, campaigns involved bureaucratic gearing up and intensification; at their most maximal, they led to highly visible full social mobilization, which in turn led to public theatrical performances (to convince, engage the emotions, and educate the population in new goals, norms, and ways of doing things, and force through broad changes in ethos and behaviour).

In common usage, “bureaucracy” is at least as ambiguous, value laden, and resistant to translation as is “campaign”. A loan word from French, “bureaucracy” and “bureaucrat” entered the English language in the 19th century to mean “government by bureaux - usually officialism/ government officials collectively”.⁸ From the outset, its connotations have been largely negative, and closely associated with autocracy, tyranny, centralization, and classification as well as a straightforward description of “government by bureaux”. If we consider other synonyms for bureaucrat, such as “official”, the Oxford English Dictionary offers a more venerable lineage that come originally from Latin for a figure with duly constituted authority, which entered English from Anglo-Norman French in the 13th century to denote public officers in either ecclesiastical or civil spheres.⁹ These English terms, and their connotations, are only partially commensurate with their Chinese counterparts. “*Guan*” 官 is broadly similar in coverage and connotation to “official”, but is even older: indeed *guan* it has been in use for as long the earliest Chinese classical texts. But the Chinese word for “bureaucracy” and “bureaucratic” “*guanliao*” 官僚 is unreservedly negative in its connotations. Quite unlike the English “bureaucracy”, there are no texts in Chinese that use *guanliao* to denote the regular organizations and institutions of the state, which are denoted as *zhengfu jiguan* (“government organs”), or in more academic writing *zhengfu jigou* (government organizations).

When we turn to specifically Weberian analytical notions of what “bureaucracy” means: hierarchy, expertise, the submission of administration to political masters, rule making, and the separation of offices from officeholders, the core principle that animates all of the above is

⁷ For the ways in which the late imperial state used campaigns, see R. Bin Wong, “Taxation and Good Governance in China, 1500-1914,” in Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla and Patrick K. O’Brien with Francisco Comín Comín, eds., *The Rise of Fiscal States: A Global History, 1500-1914*. Cambridge University Press. 2012, pp 353-377.

⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary* (online version). “Bureaucracy”: <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/view/Entry/24905?redirectedFrom=bureaucracy#eid>, and “Bureaucratize”: <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/view/Entry/24908>. Accessed December 1, 2013.

⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary* (online version). “Official”: <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/view/Entry/130654?rskey=aQD8LD&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>. Accessed December 1, 2013.

impersonality and the depersonalization of authority.¹⁰ The application of rules means that all situations that are alike in a larger system of classification and organization are processed in like fashion. The separation of the individual office holder from the decision making authority of his/her office means that another similarly trained official can come in to discharge the job. Procedures make it possible for rules to be implemented impersonally and uniformly. While there is nothing in Chinese that uses the term “to bureaucratize” in the positively charged sense of creating clear and responsive hierarchies with impersonal, fair procedures, Chinese state makers on both sides of the Taiwan Straits at mid century were incredibly exercised about the importance of creating well functioning state organizations, which they termed *jiaqiang jiguan* (“strengthening [government] organizations”). *Jiaqiang jiguan* had strong connotations of hierarchy, responsiveness, discipline, expansion through recruitment, socialization of staff into organizational norms and processes, and projection into society to implement the Party-state’s bidding. Hierarchy, responsiveness, and implementation of directives in turn required rules from higher levels in the state organization. What then, is the relationship between the more regular processes inherent to *jiaqiang jiguan* (strengthening government organizations) and *yundong* (campaigns)? The former comprised hierarchy, precedent, predictability, classification, and decision making according to stated rules. By definition the latter is an *extraordinary* intensification and concentration of political, administrative, and sometimes popular will behind the rapid achievement of a complex of goals. State makers on the two sides of the Taiwan Straits not only did not recognize the potential logical incompatibilities between “campaign” and “bureaucratic” modalities of state building. They assumed that campaigns could and would speed up the process of “strengthening organizations”, not least because the first object of a campaign was invariably the mobilization of the government bureaucracy itself.

Campaigns not only mobilized bureaucracies (and often societies as well), but radically simplified complex social and economic realities in broad frontal pushes. When effective, this combination of extraordinary mobilization and simplification had the potential to¹¹:

- 1) significantly expand state institutions to carry out chosen policies
- 2) Educate large numbers of committed agents – who often become permanent
- 3) Lower social resistance to the core policies of the campaign
- 4) enable state penetration further into local society (into villages or urban districts/neighborhoods) than would otherwise have been plausible
- 5) forge new alliances with core social groups in areas in which state projective power was previously minimal.

When we turn to the specific practices of campaign implementation in the early 1950s in the PRC and ROC/ Taiwan, it is clear that these two regimes, for all their ideological differences, shared many of the same repertoires, particularly in the early to middling stages of a campaign. These included the bureaucracy’s intensification of focus through intensive study and training

¹⁰ For the core attributes of Weberian bureaucracy, see “Bureaucracy”, in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber, Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 196-203.

¹¹ Of course, not all campaigns are effective: they can be unfocused, unclear in their intent, involve sloppy training or inappropriate slogans, mobilize those who aren’t sure of why they are being mobilized, have a host of unintended consequences, or simply peter out because the subjects of a campaign are alienated or bored. And without the fairly rapid institutionalization of the gains of the campaign through a more bureaucratic mode of action, the presumptive gains of the campaign are likely to be reversed as soon as the period of extraordinary concentration and focus is over.

courses in written materials, discussion of model/ experimental districts, extraordinarily convened conferences and reports, and mobilization through intensive propaganda that started in the bureaucracy but then spread (to varying degrees) throughout society. All of these elements were present in the land reform campaigns that these two regimes pursued in the early 1950s, and it is to this example that this essay now turns.

Overlapping agendas: Re-making the countryside through land reform campaigns I (1950-54)

For both the PRC and the ROC/Taiwan, one of the key projects for wider regime consolidation and legitimacy was land reform. Both states pushed through sharp, aggressive land reform campaigns between 1950 and 1954.¹² Land reform was *de rigueur* in the early regime consolidation of Marxist-Leninist regimes the world over. But aside from the cases of Japan and South Korea, where land reform was implemented in whole or in part by the US military, it was quite unusual for a “conservative” regime aligned with the United States to implement meaningful land reform programs. The seriousness with which the ROC/Taiwan took land reform stood out from other contemporaneous “conservative” regimes, such as the Philippines and Thailand, which paid lip service to the ideals of land reform but faltered in the actual implementation. The ROC/Taiwan amassed both the political will and the administrative capacity to push through what considered critical to its legitimacy in Taiwan. Despite its ostensible conservatism, state makers in the ROC/ Taiwan took the importance of a successful land reform program no less seriously than did its rivals in the PRC. The Party-state in China pushed through waves of land reform in the Su’nan/ Shanghai area in the autumn of 1950 and the spring of 1951; in Taiwan land reform was deliberately constructed as a more gradualist and procedurally oriented affair that took place in stages between 1950 and 1953, but, as we shall see, the rhetoric of gradualism and incrementalism in Taiwan was only partially true.

