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Land and Retribution:

Morality, Mobilization, and Violence in China's Land Reform Campaign (1950-1952)

A dissertation presented

by

Jeffrey Arshad Javed

to

The Department of Government

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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in the subject of

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Harvard University

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Abstract

China's land reform campaign was the most extensive and violent redistribution of land in history, with estimates of millions of people killed or otherwise persecuted through mass mobilized "class struggle." Yet it is unclear how the new regime managed to mobilize local communities, many of which lacked salient class divisions, to participate in this massive episode of class violence. I argue that the Party mobilized mass participation in violence by emphasizing and sensationalizing the moral transgressions of a subset of the landed elite, while simultaneously emphasizing the virtue and victimhood of the masses. Through this process of moral mobilization, the Party delineated a new moral boundary between the "oppressed" masses and the cruel and corrupt landlord class; it was on the basis of this new moral boundary that the Party galvanized popular outrage and participation in retributive violence against members of the landed elite and other perceived moral transgressors.

Drawing on archival documents, internal Party publications, oral histories, memoirs, and a unique historical dataset of 124 local county gazetteers gathered over twelve months of fieldwork, I explore how the Party used moral mobilization to mobilize mass violence across localities in Anhui and Jiangsu provinces. By comparing localities situated in contrasting geographic regions under the same political jurisdiction, I illustrate how the targeting and

intensity of moral mobilization varied at the local level. I find that the specific social categories of people targeted and punished in a locality differed according to the predominant moral norms that governed social relations between the landed elite and the local community. My analysis of local patterns of violence reveals that economic inequality and other socioeconomic indicators do not predict the intensity, or amount, of violence mobilized. Rather, local governments' dual capacity to mobilize and control violence affected how much violence a locality endured.

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so much to my parents, Debra and Arshad Javed, for their boundless love and inexhaustible support, for which I cannot fully express my gratitude. As the Tang poet Meng Jiao once asked: “Who says that the heart of a blade of grass can ever repay the sunshine of three springs?” (谁言寸草心，报得三春晖.) I dedicate this dissertation to them and the rest of my family.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

"I did not learn until later that when I was in the halls of hell proclaiming my innocence, a period of land reform had been ushered in to the world of mortals, and that the big estates had been piecemealed out to landless peasants; naturally, mine was no exception. Parceling out land has its historical precedents, I thought, so why did they have to shoot me before dividing up mine?"

—Mo Yan, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*[1]

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, states have mobilized violence against their own citizens in contexts as varied as genocide, campaigns of state terror, and civil war.[2] Because the state frequently relies on civilian accomplices to "jointly produce" violence,[3] one of the enduring questions in the literature on conflict and violence has been how states mobilize ordinary citizens to participate in horrific acts of violence against their neighbors. Various studies have emphasized how elites can exploit the magnetic power of authority,[4] the persuasive strength of ethno-nationalist ideology,[5] and the seething animosity of deeply-rooted prejudices and social cleavages[6] to mobilize civilians to denounce, kill, or otherwise harm others. Most of these accounts, however, assume the existence of clear and salient social antagonisms

[1] Mo Yan, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, trans. Howard Goldblatt (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2008), 7.

[2] I broadly define violence as any action that inflicts harm, physically or mentally, against another, with the intent to cause suffering.

[3] Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[4] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 2006 [1963]); Stanley Milgram, "Behavioral Study of Obedience," *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67, no. 4 (1963): 371-378.

[5] Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[6] Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press, 1979); Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996); Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Staub differs somewhat from this school of thought in that he emphasizes that "social stress"—e.g. economic depression—in conjunction with pre-existing prejudices produced mass violence.

between local communities and the target group that elites can exploit to mobilize violence. While this may explain some cases of genocide where intergroup relations are historically acrimonious, political elites often succeed in mobilizing citizens to participate in violence *despite* the lack of popular animosity towards the targeted population. How, then, can political elites mobilize citizens to condone or risk participating in violence against a targeted population that is defined by social boundaries of little relevance to their everyday lives? And what does the nature of the mobilization process reveal about the kinds of people who will bear the brunt of this violence?

To understand how political actors can mobilize popular participation in violence under conditions of weak or non-salient social cleavages, I turn to a significant yet understudied historical episode of state-mobilized violence: China's post-revolutionary land reform campaign (1950-1952). Launched merely one year after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) assumed power, China's land reform campaign was the world's largest and most violent land reform, during which millions of so-called "landlords" (地主) perished or endured extreme psychological and physical violence at the hands of local villagers in the name of "class struggle" (阶级斗争).[7] Because of Mao's ardent commitment to popular participation in

[7] There are no precise estimates for the number of deaths during China's land reform campaign, though most estimates place the figure in the low millions. Mao himself claimed that out of China's 36 million landlords, one million landlords were executed, one million were imprisoned, and another two million were put under house arrest. See Yang Kuisong, "On the Attempt and Possibility of the CCP's Peaceful Land Reform After the War," [关于战后中共和平土改的尝试与可能问题] *Nanjing Daxue Xuebao (Zheshe Ban)* 5 (2007): 334-351. Stavis provides an estimate of over one million deaths, Teiwes cites a figure of between 1 to 2 million executed, while Domes believes that 5 million were killed during the campaign. See Benedict Stavis, *The Politics of Agricultural Mechanization in China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 29-30; Frederick C. Teiwes, "The Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime, 1949-1957," in *The Politics of China: Sixty Years of the People's Republic of China*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6-86; Jürgen Domes, *Socialism in the Chinese Countryside: Rural Societal Policies in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979* (London: C. Hurst, 1980), 8. Julia Strauss presents a nice overview of the various estimated figures for deaths during land reform (and the concurrent campaign to suppress counter-revolutionaries), giving a figure of one to five million in total for both campaigns. See Julia Strauss, "Morality, Coercion and State Building by Campaign in the Early PRC: Regime Consolidation and After, 1949-1956," *The China Quarterly* 188, no. 1 (2006): 901, fn. 17. For a more recent

revolutionary violence, the nascent regime insisted on the widespread involvement of ordinary villagers in the identification and punishment of these class enemies. At various mass rallies—e.g. "struggle sessions" (斗争大会), "public sentencings" (公审大会), and "People's Courts" (人民法庭)—armed guards escorted victims to a stage or clearing where, in front of a crowd of their fellow villagers, locals would publicly denounce them. The spectating crowd meanwhile would act as a communal judge, listening to these melodramatic testimonies, shouting slogans in sympathy with the denouncers and against the accused, and eventually recommending a suitable punishment.

The Party's mobilization efforts unleashed tremendous violence, which even the Party struggled to control. For example, in 1951 at a struggle session in a township in southern Jiangsu Province, "originally, over fifty people were to make accusations against the 'evil tyrant' (恶霸) and former district head You Ruilin at the struggle session, but because they started beating him as soon as the session began, they had already beaten him to death after only two people had finished denouncing him." Losing an opportunity to act on their outrage did not necessarily stop villagers from expressing their anger. In the nearby township of Ding Qiao, a man slated for political struggle escaped custody and hanged himself, fearing his punishment at the hands of the people. When the locals heard of this the next day, they found his body and hacked it apart with knives.[8]

assessment of violence during land reform, see Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945-1957* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).

[8] Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Dispatch on Strengthening the Inspection of Land Reform Work," [关于加强土改工作检查的代电] Nov. 15, 1951, *BSDA*, No. 1-2-001-052.

These outbursts of violence did not faze the Party; in fact, it considered them the natural consequence of releasing the peasantry's pent-up anger from centuries of class oppression.[9] It was simply a "law of physics" (物理学的定律), one official asserted, that an explosion of violence would follow the dissolution of China's ancient system of "feudal exploitation."[10] One district Party secretary, when questioned about the violent implementation of land reform in his locality, maintained that "it's not possible for the masses to struggle in a well-behaved manner" (要群众斗争规规矩矩是不可能的).[11]

The Party's narrative that violence inevitably erupted from repressed class hatred is belied by the relative non-salience of class boundaries in pre-1949 China. As Odoric Wou has noted, in traditional Chinese society "social cleavages seldom ran along class lines. The two main rural classes—gentry and peasants—shared a common identity in kinship group and residential community."[12] More importantly, this assertion that the Party merely unleashed popular anger toward the landed elite elides the extensive process by which it mobilized villagers' acceptance of and participation in violence, a process that is at the heart of this study.

While the land reform campaign involved a considerable amount of mobilization work, we know surprisingly little about how the Party mobilized participation in violent land reform after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Research that has addressed the mass

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[9] This remains the official Party narrative on the land reform campaign.

[10] Huang Yanpei, "Report Inquiring into Southern Jiangsu's Land Reform (Excerpt)," [访察苏南土地改革报告(节录)] February 13, 1951, *JSTGYD*, 152.

[11] Southern Jiangsu Land Reform Inspection Team. "A Record of the Situation of Land Reform in Various Localities in Southern Jiangsu," [苏南各地土改情况纪录] *JSPA*, no. 3006-244. Quoted in Mo Hongwei, "The Bloody Struggles during Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu," [苏南土地改革中的血腥斗争] *Modern China Studies* 4 (2006), http://www.modernchinastudies.org/cn/issues/past-issues/94-mcs-2006-issue-4/989-2012-01-05-15-35-10.html.