Despite their stark differences on the question of primacy of violent class struggle, political leaders of the rival Chinese governments subscribed to a complex of overlapping notions for legitimate state action that derived from a much longer tradition of imperial statecraft and agrarian empire. Although each of these elements merits a full discussion, for present purposes I will simply list them as follows: 1) a late Confucian assumption that most people are inherently good and sociable, and that properly socialized and motivated state administrators will be able overcome objective circumstances through proper application of morality and will, 2) a deep suspicion of associational activity not overseen and deemed legitimate by the state, with consequently quick labelling of all such associational activity as heterodox, intolerable, subversive and deserving of extermination, and 3) a normative commitments to the state’s role in ensuring subsistence and a rough, social justice.

¹² The book manuscript, I also consider two other paired comparisons: 1) the suppression of state enemies and “subversion” through two campaigns: the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries (PRC) and the “White Terror” (ROC-Taiwan), and 2) the institution building strategies of ensuring cheap and stable supplies of rice to urban areas, which was in contrast characterized by a lack of campaign mobilization. Due to space constraints this essay omits these two cases. For here it should simply be pointed out that the dynamics of campaigns to suppress real or imagined subversion had a great deal in common with land reform campaigns. In contrast, in the case of rice supply both the PRC and ROC- Taiwan were equally insistent on the importance of presiding over cheap and readily available stocks of rice for hungry urban areas, and articulated a nearly identical rhetoric of the responsibility of the government to assure “people’ s livelihood” (*minsheng* 民生), affordable supplies of “items of daily use” (*riyong pin* 日用品), and contain both speculation and the spectre of inflation, but were remarkably devoid of campaign mobilization outside of the natural work push that came with planting and harvesting.

The rhetorical framings and relevant diagnoses of rural problems that undergirded land reform programs in China and Taiwan were indistinguishable from each other, and converged with the global developmental norms of the time. Whether Leninist/ revolutionary or liberal/ modernizing, all shared a distaste for the “inefficiency” of small holder based, “fragmented” agriculture and professed an affinity for the big, visible, and noticeable projects emblematic of mid-20th century modernity: concrete, dams, infrastructure, and factories. The leaders of the party-states in China and Taiwan further assumed that the state had to extract as much as it could out of agriculture to finance industrialization and other modernization projects. In the nearer term, both were agreed that 1) objectively China’s rural problems were characterized by economic stagnation, severe inequality, fragmentation and pressure on land holdings, 2) in practical policy terms, successful implementation of land reform was absolutely essential for reasons of both social justice and further economic development that only increases in agricultural productivity could bring about, and 3) the lessons of recent history suggested that the Guomindang’s aggregate failure to deal with rural distress in general and land reform in particular explained a good deal of its loss of support and eventual defeat in the civil war. Thus for both, all discussion of land reform was framed by the presumptions that it was economically desirable (to lay the groundwork for further consolidation and efficiency in agriculture), socially necessary and desired (if not actively demanded) from “below”, and politically paramount – indeed the very legitimacy of the regime in the countryside was presumed to depend on its successful implementation. Although these propositions were all at the very least questionable, what mattered at the time were the perceptions of necessity, social justice, subsistence guarantees, and development that went into the framing of land reform for state building elites.¹³ In both the People’s Republic and Taiwan there was virtual unanimity that land reform was necessary, desirable, demanded from below, and critical for regime legitimacy in the countryside. Both were also equally convinced that the successful implementation of land reform campaigns would do much to establish a new set of rhetorical, normative, and political realities, quite irrespective of objective conditions.¹⁴

Campaigns by definition shared in a necessary first step: the mobilization of the bureaucracy and the intensification of focus around the implementation of a particular program. Despite their differences in ethos (violence vs. inclusion), type of implementing state organization (class based revolutionary party vs. technocratic administration), and official rate of implementation (relative quickness in China and deliberately slow and careful sequencing in Taiwan), the early to middle stages of land reform campaigns in Sunan and Taiwan progressed

¹³ These assumptions can be found in virtually all of the propaganda on the importance of land reform in both China and Taiwan, as well as by westerners able to observe the prosecution of land reform in north China villages in the late 1940s. This was not only in the early 1950s, when these initiatives were being pushed through, but has been more or less unchanged ever since. For representative examples, see Pan Guangdan, “Beijing gedaxue jiaoshou huadongqu tudi gaige canguantuan zongjie”(General summary of Beijing universities’ professorial group visiting tour of the Eastern China region land reform), p. 198 Pan Guangdan and Quan Weitian. “Su’nan nongcun fengjian shili de jige tedian”, pp 5-8, and Shi Wenqi, “Wo suo jiandaode su’nan tudi gaige yundong” (The land reform movement in sunan that I saw”, p. 88-89, all in Su’nan renmin xingzhengshu tudi gaige weiyuanhui (ed.), *Wo suo jiandao de Su’nan tugai gaigeyundong* [The land reform movement in Su’nan that I saw], no place, 1951. See also Hinton, Isabel and David Crook, Chen Cheng, and Hui-sun Tang, op. cit.

¹⁴ There was in fact good reason to doubt many of these “givens”, in the economically developed regions of central and southern China (as well as Taiwan), tenancy was already in decline, tenants were already migrating to cities in search of better lives, often in factories, and there was little evidence of bottom up demand for land reform programs at the outset of these campaigns. Indeed in both places land reform campaigns can be seen to have generated their own demand.

in broadly similar stages. First came the mobilization and intensification of focus in the bureaucracy itself, which broke down into a set of discrete tasks: background investigation, experimental investigation in trial districts, drawing up guidelines and procedures, meetings, training of supplementary staff, propaganda/ publicity dissemination, local implementation.

The campaign's mobilization of the state administrative organization was reflected in a nearly identical heroic language of implementation, and by the explicit way in which political and administrative actors attempted to mobilize the extraordinary commitments of their agents. As one indication of this, by 1950, state agents in the People's Republic were invariably called *ganbu* (cadre) – a term with a set of connotations that combined activist heroism, mobilization, and expertise and personal moral commitment to state service into one heady package. What is notable is that even in Taiwan, where state agents were normally denoted *gongwuyuan* or *zhiyuan* (terms that translate to “civil servants” or “public functionaries”) – labels that connoted sober, depersonalized, functional technocracy, internal documents in Chinese (rather than the English used in in the technocratic Joint Commission for Rural Reconstruction, took a lead in planning much of the land reform programs in Taiwan) explicitly denoted the local state agents actually in charge of the on ground implementation of land reform campaigns as “cadres” (*ganbu*).¹⁵ In both Su'nan and Taiwan, land reform campaigns were by definition heroic and extraordinary rather than routine and workaday. The language of administrative mobilization and training reflected this, even for a the GMD regime that had every conceivable ideological reason to avoid vocabulary items that were so readily associated with the Communist “Other” across the Taiwan Straits.