[12] Odoric Y. K. Wou, *Mobilizing the Masses: Building Revolution in Henan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 121.

mobilization of violence in land reform has focused primarily on the *pre*-revolutionary land reform campaign carried out in the northern Communist base areas between 1946 and 1948 during the Chinese Civil War.[13] The wartime environment, the radicalism of the guiding land reform policy, and the ferocity of the Japanese occupation in northern China all have provided ready explanations for the widespread violence that ensued.[14] When looking at the land reform campaign after 1949—which began in peacetime under a less radical policy framework and covered a vast and diverse territory—most scholarship, Western and Chinese, has downplayed the campaign's mobilization of violence and fixated instead on its economic impact or its historical evolution as a policy.[15] Vivienne Shue, while acknowledging the "explicitly conflictual" nature of the land reform campaign, describes the overall socialist transition in the countryside as having been "accomplished with minimal violence and disorder."[16] Even where scholars have alluded to the extreme violence of the campaign, they have not engaged in a systematic, comparative exploration of how this violence was mobilized and unfolded.[17]

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[13] The CCP carried out land reform, violently and nonviolently, many times since the 1920s; however, the Civil War-era land reform campaign was the largest episode of violent land reform before 1949.

[14] For thorough discussions of land reform violence during the Chinese Civil War, see Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-1949* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); and Yang, "Peaceful Land Reform."

[15] For economic accounts of land reform, see Robert Ash, "Economic Aspects of Land Reform in Kiangsu, 1949–52: Part 1." *The China Quarterly* 66 (1976): 261–292; Victor D. Lippit, *Land Reform and Economic Development in China: A Study of Institutional Change and Development Finance* (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences, 1974); and John Wong, *Land Reform in the People's Republic of China: Institutional Transformation in Agriculture* (New York: Praeger, 1973). For more historical and policy-centric accounts, see Dong Zhikai, *Land Reform During the War of Liberation* [解放战争时期的土地改革] (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chuban She, 1987); Du Runsheng, ed., *China's Land Reform* [中国的土地改革] (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo Chuban She, 1996); Yang, "Peaceful Land Reform"; Zhao Xiaomin, ed., *The History of Chinese Land Reform, 1921-1949* [中国土地改革史*, 1921-1949*] (Beijing: Renmin Chuban She, 1990).

[16] Shue, *Peasant China*, 2, 325.

[17] For descriptive accounts of land reform violence, see Dikötter, *Tragedy of Liberation*; Edwin E. Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Stavis, *Agricultural Mechanization*; and Yang, "Peaceful Land Reform."

I argue that the Chinese Communist Party, in the absence of clear and salient class cleavages, mobilized mass participation in violence against the landed elite by emphasizing and sensationalizing the moral transgressions—violations of norms of appropriate or good behavior—of a subset of the landed elite and other members of the community, while simultaneously emphasizing the virtue and victimhood of the masses.[18] Through this process of *moral mobilization*, the CCP not only delineated a new moral boundary between the "oppressed masses" and the "oppressive landlord class," they also used the exposure and condemnation of certain individuals' supposed moral turpitude to galvanize the righteous indignation of the masses and their acceptance of and participation in violent reprisal against members of this group.

In the remainder of this introduction, I outline my argument and provide a brief overview of the post-1949 land reform campaign. I then situate the puzzle of land reform in the context of the literature on social mobilization and political violence, demonstrating why existing explanations cannot fully explain the Party's mobilization of violence during land reform. After examining these existing explanations, I introduce and discuss the three major propositions that I address throughout the dissertation regarding morality and the mobilization of land reform violence. Finally, I present my research design and conclude with a brief chapter breakdown of the dissertation.

[18] I define participation broadly to include the direct perpetration of violence, public or private denunciation, or voluntary attendance at events where violence is used (e.g. struggle sessions, public sentencings, People's Court trials, etc.).