After the preparatory stage that involved meetings, internal information dissemination, and training of extraordinary numbers of staff, the land reform campaign in both cases progressed in broadly similar stages: 1) intensive propaganda aimed at rural society at large to educate the population into the necessity, desirability, and mechanics of the program, 2) the creation of local representative organizations (peasant associations in the PRC and rent reduction committees later transformed into farmer/tenant committees in Taiwan) to support the campaign, 3) the intensive assessment, checking and official recording of who owned what land, backed up by the dispatch of outside leaders to guide and check on this process, 4) the actual redistribution of “excess” land to those in officially designated land deficit, and finally 5) review and rechecking of the results.

In Sunan and Taiwan, these campaigns of bureaucratic intensification and redistribution required very similar kinds of “state organization strengthening” (*jiaqiang jiguan*) through the vast expansion of the implementing capacity of the state through the recruitment and dispatch of newly deputized state agents to the countryside to conduct preliminary investigations, implement the policy, and keep records. Both produced enormous amounts of propaganda that drew a sharp line between the correct and moral implementation of land reform and the ineffective and/or immoral implementation of land reform by the rival “Other” regime. And both attempted to simultaneously solicit broadly based popular support for the program while retaining full control over both process and outcome.

The preparations for land reform also led to the training of very large numbers of people, often young, to go down to the most grassroots level of the countryside to oversee the implementation of the new policy. Training of extra personnel to oversee the implementation of

¹⁵ GCA (Gaoxiong County Archives). 0042/155.1.57/01/11/022. “Jinfa qishanqu shishi gengzhe you qitian lingdao ganbu yewu huibao ji lü” (Minutes of Qishan district land to the tiller leading cadre work meeting), 1953; GCA 0042/155.1.57/01/03/002 “Gaoxiong xian zhengfu zhi gequ dudao tongzhi zhizhao” (Gaoxiong county government circular to leaders [implementing the land to the tiller program] in all districts), March 6, 1953.

land reform was as much about the state's extension of direct power to reordering economic and social relations in the countryside and vertically integrating the bureaucracy as it was about the land reform program as such. In S'nan, land reform went hand in hand with a substantial expansion of the ranks of basic level cadres in the countryside. In the Shanghai suburbs alone, some 460 lecturers from local universities and middle schools were trained and sent down to the countryside to implement land reform, accompanied by a much larger number of 4616 activists, largely from poor peasant backgrounds. Once in the countryside, a substantial minority never left. Of these activists, over one fifth (1042) were eventually regularized as permanent cadres, often remaining in the villages where they had been dispatched to oversee the land reform campaign, and guiding later rural campaigns.¹⁶ In late 1950, the Sunan Party Village Work Committee targeted the training of an eventual 11,333 cadres to cover the three districts of Suzhou, Changshu, and Songjiang.¹⁷

Similar training exercises took place in Taiwan under the auspices of the Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction, as the technocratic bureaucracy mobilized to help local the Land Bureaux (*dizheng chu*) under the auspices of the Taiwan provincial government extended their reach down to every village and hamlet. The JCRR oversaw the training of over 4,000 staff workers to implement a rent reduction program (*sanqinwu* 三七五) between 1949 and 1952, and repeated the exercise in 1952 when it trained over 2000 to carry out the specific technical work of checking and re-entering of land ownership record cards for the entire cadastre of land under cultivation on the island in preparation for the Land to the Tiller program of 1953 (*gengzhe you qitian* 耕者有其田).¹⁸ The Land to the Tiller initiative in turn required additional training of administrators already in place in Taiwan's land administration at the provincial, county, and district levels. In Taiwan provision was also made for supplementary technical training for an additional 2,400 field workers, and top up training of the 3000-odd members of local farm tenancy committees and 6,537 hamlet and section chiefs.¹⁹

These land reform campaigns also put a good deal of time and effort into propaganda dissemination. This meant persuading large numbers to mobilize in support of the state's program to go down to the countryside, and convincing even larger numbers of people in the countryside that these new policies were reasonable, comprehensible and absolutely necessary. Publicity about land reform programs was disseminated widely in national, regional, and local press. In China this meant the reproduction of pamphlets in simple language, often with use of cartoons, laying out basic questions and answers to illustrate the gravity of exploitative feudalism in the countryside and the government's measures for resolving this deplorable situation.²⁰ More upmarket versions of printed propaganda was aimed at intellectuals. For example, the noted anthropologist and sociologist Pan Guangdan and other senior academics from Beijing were

¹⁶ SMA (Shanghai Municipal Archive) B14/1/80, "Shanghai shi jiaoqu xunlian ganbu shu piyang jijifenzi qingkuang"(The situation for Shanghai municipal outer district cadre training and the cultivation of activists) , and "Sheng tudi gaige qianhou xiangcun jiceng ganbu bianhua qingkuang tongjibiao" (Statistical form on changes in village level local cadres before and after land reform). both p. 13 of internally numbered file, dated 12/31/51. SMA B14/1/6/ "Jiaoshi canjia tudi gaige di'yi xiaozu mingdan ji duiyuan tongjibiao" (Instructors participating in land reform: the first small group name list and statistics) 1951.

¹⁷ JPA (Jiangsu Provincial Archive) 3006-3-360. "Benhui [zhonggong su'nanzu dangwei nongcun gongzuoweiyuanhui] Su'nan ganbu xunlian tongjibiao"(Chinese Communist Su'nan group party village work committee Su'nan cadre training statistics). N.d, 1950

¹⁸ Hui-sun Tang *Land Reform in Free China* p. 50-51

¹⁹ Hui –sun Tang, *Land Reform in Free China* p. 116

²⁰ See Tao Dayong et.al., *Tudi gaige yu xin minzhu zhuyi geming* (Land Reform and the New Democracy Revolution), Shanghai: Zhanwang Zhoukan , 1951

taken on a study tour of land conditions and the process of land reform in Sunan in the spring of 1951. The published essays resulting from this experience read like emotional conversion experiences: being awakened to the suffering of the peasantry and deep inequality in the countryside, the correctness of the CCP's categories of class analysis and diagnosis of rural problems, and absolute support for the notion that a) feudalism was rampant in S'unan and b) the evils engendered by feudalism required total overthrow by the Chinese Communist Party.²¹ Finally, propaganda was taken straight to the villages with small group meetings, and popular entertainment featuring plays emphasizing the drama and righteousness of land reform, further blurring the boundary between education and entertainment.²²

Given the enormous ideological distance between the two regimes, the form of propaganda dissemination in Taiwan were astonishingly similar. In Taiwan, land reform was run through a combination of the Taiwan provincial level land bureaus (*dizheng chu*) with leadership from a technocratic rural development agency staffed jointly by Chinese and American agricultural economists called the JCRR (Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction). Like the CCP, the JCRR prioritized publicity and propaganda: in preparation for the land to the tiller program, the JCRR itemized budget for project publicity was even larger than that for training nearly 2000 trainees. But the similarities do not end there. The specific forms of propaganda and publicity and means of dissemination were virtually identical: the commissioning of cartoons, movies, songs, and plays accessible to rural villagers, followed by intensive deployment. Once written and rehearsed, these dramatic performances were slated to be performed at the rate of one per every three villages throughout Taiwan. In addition, the JCRR subsidized the projection of a reel of educational slides about the land to the tiller program to be run in over 120 cinemas. In terms of print material, the JCRR literally blanketed the island with paper that explained, exhorted, and entertained: fully half of its large printing budget was devoted to publicity materials, many of which entertained as much as they informed: cartoons, movie synopses, posters, pictures, and the texts of the locally performed plays along with more mundane copies of program regulations.²³

Diverging Campaign Repertoires I

We are used to thinking of the CCP and the GMD as utterly different because of their positions on the importance of class struggle and physical violence. This fundamental philosophical difference is certainly at the core of the ways in which these two regimes' repertoires diverged over the course of land reform. The CCP trumpeted the cleansing power of struggle including physical violence, while the GMD shied away from explicit struggle whenever possible, preferring to conduct its violence in out of sight. The CCP explicitly and deliberately used land reform as a way to engage in a project of investigation and classification of the countryside, fixing class labels on the basis of occupation for individual families that would remain permanent while the GMD made every effort to encourage individual movement between different occupational statuses (from tenant to free holder and from landlord to capitalist). Given the overall similarities and core state agenda and its staking of public legitimacy on implementing meaningful land reform in Taiwan, ROC political elites went to extraordinary lengths to distinguish themselves and their land reform programs from the violent and evil Other,

²¹ Su'nan Renmin Xingzhengshu Tudi gaige weiyuan hui, *Wo suo jiandaode Su'nan tudi gaige yundong*, (My view of the Land Reform Movement in Su'nan) (1951), op. cit.

²² Xiao Mu, *Tugai Xuanchuan ju* (Land Reform Propaganda Plays) (Hangzhou: Zhongguo Ertong Chuban) 1950. The topic of theatre and plays as propaganda during the land reform campaign is also the subject of ongoing work by Brian DeMare, currently at Tulane University.

²³ GSG (Guoshi Guan [Academia Historica]) 313/1285-3 FY 52, "A preliminary budget estimate for the private land purchase project in Taiwan", prepared by Taiwan Land Bureau, April 1952.

on the opposite side of the Taiwan Straits. This was implicit in the rhetoric, but it was also explicitly laid out in private discussions within the government.

One ROC/Taiwan Executive Yuan discussion over the specifics of the set piece Land to the Tiller program went as far as to lay out the parameters of the debate in the following manner. Given that the purpose of the Land to the Tiller program was “to abolish an irrational system of tenancy, to establish an open and fair system of private land ownership, and to return land ownership to the tiller”, a chart was made up on an oversized piece of paper that was folded in on itself several times. The main features of the Communist version of land reform were laid out on the left side of the paper, and the range of possibilities for the Nationalist version of land reform on the right side of the paper. The left side of the chart enumerated the goals and methods of the Communists, while the right side of the suggested three or four possibilities that the Nationalists could choose by way of response. At all times the possible options were negatively framed by the (presumed) goals and repertoires of the Communists: if those awful “*gongfei*” [共匪] (Communist bandits) over there had engaged in class struggle and public humiliation of landlords, then by definition we good people over here could only consider methods that explicitly ruled out class struggle and public humiliation of landlords. If the Communists had done x and y, then we could only countenance engaging with what was clearly and demonstrably non-x and non-y. For the Guomintang, the range of the possible in land reform was defined largely by what the CCP had not done. Fortunately, there were normally two or three credible options that the CCP had not obviously engaged in their pursuit of land reform for the GMD to consider by way of response.²⁴ In practice these different choices in repertoire not only expressed core philosophical differences and bitter competition; they also were part of a much larger process of mutual differentiation through public performance that reified each regime’s own way of doing things while instructing the population at large into that state mandated good.

Land reform performances in the two Chinas differed in their pace, in the kinds of shows that were put on, in their staging, in their dramatic registers and, perhaps most critically, in the kinds of popular participation that was mobilized. In Su’nan, land reform performances necessarily required very public forms of participatory theatre that were acted out in public space through public meetings that were called variously “struggle meetings” (*douzhenhui* 斗争会) or “accusation meetings” (*kongsu hui* 控诉会). Local cadres that failed to “stir up the masses” (*fadong qunzhong* 发动群众) were severely criticized by their superiors, because one of the main goals of popular mobilization was to instruct the public in new regime norms even as it garnered its support. In Taiwan land reform was equally heuristic, but its land reform performances prioritized the public display of legal procedure and due process. In Sunan mass *yundong* absolutely required the fear and anger of cathartic mass emotion; the graphically public corporeal destruction of the “old” (feudal, corrupt) as a form of cleansing and public identification with the “new” (modern, clean and bright), now firmly identified with the CCP’s right to rule and the legitimacy of the PRC. In Taiwan, the ROC government, in cooperation with the JCRR, made every effort possible to dampen down and channel emotion by insisting on its moral righteousness through procedures, best exemplified through highly controlled public voting exercises.

In order to support these two different conceptions of what the state enlightened subject was supposed to do, the parts of the land reform campaigns that engaged publics were executed in very different ways. The first major divergence was in tempo. In Sunan, campaign pace was much faster than was the case in Taiwan, with a mandatory “high tide” (*gaochao* 高潮) in the

²⁴ GSG 071.204, Xingzheng Yuan, Mishu chu, “Taiwan gengzhe you qitian yu gongfei ‘tugai’” (Taiwan’s Land to the Tiller and Communist bandit ‘land reform’) August 2, 1953

process that was particularly rapid. In S'nan official investigations into rural conditions, followed by land reform trials in experimental villages (*shidian cun*) dragged throughout 1950. Throughout this year of preparation, investigation, and experiment, it became clear that many local cadres doubted that the land reform campaign was necessary, as categories handed down from high (landlords, local bullies and rich peasants as “exploiting classes”) and the presumption of a reservoir of mass hatred for these exploiters simply did not apply to the Sunan region. Worse still, many locals resolutely refused to be “stirred up” and instead sympathized with the putative “exploiters” in their midst. This informal deadlock was broken in November 1950, when the entire Su'nan region sent cadres to a specially convened land reform conference. At this juncture, local officials were put on notice that their excuses and footdragging would no longer be tolerated. Predictably, the campaign then lurched wildly to the left. While the timing of the actual “high tide” of the campaign, which involved mass meetings, public accusation meetings, and assignment of the “fruits of struggle” varied, in all cases it was done extremely quickly once underway: and was typically concluded in a matter of one to two weeks..