Outline of the Argument: The Moral Mobilization of Violence during Land Reform

Moral mobilization is a process of framing and sensemaking that emphasizes and sensationalizes moral transgressions—violations of culturally-specific norms of appropriate or just behavior—in order to motivate participation.[19] This mobilization process unfolded during China's land reform campaign in two stages: 1) *moral boundary work*,[20] in which Party officials grafted moral boundaries onto newly-imposed class boundaries by emphasizing the moral failings of some members of the landed elite and other perceived transgressors while emphasizing the virtue and victimhood of the "masses" (群众); and 2) the deployment of *moral shocks*—sensationalized accounts of normative transgressions—to generate intense feelings of outrage to justify and promote participation in violence against the landed elite.[21]

In most localities, moral mobilization adhered to the following sequence: After thoroughly researching the local community, Party work teams engaged in intensive propaganda work to raise locals' awareness of their victimhood. First in private small groups and later in large public meetings, they guided villagers to dredge up memories of past wrongs committed

[19] On the mobilization of violence as a sensemaking process, see Charles King, "The Micropolitics of Social Violence," *World Politics* 56.3 (April 2004): 431-455. On "framing" in social mobilization, see David Snow and Robert Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," *International Social Movement Research* 1 (1988): 197-217; Robert Benford and David Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611-39; and Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For more on the overlap between framing and sensemaking approaches and the utility of combining them, Peer C. Fiss and Paul M Hirsch, "The Discourse of Globalization: Framing and Sensemaking of an Emerging Concept," *American Sociological Review* 70.1 (2005): 29–52.

[20] On the concept of boundary work, see Michèle Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Michèle Lamont, *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-middle Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1-14; Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2002): 167–195; Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[21] I borrow and modify the term "moral shock" from James Jasper, "The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions in and around Social Movements," *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 3 (Sept. 1998): 409.

against them and the community and to "speak bitterness" (诉苦) against these alleged offenders. The Party then began a process of grafting its own narrative of class struggle onto local social boundaries, imbuing them with moral content related not to class but rather violations of traditional norms that governed authority relations—i.e. relations between landlords and tenants and officials and communities. The effectiveness of this strategy lay in the Party's ability to raise awareness of and situate these normative violations in its own overarching narrative of class struggle. After altering the moral content of a community's social boundaries, the Party set about to galvanize the local community's outrage against selected offenders. At mass rallies—i.e. struggle sessions and public sentencings—the Party, with the help of local aggrieved villagers, used moral shocks to provoke the outrage of the local community and to validate and mobilize violence against targets.

While I argue that the sequence and form of the mobilization process were constant across regional contexts, the people who were targeted and the amount of violence mobilized varied as follows:

1. The specific social categories of people targeted and punished in a locality differed according to the predominant moral norms that governed ties between the landed elite and the rest of the community. The Party adapted its nebulous discourse of class struggle to local social contexts by focusing on normative violations most relevant to that community. In Jiangnan, a wealthy and unequal region in the Lower Yangzi Delta with a history of violent rent disputes, the Party mobilized locals to identify members of the landed elite who had transgressed *norms of propriety*—behavior that violated expectations between landlords and tenants regarding fairness and cheating. Consequently, those selected for violent political struggle in Jiangnan tended to be

landlords or rich peasants who had reputations for cruelty or dishonesty. In Huaibei, a significantly poorer and bandit-riven area that experienced frequent anti-state rebellion, locals focused instead on violators of *norms of virtue*—namely, expectations that political elites would refrain from corruption and predatory behavior and protect the community from external threats. Here, the main targets of land reform violence were corrupt officials, bandits, and petty criminals.

2. The number of struggle targets publicly humiliated, beaten, or killed in a given locality tended to vary according to the Party's *mobilization capacity*. The Party could *mobilize* more participation in violence where it had secured territorial control for the duration of the campaign; however, it was better equipped to *control* the scope of violence where it had a greater organizational presence.

The Post-1949 Land Reform Campaign and the Shift Towards Violence

One of the looming questions for the central Party leadership after assuming power in 1949 concerned the implementation of the land reform campaign and the role of violence therein: Should land reform in the newly liberated territories combine violent class struggle with land redistribution, or could it be done peacefully as a method of promoting economic development? Conducting land reform in the newly liberated territories was a daunting task in light of the Party's limited personnel, most of whom were foreign to the areas where they would be implementing the campaign, and the sheer size of the amount of land to be redistributed.[22]

[22] Frederick C. Teiwes, "The Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime, 1949-1957," in *The Politics of China: Sixty Years of the People's Republic of China*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 34.

After pushing an especially violent brand of land reform during the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949), it appeared for a moment that the Party was going to embrace peaceful land reform in the early 1950s. At the second session of the People's Political Consultative Conference on June 14, 1950, Liu Shaoqi argued that land reform during the civil war was violent, understandably, because of the intensity of the wartime situation, but that the focus of land reform now needed to shift to economic development with minimal violence. In his "Report on the Issue of Land Reform" (关于土地改革问题的报告), Liu called for "preserving the rich peasant economy" (保存富农经济) and restricting land reform violence to "People's Court" (人民法庭) trials of landlords who were guilty of grievous crimes.[23] "As for regular landlords," Liu asserted, "[we are] only abolishing their feudal system of landownership and them as a social class; we are not eliminating their bodies" (废除他们这一个社会阶级，而不是要消灭他们的肉体).[24] At the time, Mao seemed to have supported this peaceful economic version of land reform. He too emphasized the necessity of preserving the rich peasant economy to promote economic development and suggested that post-Liberation land reform would encounter serious obstacles if it followed in the bloody footsteps of the Civil War-era land reform campaign:

> [T]he agrarian reform in the north was carried out in wartime, with the atmosphere of war prevailing over that of agrarian reform, but now, with the fighting practically over, the agrarian reform stands out in sharp relief, and the shock to society will be particularly great!"[25]

[23] Liu was most likely responding not only to the reckless violence of the Civil War period towards rich peasants and others but also to the anti-kulak violence during the Soviet Union's disastrous collectivization campaign. See Ezra F. Vogel, *Canton under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949-1968* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 95.

[24] See Liu Shaoqi, "Report on the Question of Land Reform" [关于土地改革问题的报告] June 14, 1950 in *Collection of Important Documents on Land Reform* [土地改革重要文献汇集] (Beijing: Renmin Chuban She: 1951): 11-28.

[25] Mao Zedong, quoted in Teiwes, "Consolidation," 34.

Shortly after Liu's Report, the Party promulgated the 1950 Agrarian Reform Law (土地改革法), the principal guiding policy document for the post-1949 land reform campaign.[26] The Law appeared to be a "victory for the moderates" because of the protections it put in place for rich peasants and for setting aside some land for dispossessed landlords to till for their subsistence.[27] Aside from incorporating Liu and Mao's concern for protecting the rich peasant economy, it also acknowledged the distinction between pre-1949 wartime and post-1949 peacetime land reform, and emphasized using land reform primarily to "free[] the rural productive forces" and "pave the way for industrialization."[28]

This commitment to peaceful land reform was short lived. The leadership quickly jettisoned the idea of economic land reform, though it is not clear what triggered this sudden shift. Teiwes notes that the shift began in late summer of 1950 and was likely a reaction to local reports about resistance to the campaign.[29] It is clear, though, that the PRC's entry into the Korean War in October 1950 provided a justification and opportunity for pushing for violent class struggle as an integral component of land reform. As Tao Zhu noted:

> If the Center advocated a more moderate land reform in the past, that was because there was no longer a war. Implementing [land reform] too violently would have been too great a shock to society…Now that the Korean War has broken out and created such a great shock, we can precisely now set about resolving the domestic issues of suppressing the counter-revolutionaries and land reform.[30]

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[26] See "The Agrarian Reform Law of the People's Republic of China" [中华人民共和国土地改革法] June 28, 1950 in *Collection of Important Documents on Land Reform* [土地改革重要文献汇集] (Beijing: Renmin Chuban She: 1951), 2-10.

[27] Vogel, *Canton*, 95.

[28] Teiwes, "Consolidation," 35.

[29] Ibid., 35-36.

[30] Tao Zhu, quoted in Yang Kuisong, "The Landlord Question in the Context of New China's Land Reform," [新中国土改背景下的地主问题] *Shilin* 6 (2009): 1-19.

Even Liu Shaoqi, the former champion of peaceful land reform, argued that the "loud gongs and drums" of the Korean War could drown out the otherwise "unbearable noise" of violent class struggle in land reform.[31] It was precisely during this time—the fall and winter of 1950—that the East China Bureau, which governed the region under examination in this study, pushed its policy of "going all out to mobilize the masses" (放手发动群众). This new policy orientation officially signaled a shift from peaceful to violent land reform.[32] A Central Policy Research Office Report observed that beginning in December, the "extreme leftist phenomena of reckless seizures and reckless beatings" (乱抓乱打的过左现象) erupted throughout the areas implementing land reform in the East China Bureau.[33] By the end of 1950, the Party had undoubtedly reverted to the "dialectical logic" (辩证逻辑) of the Civil War-era land reform campaign, which emphasized the need for both moderate and radical action, and the conviction that "there can be no construction without destruction" (不破不立).[34]

In understanding this shift toward violence, it is difficult to ignore Mao and other top leaders' irrepressible belief in mobilizing mass participation in violence as a way of politicizing the peasantry and forging solidarity with them. For the Party, a central goal of land reform was to

[31] Quoted in Yang Kuisong, "Reconsidering the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries," *The China Quarterly* 193 (2008): 105. Here Liu Shaoqi was also referring to the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries (镇压反革命运动), which was launched in tandem with the violent turn in the land reform movement in October 1950.