The description below of land reform in Qingpu county, to the immediate west of Shanghai is instructive in its depiction of how quickly the campaign was pushed through in the lower Yangzi region:

“... the investigation of eight administrative villages, 44 villages and 5 unified towns began in the spring of 1950. ... by the end of August, each district had seven experimental areas that had implemented land reform; in the first half of September the second group of 27 villages and one town began, in the second half of September a third group of 23 villages and 5 towns, and by the end of November, the entire county had finished up.

Land reform work went through the training of backbone (cadres), propaganda mobilization, division of classes. The county party committee held three land reform cadre training sessions that 451 cadres attended, of whom 96 were land reform work team members who were sent to help with land reform work in villages after participation in the district experimental villages.

The county Peasant Association convened four Peasant's Representative Meetings with 3117 participants. 10,500 participated in district level Peasant Representative Meetings, which disseminated propaganda about the significance and purpose of land reform.. At the beginning of September, the District Land Reform Committee formally established a 13 member land reform committee, in order to pursue the line of “relying on poor peasants and hired laborers, uniting with middle peasants, neutralizing rich peasants and isolating landlords”, in succession dividing classes, collecting land and distributing the fruits of victory”.

In the middle of land reform, the districts held a total of 1072 public accusation meetings. 137,000 participated, and [of these] 3855 individual peasants uncovered and accused landlord and evil bullies' criminal behavior. According to law, the entire county collected 437,227 mou of land, including 6017 *mou* of “black earth” (land hidden by landlords). Of this (total), 332,069 mou was taken from landlords, and the remaining 105,158 *mou* from half landlord half rich peasants, rich peasants engaging in trade while renting land, petty rentiers, and other kinds of public land. According to policy, this land was distributed to poor peasants and hired laborers, middle peasants, and others engaged in labor. In order to transform landlords into self supporting laborers, they were given a parcel of equivalent land. Undergoing the process of land reform has realized “land to the tiller” (*gengzhe you qitian*). Land reform ...through public meetings also redistributed landlords' excess property of 426 carts, 371 boats, 370 head of water

buffalo, 2156 pieces of furniture, 4786 dwellings, and 540,000 kg of grain to poor peasants and hired laborers. On May 15, 1951, the county government promulgated “land reform house ownership certificates” (also called “land reform certificates”). These were distributed in three batches, concluding at the end of July, with the issuing of more than 61,000 certificates.”²⁵

This official report on land reform in Qingpu county, which is drawn from a more detailed archival report, is quite revealing. Once the organizational / bureaucratic preparations had been made, it is quite clear that the Qingpu authorities put a premium on speed. Mobilization, mass accusation meetings, and redistribution appear to have been condensed into one intensively charged period of approximately two weeks from either the beginning to middle or middle to end of September for the second and third groups in Qingpu. Even laggard villages had completed the process by the end of November.

In other areas, particularly the Shanghai *jiaoqu* (outer districts) and in rural Shanghai county to the south of the city, land reform was delayed until the spring of 1951. Despite this half year lag, the rapid pace of “high tides” was identical. In Shanghai county, for example, virtually all villages in the county had completed land reform by late June 1951, and the vast majority of these pushed through their “high tides” very quickly indeed, with some recorded instances of the “high tide” being completed in only 4 or 5 days.²⁶ Final registration of the results, record keeping and the hearing of appeals and resolution of difficult cases and border adjudication dragged on into 1952, but these were relatively straightforward matters of bureaucratic tidying up.

The comparison with land reform in Taiwan is stark. The implementers in Taiwan went out of their way to adopt a gradualist version of land reform. *Ex post facto* accounts of the land reform process suggest that land reform was accomplished by three by carefully planned and executed projects that progressed in natural, logical sequence between 1949 and 1953-54, “starting from 1949 and [was] brought to a successful inclusion in 1953.”²⁷ In official representations, the JCR and the Nationalist Government jointly developed land reform out of four quite separate and deliberately gradualist administrative initiatives that built on each other between 1949 and 1954: 1) the “375” rent reduction (1949, but accelerating in 1951-52), 2) the sale of public land (1951-52 at various points), 3) the re-checking and re-registration of the entire cadastre (1952) and only then 4) the land to the tiller program (1953, but comprehensively assessed and declared to be an overwhelming success in 1954). The terms of the Land-to-the-Tiller program were designed to simultaneously provide “reasonable” compensation to landlords and to proceed incrementally, through a process whereby after the landlords’ compulsory sale of excess land to the state and the state’s transfer of that land to tenants, tenants were to redeem to value of the land through instalment payments to be completed over an additional ten year period. The way in which land reform was explained to contemporaries and commemorated for posterity stressed its incrementalism and gradualism. The bureaucratic focus and intensification

²⁵ *Qingpu xianzhi zhubian* Ma Wen, (Qingpu county gazetteer, ed. Ma Wen), Shanghai: Renmin Chubanshe, 1990, pp. 199-200.

²⁶ MDA (Minhang District Archive) 13-1-37 “Shanghai xian guqu” (Shanghai county districts). This map shows 48 districts in the county, with the dates of their first (preparatory), second (“high tide”), and third (“concluding”) phases of land reform. Of these, 23 completed the second stage in a week or under, and 23 in between one and two weeks, none in more than two weeks, and two for whom there is no information.

²⁷ Chen Cheng, *Land Reform in Taiwan*, (Taipei: China Publishing Company, 1960), Hsiao Cheng, *The Theory and Practice of Land Reform* (Taipei: China Research Institute of Land Economics, 1953. 1968), p. 96 and *Land Reform Annual Reports* ... p. 20

around pushing through land reform in Taiwan lasted five years (in comparison to the CCP in Sunan, which took roughly eighteen months). The very design of the Land to the Tiller program further reified gradualism and stability, since tenants entitled to buy their land under the program were expected to take an additional decade of instalments to repay their loans to the government in full. Even after the land was fully redeemed after a decade, land reform was slated to then move into a “second stage” of gradual land rationalization and consolidation in a gradual and only distantly realizable future of efficiency and progress.²⁸

In practice, land reform in Taiwan was not nearly as cleanly incrementally implemented as these official narratives suggest. The crowning glory of land reform campaigns in Taiwan, the “Land to the Tiller” program, is best understood as a dramatic campaign of regime mobilization in response to the problems engendered by the more technocratic and managerial “375” Rent Reduction policy and the disappointing outcomes of the sales of public land. To the dismay of the planners in the JCRR and the Taiwan provincial Land Bureau, rather than lessening social conflict in the countryside, the regime’s seriousness in implementing rent reduction in 1951-52 triggered widespread evasion, unilateral lease cancellations, waves of disputes between landlords and tenants over lease terms and responsibility for irrigation fees, and the exact opposite of what the rent reduction program was meant to accomplish: stability by undercutting what was felt to be the Left/ Communist strongest source of appeal in the countryside. Uncertainty over land tenure meant that land prices dropped. Landlords complained bitterly about their suddenly economically precarious position, and the local Rent Reduction Committees (*sanqiwu weiyuanhui*) established to resolve disputes between landlord and tenant were either landlord dominated or existed only on paper. Indeed the problems engendered by the 375 Rent Reduction policy raised the spectre that a program designed to dampen down rural unrest was instead accelerating exactly the kinds of problems that it was trying to ameliorate. The much less gradualist Land to the Tiller Program (*gengzhe you qitian*), and the preparatory projects that accompanied it between 1952 and 1954 played out as a series of sub-campaigns, even as their planners were occupied at every turn by the imperative to distinguish their rationale, their methods, and their outcomes from the land reform campaign in the People’s Republic of China.