[32] Li Liangyu describes this as the shift from a "policy-control model" (政策控制型) to a "violent-implementation model" (暴力进行型) of land reform. See Li Liangyu, "Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu and the Question of Modernizing Tradition" [苏南土改与现代化传统问题] *Jiangsu Daxue Xuebao: Shexue Kexue Ban* 8.3 (2006): 1-12.

[33] Central Policy Research Office, "Central Policy Research Office Summary Report on Several Problems in the East China Bureau's Land Reform" [中央政策研究室关于华东土改中几个主要问题的简报], *ZGTDGGSLXB*, December 27, 1950, p. 703.

[34] Li Lifeng, "The Dialectical Logic of Policy Operations," [政策运作的辩证逻辑] *Jianghai Xuekan* 1 (2012):161-168.

psychologically transform the peasantry. As David Der-wei Wang, in his analysis of the "land reform novel,"[35] elegantly puts it, "[The] [r]eform of the Chinese landscape results in reform of the Chinese mindscape. A national discourse cannot be complete until its human components, the people, are redefined."[36] The Party considered violent class struggle to be a necessary part of this psychological transformation. Less than one year after the initiation of the land reform campaign, one top Party leader, Huang Yanpei, proclaimed that reshaping the minds of the peasantry was undeniably a central goal of land reform and violence was key to this process:

> I believe that land reform is not just about redistributing the land held by the landlords. [The Party] must make the peasants stand up and cultivate their self-respect; make them realize that they are the new masters; encourage their enthusiasm to work hard at production; [help them] establish their capability for self-defense; and render the landlords incapable of retaliation. Can these things be done using peaceful methods?[37]

Potter and Potter summarize this perspective on the link between participatory violence and psychological transformation:

> The idea was that only through revolutionary praxis could the peasants truly emancipate themselves from the values and ideas of the old society and learn to think of themselves as potent social actors. The leaders of the new government did not send in soldiers to arrest landlords and confiscate property, but insisted that peasants carry out these acts themselves, so that they would become active participants in the revolutionary drama.[38]

Existing Explanations of Mobilization and Political Violence

How can we understand the Party's successful—though sudden—mobilization of mass participation in violence after the 1949 revolution? This section illustrates how existing

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[35] The authors of China's most famous land reform novels were actual participants in the land reform campaign in base areas before 1949. These novels include Zhou Libo's *The Hurricane* and Ding Ling's *The Sun Shines Over the Sanggan River*.

[36] David Der-Wei Wang, *The Monster That Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 165.

[37] Huang Yanpei, "Report Inquiring into Southern Jiangsu's Land Reform (Excerpt)," [访察苏南土地改革报告（节录）] February 13, 1951, *JSTGYD*, 151.

[38] Sulamith H. Potter and Jack M. Potter, *China's Peasants: The Anthropology of a Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 57.

explanations of social mobilization and political violence cannot or only partly explain the mobilization of popular participation in the violence of China's land reform campaign.

Social Cleavages and "Class Struggle"

A large umbrella of explanations of mobilization and political violence concerns how pre-existing grievances related to the social cleavage at the heart of the political ideology drive participation in violence. According to this literature, elites exploit pre-existing social cleavages, often grounded in ethnic, religious, or class conflict, to mobilize mass participation in violence.[39] In the context of land reform, the CCP adopted the ideology of class struggle, rooted in Marxist-Leninist and Maoist thought, to guide its campaign. This class struggle perspective posits that socioeconomic inequality is inherently unjust, a product of the exploitative relationship between the owners of the means of production and those who lack it; in the "feudal" context, as the CCP described rural China, this was the contradiction between the landed elite and the landless or land-poor villagers.

The class struggle perspective has two major limitations. First, it assumes that class boundaries—even where they were antagonistic—were salient enough to be used as the basis for the mobilization of violence. Petersen calls this the "is-ought fallacy"—i.e. "because a group convention exists, it should be attributed moral power."[40] Similarly, Wimmer exhorts scholars to treat the relevance of categorical boundaries as hypotheses to be tested: "one should be careful to avoid the Herderian fallacy of assuming communitarian closure, cultural difference, and shared

[39] See Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*; Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996); Goldhagen, *Worse Than War*; Kuper, *Genocide*.

[40] Roger D. Petersen, *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

identity rather than empirically demonstrating their existence."[41] That is, we should not assume the salience of *a priori* categorical boundaries, such as class, and instead understand how people "relate to these existing boundaries by trying to change them or de-emphasize them and enforce new modes of categorization altogether."[42] This is particularly relevant in the analysis of class boundaries because the operative mechanism behind class conflict tends to be "relative deprivation," a phenomenon of frustration-aggression whereby people participate in violence to obtain something they lack yet feel entitled to possess.[43] Unless poor members of the community feel that they are entitled to the economic advantages of the landed elite, political elites will struggle to mobilize their participation by appealing to their class interests alone.

The salience of class boundaries in Chinese society on the eve of the land reform campaign is questionable. Positive face-to-face personal ties between landlords and tenants often muted class tensions. The peasantry did not necessarily hate local landlords but rather other "local power holders who bullied and swindled them in every way, be they district (*qu*) level officials, *xiang*—and village—level subofficials, or other villages bosses of the *tuhao* (local bully) variety."[44] Duara has similarly stressed that during the pre-1949 period the principal social tension in the countryside was between the peasants and entrepreneurial brokers who collected

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[41] Wimmer, *Boundary Making*, 41.

[42] Ibid., 49. On the problem of social cleavages and salience, see Daniel N. Posner, "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (2004): 529–545; Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). The significance of salience also explains research on civil wars that finds that the presence of more social cleavages does not produce more violence. See Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563-95; James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75-90; Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War," *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 8 (August 2008): 1043-1068.

[43] Ted R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

[44] Lucien Bianco, *Peasants without the Party: Grass-root Movements in Twentieth Century China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 235.

the state's burdensome taxes, the so-called "local bullies."[45] Moreover, there is little evidence that ordinary villagers viewed the inequality of the pre-revolutionary landholding system as inherently unjust; indeed, there were significant moral norms that undergirded the maintenance of this system. Fei Xiaotong notes that many villagers viewed paying rents to landlords and taxes to the state as a moral duty, while Zhou Xiaohong argues that the CCP during land reform had to use extensive propaganda work to dispel the peasantry's notion that the socioeconomic status quo was "right and proper" (天经地义).[46] Rural villagers simply did not view the socioeconomic order through a Marxist lens; this perspective was inculcated in them during the process of land reform mobilization.

The peasantry's weak class consciousness (阶级觉悟) presented real difficulties for the Party's agenda during land reform. Early in the campaign, the CCP imposed "class labels" (阶级成份) to reclassify households according to assessments of their sources of wealth into new class categories—e.g. farmworker, poor peasant, middle peasant, rich peasant, or landlord.[47] Yet these labels were abstract ideological constructs that did not map easily onto the crisscrossing ties of kinship, political affiliation, secret society membership, and religious identity that characterized Chinese society at the time.[48] As a result, "[m]any people resisted the new [class] categories;

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[45] Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

[46] Fei Xiaotong, *Chinese Village Close-up* (Beijing: New World Press, 1983), 91; Zhou Xiaohong, *Tradition and Change: The Social Psychology of the Peasantry of Jiangsu and Zhejiang and Its Modern Evolution* [传统与变迁：江浙农民的社会心理及其近代以来的嬗变] (Beijing: Shenghuo Dushu Xinzhi Sanlian Shudian, 1998), 150.

[47] These are only the major class categories used during land reform. For a much more extensive discussion of the class label system, see Vivienne Shue, *Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development Toward Socialism, 1949-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 47-56.

[48] Chen Yung-Fa, *Making Revolution: The Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986).

others who generally accepted them still found them not suitable for all facets of life and continued to identify themselves partly along more traditional lines."[49] Thus, the Party could not easily exploit pre-existing class animosity; rather, as part of the mobilization process the Party had to both impose class boundaries on a complex social fabric and somehow mobilize violence across these new class lines.

Second, a class struggle explanation, like other grievance-based arguments, ultimately considers mobilization from the perspective of Schmitt's "friend-enemy grouping," which views conflict as a product of "prior collective and impersonal enmity."[50] Since "[the enemy] need not be hated personally," the land-poor masses, once mobilized, should have participated in violence as members of a collective group—"the masses"—and directed their violence against an undifferentiated category of "landlords."[51] This formulation assumes that villagers already had class consciousness or had quickly imbibed the official class struggle framework. If the Party did successfully mobilize the peasantry to accept the notion of class struggle, that in and of itself needs to be problematized. As Guo Yuhua and Sun Liping write: "While distinctions in rural society and the hardships peasants experienced before land reform objectively existed, the key [question] is how were they transformed into class concepts."[52] Externally imposed categories mean little outside of the context—or "face-to-face situations"—of social actors; these categories

[49] Shue, *Peasant China*, 44.

[50] Stathis N. Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003): 475-494.

[51] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007 [1932]), 29.