Divergent Repertoires II: Performing the Campaign

Violence, either real or threatened, was at the heart of land reform, and this was as true in Taiwan as it was in the People’s Republic of China. What differed was how direct or implicit the violence was, and how the violence was entangled with quite different forms of representation and local participation. Planners of the campaign in both Sunan and Taiwan presumed that regular, organized representation from “below” was necessary for the successful implementation of such a life altering program in the countryside. Authorities in China and Taiwan both made efforts to organize the grassroots (typically through some form of electoral representation) into Peasant Associations (for China) and Rent Reduction Committees/ Farm Tenancy Committees (for Taiwan). However, Peasant Associations in Sunan were distrusted them on the grounds that they could easily come to be dominated by rich peasants and landlords. There was at least some reason for this kind of worry in a region in which tensions in the countryside were not nearly as sharp as the CCP’s framing of class struggle postulated: in at least one documented case in Miaoyang, Changshu, the “masses” openly wondered why landlords could not join peasant associations, and stand for election as small group representatives²⁹. The information revealed by the gazeteer in Qingpu implicitly suggests that land reform was locally dominated by a combination of the local land reform committee (a small group of individuals, often led by

²⁸ On this process, that went well into the 1970s, see Irene Bain, *Agricultural Reform in Taiwan: From Here to Modernity* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1993)

²⁹ JPA 3006-3-271. *ibid.*

outsiders appointed by the county government), work teams sent from outside the local area, regular cadres sent to the county for special training sessions, and pre-identified local activists. Insofar as the Peasant Association had a role at all, it appears to have been confined to propaganda dissemination and on occasion helping to get everyone out to public struggle meetings.

In Sunan, local representation and participation in land reform was very important, but the most important manifestation of representation in land reform was not, as one might have expected, through elections and regularized expression of interests via the local Peasant Association. Meaningful local representation was instead expressed through direct participation unmediated by rules and procedures in the public drama of mass struggle sessions. As a matter of definition, the repertoire the mobilizational campaign positively required a “high tide” in which the masses were stirred to action. And the only action that would do was a *public* mass chorus that would articulate rightful hatred towards landlord exploiters. The revolutionary state deemed this necessary as a first step in raising popular revolutionary consciousness, to mention nothing of explicitly engineering a public rally around the new government and garnering the public’s collusion in bloody violence against the state’s newly defined enemies. Cadres that failed to demonstrate appropriately “stirred up” masses were reprimanded for being formalist and insufficiently revolutionary.

Despite their seeming spontaneity, mass struggle sessions were carefully planned in advance, and required substantial background work of a more bureaucratic, routine nature. Public arenas had to be identified, stages had to be set up, times had to be agreed, and the accused had to be thoroughly processed in advance of the actual session. Cadres identified and coached activists, and were told to recruit particularly sympathetic accusers likely to stir the emotions of the crowd. Almost exclusively, public accusers were the very young, the very old, women, and the obviously infirm and handicapped. At the actual mass struggle session, they come forward onto the stage in a pre-determined sequence, and knew which particular accusations to make. Land reform in Sunan followed performance scripts handed down from higher levels, and there was pressure from on high to repeat the drama and emotionally led self-transformation deemed to be necessary to the “high tide” of the campaign for it to count as successful. At the Sunan regional level, cadres were insistent that the specially chosen wronged mount the stage (*shang tai* 上台) to engage in direct “face to face” (*mian dui mian* 面对面) accusation and that the evil accused “publicly acknowledge” previous crimes (*chengzui* 承罪) before the masses; ... without this kind of public acknowledgement of crimes the entire [process] is false.”³⁰ The form of the mass accusation session gathered virtually the entirety of the rural population as one participant-spectator audience in one place, where the specific theatrical device of “speaking bitterness” (*chiku* 吃苦) was acted out by pre-coached activists and victims, and the “masses” publicly merged as one with the state.

County records from Qingpu and Shanghai, as well as those from the Shanghai *jiaoku* (outer districts) confirm that large numbers of mass struggle sessions were convened and that those “targets” pre-determined to be the most evil and hated were promptly led off to the execution ground. Statistics from Shanghai county convey the startling information that nearly a third (224 of 779) of recorded “accusation targets” (*douzhenng duixiang* 斗争对象) were “strung up and beaten” (*douzhenng zhong bei diaoda* 斗争中被吊打) during the course of mass accusation sessions. Whether this sort of extreme violence was genuinely popular and welcomed by the public audiences is difficult to determine. The record in Sunan is thus far lacking in the kind of detailed eye witness accounts that give us a sense as to whether this kind of violence was

³⁰ JPA 3006-3-271. Su’nan Tugai Weiyuanhui Mishuchu, “Guanyu fadong qunzhong wenti de baogao”, (Report on the Problems of Stirring up the Masses) 1951

genuinely popular, whether it brought about the free flowing tears and spontaneous accusations that were typical of the land reform campaign in North China whether it was the product of a small minority, or whether in fact it only took place with the active connivance of local cadres.³¹

A critical report on the difficulties of stirring up the masses compiled by the Sunan Land Reform Investigation Unit in April 1951 suggests that in many locales cadres had to overcome a great deal of natural reluctance on the part of the “masses” to be “stirred” to physical violence. In one case in Jiading county, Mawei district, Beiguan village, a local cadre clearly incited the masses to demand physical violence: from the middle of the crowd he shouted “go ahead and hit” (the accused). “From the stage [where the accused and a peasant who was ‘speaking bitterness’ towards the accused], the district cadre instructed the man who was ‘speaking bitterness’ “if the masses say ‘hit him’ then you have to go ahead and hit him.” But the man who was in his appointed role to ‘speak bitterness’ demurred for quite a while with the repeated insistence that: “I’ve never hit anyone before, and I will not hit him”. After the crowd continued to bay for more violence, the designated victim on the stage hit the accused, ultimately resulting in seven or eight blows.³² In other places, local cadres dampened down the physical violence of accusatory theatre rather than ratcheting it up. In Kunshan’s Yebi district, Yebi village, before the public accusation session commenced, the cadre warned the gathered crowd that “he [the cadre] was the one passing judgement, and that anyone who went ahead and “strung up and beat” an accused target would have to take responsibility for so doing”. In another instance involving a particularly despised “little tiger” (*xiaohu*), the local cadre by the name of Zhang Zhihua refused to let the prisoner go to his appointed struggle session, on the grounds that if the prisoner had to face the public, he would definitely be beaten to death.³³

Thus the qualitative evidence about the as well as the form desired by higher levels in the CCP (representing popular will, whipping the crowd into a frenzy of popular support for the regime’s dispatch of now isolated class enemies) is unclear. Recorded statistics claim that the majority of the rural population “participated” in accusation sessions, but these seem to be the aggregate numbers of those who turned up for the public gathering. Formulaic reports almost uniformly conclude that “the masses were stirred up” and that justice was done, with resounding affirmation for the state’s violence against class enemies. More detailed micro-narratives suggest a much more mixed picture. Some of the presently available accounts support the notion that local cadres lurched radically leftward after November 1950, and along with activists incited the “masses” to publicly denounce and commit violence against those targets deemed hateful exploiters. Other evidence suggests that local cadres put definite limits on the degree of uncontrolled violence that they would permit on their watches. Within this variation, however, it is clear that scripts handed down from superiors required a dramatic culmination of “stirred up” masses accusing evil landlords and reaffirming collective unity with the state and its violence against defined enemies. Sometimes the public performance went well. But in other cases it seems to have not, at least in part because of the social and economic realities in Sunan, where the dividing line between exploited and exploiters was very blurred, landlords were weak, social and economic mobility was high, and in many places local people actually thought that their own local landlords weren’t such bad sorts at all. We cannot know for sure about something so variable and subjective, but it does stand to reason that perhaps the masses were less enthusiastic than the large numbers of those in attendance at the mass struggle sessions would otherwise

³¹ There is a good deal of evidence that indirectly suggests that many, if not most, of the “masses” in Sunan were reluctant to rush forward and accuse their neighbors, but it is quite difficult to know how representative either enthusiasm or distaste for public struggle sessions was for the audiences in Sunan.

³² JPA 3006-3-271. “Guanyu fadong qunzhong douzheng de cailiao zhailü”, April 1951.

³³ Ibid.

suggest, and that in Sunan the dramatic dénouement of state led retribution through public accusation meetings simply didn't conform to the repertoire of out of hand violence, drama, and free flowing tears laid down in north China in the late 1940s.

The theatre of the mass struggle meetings is notable for several reasons that go beyond the degree to which the “masses” supported or refrained from the show of participatory violence put on by the state. First, the public stage was where the meaningful local input and representation came in to the campaign, and did so in ways that were diametrically opposed to the procedural and regularized - forms of representation that were characteristic of land reform in Taiwan . The public nature of the staging, the unitary and emotional narratives of prior suffering, injustice and the now shackled representatives of evil personified encouraged the very reverse of procedure and rules – an unleashing of collective emotion and fury that merged individual interests into collective identification with the group and the new regime. Although these were in fact heavily stage managed events, and the spontaneity of the accusations levied and the importance of the crowd in determining the outcome towards the accused was more apparent than real, it is not at all clear at this early stage in regime consolidation that the “masses” understood that the outcome of public struggle sessions was foreordained and that their designated role was that of the chorus: to be stirred to emotion, to cheer and clap on cue, and to collectively re-affirm the moral righteousness of the regime in stamping out vicious enemies. Second, the very form of the mass struggle meeting was as much a heuristic device for educating the participants about the new regime's norms and rhetoric as it was a means for dispatching individuals deemed to be enemies of the state. The state claimed to represent, reproduce, and make public the legitimate position and opinions of “the masses”; the masses in turn learned what was expected of them in collective action in new forms of political participation unmediated by organizations or procedures. The very public and staged nature form of the mass struggle session implicitly bloodied the hands of all of those who shouted in support of the regime's violence against enemies, and provided a symbolic point of no return; after such a highly public show of participatory violence against defined class enemies, things would never be quite the same again. When the show went well, local participation and representation was thus articulated through a publicly affirmed emotional unity and merging of crowd and state; representation was fused in a dramatic unity with the state and its agents.

Local participation in land reform with concomitant theatre was equally important in Taiwan, but it could not have been more differently managed. Rather than the emotional “stirring up” and free floating tears and violence of the mass struggle session, in Taiwan provision was made from the outset to channel representation in highly regularized, if indirect, forms of procedural representation. Over the course of the land reform campaigns in Taiwan, there were two forms of this kind of representation: first were Rent Reduction Committees (*sanqinwu weiyuanhui*) (1949-1951) thereafter the much stronger Farm Tenancy Committees (*gengdi zudian weiyuanhui* 耕地租佃委员会 or *zudian weiyuanhui* 租佃委员会). As was so often the case for local representative groups organized with the blessing of the Guomindang on the mainland, the Rent Reduction Committees never worked as intended and either didn't meet at all, or became vehicles for continued local elite domination. In 1952, the combined JCRR-government response was to establish an island wide series of Farm Tenancy Committees to replace the Rent Reduction Committees. This was accomplished through another, quite literal, kind of sub-campaign: to hold through occupationally separate tiers of island wide indirect elections to these newly established Farm Tenancy Committees. Thus what was not fit for purpose was replaced with a very different kind of theatrical performance: the theatre of the public, competitive election, followed by the more closed and bounded performance of procedural rule application by committee behind closed doors.

The first round of elections for these Farm Tenancy Committees were for hamlet and section representatives. The first step was to compile a list of eligible voters according to their rural occupational status (landlord, tenant, or freeholder). Regular village and township offices screened the applications of prospective candidates and then publicly displayed the list. From this public posting each hamlet and section elected two tenant farmer representatives, one owner-farmer representative, and one landlord representative. This process was then repeated for the relatively fewer county and city farm tenancy committees.³⁴

A good deal about these elections is unclear. The text of *Land Reform in Free China* hints that these elections were often held in big group meetings rather than at a ballot box, so one wonders about how the procedures worked in practice and indeed what kinds of public theatrical “shows” might have accompanied these elections. What is also clear is that voters were grouped by rural economic status, and separate elections were held for landlords, freeholding farmers, and tenants, with fixed proportional representation weighted in slight favor of tenants on each committee. On the advice of Wolf Ladejinsky, who was then a key advisor to the land reform program in occupied Japan, at least half of the places on Farm Tenancy Committees were reserved for tenants; many years later, those at the top of the JCRR programs felt these quotas to have been critical to the program’s later success.³⁵

Although given responsibility for resolving local land related disputes, the degree to which these elected bodies had genuine rather than nominal authority and discretion to adjudicate land related disputes and make binding decisions is unclear, and may have varied from place to place and over time. We do know that the Taiwan provincial government’s land administration bureau gave compulsory two week training courses to recent electees “to acquaint them with their functions and responsibilities and the relevant laws and regulations.”³⁶ The decisions and minutes of the meetings of the Farm Tenancy committees were reported on a regular basis to the immediately superior level of the *dizheng chu* (Taiwan Government Land Office at the local level). Difficult cases were variously passed up to higher level Farm Tenancy committees, the district level *dizheng chu* and more rarely the courts. While much work remains to be done to ascertain the degree to which regular government offices exercised oversight over these committees, what is indisputable is that a very large number of elections was held to staff these committees in every village, township, county, and city in Taiwan in the second half of 1952. These local committees met regularly from 1953 through the late 1950s at least. They had the authority to directly question those bringing the case and those being accused in a quasi-judicial setting. And they formally handled and made decisions on a very large number of adjustments to land classification and land related disputes. One set of statistics suggests that between January 1952 and July 1956 township level committees conciliated 31,759 disputes and referred 16,462 to the prefectural or city land tenure committee; of these 16,462, 9,418 were conciliated and only 5,321 were referred to courts. There is in addition some evidence that within a fairly short period of time in some localities, at least some Farm Tenancy committees began to take on larger roles in local land disputes than the straightforward landlord vs. tenant cases originally envisioned by the JCRR. For example, in 1955, in Tainan county, a land dispute between two quasi-government bodies, the local sugar factory and the local agricultural school was brought before the Yongkang town Farm Tenancy Committee. In an echo of the way in which the late Qing state dealt with local problems, the Guomindang’s preferred strategy was to blur the boundaries of state and society by creating a committee of local stake holders to get them to take over some portion of the state’s work. The Guomindang party-state went out of its way to provide for a regularized form of participatory representation for local interest

³⁴ This information is drawn from *Land Reform in Free China*, pp. 56-58.

³⁵ Louis Walinsky, ed. *The Selected Papers of Wolf Ladejinsky* (Washington: World Bank), 1977, p. 95.

³⁶ *Land Reform in Free China*, P. 59.

articulation (and likely help with some of the hard work of making some of the more difficult parts of land reform implementation stick). In Taiwan, local representation in land reform was regularized, formally organized, procedurally oriented, designed to be deliberately inclusive of different economic status groups in rural society. And after the openness and procedurally delimited theatre of the initial elections, this work seems to have done its work behind closed doors.

In both Sunan and Taiwan, the state organized local forms of representation to seem as if they represented local popular desires, favoring particular groups while marginalizing or exterminating others. However, the ways in which the state did so could hardly have been more different: carefully planned, procedural, and electoral forms of local representation designed to dampen down emotion in Taiwan, vs. the public, violent, emotional collective will deliberately whipped up to merge with that of the state in Sunan. In Sunan the public and participatory theatre of land reform collapsed representation into regime goals and fostered emotional and theatrical unity of the masses with the CCP; in Taiwan the public and participatory parts of land reform were confined to segmented, procedurally oriented elections, after which rules and procedures were delegated to an elected committee, whose deliberations and application of rules took occurred in enclosed public space, away from crowds and emotion. Ironically, the politically conservative Republic of China on Taiwan was able to allow for more “modern” forms of voice through (controlled) voting, while the explicitly revolutionary People’s Republic of China fell back on a much older set of repertoires, in which voice was articulated through collective public performance.

By way of conclusion

What then, do the clearly successful land reform campaigns in the revolutionary state in Sunan, PRC and the “conservative” ROC state in Taiwan suggest about the importance of frame, repertoire, and performance for wider processes of regime consolidation and institutionalization? The first, fairly obvious point is that subjective interpretation of what is desirable and possible matters, particularly so when state organizations are not yet institutionalized and aspiring statemakers are faced with a set of extraordinary tasks: socializing their agents into their agendas and methods, projecting state capacity, and garnering compliance and some degree of support from critical sectors of the population. Punctuated equilibrium theory suggests that crises and periods of severe irruption (such as after a major war) allow opportunities and spaces for the creation of new practices and institutions. But even a cursory comparative review of a topic such as land reform suggests that there are many more ways in which to fail than there are to be successful. the PRC and ROC were undeniably successful in pushing through their own instinctively performative land reform campaigns, but many more regimes in the area possessed neither the political will nor the range of potentially effective repertoires for success. Even Japan’s “successful” land reform in the late 1940s was implemented at the fiat of the US Occupation. Post war attempts in the Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, the entire sub-continent apart from Kerala, and any number of states in Latin America proved to be even more disappointing.

Considering the common core agendas, overlapping frames, and partially convergent repertoires in these two competitive variants on the Chinese states in the early 1950s suggests that regime commitments and capacities are bounded as much by the subjective (what is preferred, imaginable, and do-able) as they are by the more readily identified objective (size of the bureaucracy, scale of the program to be implemented, the material interests of subjects). What is preferred, imaginable and do-able does not drop from the sky. Campaigns, bureaucratic “organizational strengthening”, and performance repertoires are constituted from a combination of long held norms, historical experiences that are interpreted positively or negatively, philosophical justifications for governance, and external reference groups. And what then

becomes preferred and then potentially institutionalized is not only a matter of power or factional politics; it also reflects what state makers perceive has (or has not) been successful.

The young PRC was dedicated – to the point of obstinacy – that not only its goal of land equalization but its methods of mass mobilization and stirring up the masses, were a necessary part of revolutionary regime consolidation, even where the local economy and power structures were so utterly different from the Chinese Communist Party’s original base in north China. The reason that this is likely so is because of the sheer, unanticipated, rapid *success* of China’s revolution. Mao had insisted on the triumph of revolutionary will and organization over objectively unfavourable circumstances for nearly 20 years, and in 1949 he was proved right. Sunan was forced to play out repertoires laid down in the long years of the CCP’s internal exile and the North China land reform campaigns of the 1940s. When these repertoires were implemented in Sunan in the early 1950s, there was compliance but a certain bewilderment. It was only after all the usual suspects who were demonstrably beyond revolutionary inclusion (landlords, bullies, reactionaries, bourgeois intellectuals, local capitalists) had been dispatched that these repertoires of public struggle began to turn inward, with predictably deleterious effects. Similarly, the sheer level of political will behind the ROC/JCRR version of gradualist land reform in Taiwan is inexplicable without referring to the ROC’s instructively negative counter-experience. The loss of the mainland had been such a protracted, searing process for GMD elites that once on Taiwan from 1949 onward they engaged in protracted soul searching, emerging from a set of frank discussions about the causes of their collapse in China with a new consensus about what needed to be done as a matter of regime survival. Land reform was in that new consensus.

But just because a policy “should” be implemented does not mean that it will be, even in the face of critical security issues. Many states limp along with much less than was accomplished in the PRC (revolutionary variant) and the ROC/Taiwan (conservative variant). And it is here that the effective combination of campaign and bureaucratic modalities of state building – and their relation to comprehensible and credible performances become particularly important.. Without an effective set of state organizations, neither regular polities nor campaigns can be implemented: without the mobilizing the commitments of state agents, no state organization can be “strengthened”. It is at this juncture that repertoire and performance become particularly pertinent. Although the particulars of repertoires and performances vary, if they are comprehensible, justifiable, and command a strong consensus within the higher reaches of the state, they are likely to lead to a stiffening of commitments of state agents, state projection to ever more grass roots of society, and acquiescence in core sectors of society. Insofar as the repertoires and performances are in conflict, vague, poorly executed and weakly played, they will likely not.