[52] Guo, Yuhua and Sun Liping. "Speaking Bitterness: A Type of Mediating Mechanism in the Formation of the Concept of the Peasant State," [诉苦：一种农民国家观念形成的中介机制] *Zhongguo Xueshu* 3, no. 4 (2002): 130-157.

must carry political or cultural significance.[53] A tenant farmer does not hate a landlord simply because the latter belongs to an abstract group the communist cadres have labeled as an ideological foe; rather, the tenant-landlord split only makes sense when framed in terms that relate to the lived experience of those involved. It is the large landholder who has repeatedly beaten villagers or refused to waive rents during times of famine who becomes the face of the "landlord" as an object of derision, not simply a person who possesses a great deal of land and extracts income from rents and interest.

Research on mass mobilized violence has yet to understand "how potential victims are collectively categorized into a monolithic group by perpetrators."[54] To translate abstract ideology into something of concrete significance for local citizens is a monumental task for political actors; it was up to the Party, in conjunction with ordinary villagers, to forge this link between people with "bad" class labels and moral culpability and to mobilize violence against those thusly labeled.

As an explanation for this framing process, moral mobilization bears many similarities to arguments in the genocide studies literature on how the moral conceptions of the targeted group facilitate acceptance and participation in violence. Morality has loomed in the background of many of these explanations of how political elites can mobilize citizens to participate in violence by targeting groups that exist outside a community's "sanctified universe of obligation"[55] or

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[53] Ann Swidler, "Cultural Power and Social Movements" in *Social Movements and Culture: Social Movements, Protest, and Contention*, ed. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 35-36.

[54] Peter Owens, Yang Su, and David Snow, "Social Scientific Inquiry Into Genocide and Mass Killing: From Unitary Outcome to Complex Processes," *Annual Review of Sociology* 39 (2013): 78.

[55] Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, 4.

"scope of justice."[56] Some of these studies emphasize how, through processes of moral exclusion, dehumanization, or in some cases demonization,[57] perpetrators of genocide portray targeted groups as undeserving of fairness; subhuman; or as imminent threats that must be destroyed. Yet these arguments tend to assume the existence of *a priori* antagonistic boundaries. As Fein argues, the state could only use violence against groups that had "been previously defined as basically of a different species, outside of the common conscience, and beyond the universe of obligation."[58]

Moral mobilization, however, is an active, elite-driven form of mobilization rooted in moral boundary work; it does not exploit existing *group* prejudices but rather forges them through the identification, reframing, and dramatization of the perceived moral failings of a subset of members of the targeted group. In contrast to processes of dehumanization or demonization, it does not strip targeted groups of their humanity or excommunicate them from a community's moral universe; rather it holds targets accountable for their perceived violation of the community's norms of appropriate behavior. Those who use or condone violence in the process of moral mobilization are well aware of the humanity of their victims—indeed, the personal connection between victims and persecutors amplifies the acrimony between the two. Unlike Schmitt's "friend-enemy grouping"—where the impersonal, collective enemy is the "other" stripped of any specific moral meaning and not necessarily "morally evil"[59]—

[56] Susan Opotow and Leah Weiss, "Denial and the Process of Moral Exclusion in Environmental Conflict," *Journal of Social Issues* 56, no. 3 (2000): 475-90.

[57] On moral exclusion, see Opotow and Weiss, "Moral Exclusion"; on demonization versus dehumanization, see Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Worse than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009).

[58] Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, 8.

[59] Schmitt, *Concept*, 27.

participants are mobilized precisely because they are convinced of the moral depravity of the targeted person or group.

Material Incentives

Political actors who mobilize participation in violence face a daunting collective action problem: the grave risks of participating in violence and the possible moral aversion to engaging in such behavior are high "costs" that the commensurability and uncertainty of the potential rewards do little to offset. Instead of participating, individuals can "free ride" off the efforts of other participants. A common explanation for overcoming the collective action problem is the use of selective incentives,[60] which can be economic, political, or emotional.

Popkin emphasizes the primacy of material incentives in peasant mobilization. In the context of subsistence farming, where peasants are living on the economic brink, Popkin posits peasants as risk-averse utility-maximizers who will not participate unless there is a clear indication that participation will improve their economic lot.[61] Scholars of genocide have conjectured that these material incentives may be particularly alluring in instances of economic depression or instability, which lower the opportunity cost for participation.[62]

Because land reform was nominally an economic campaign, it is possible that the Party mobilized violence through the provision of selective economic incentives. A major problem with this argument is that there is little documented evidence of locals receiving more land or

[60] Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

[61] Samuel L. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

[62] Barbara Harff, "No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 57-73; Staub, *Roots of Evil*.

other assets because of their participation in violence during this period. Over 60 percent of the rural population received some land during the land reform campaign,[63] and this land was redistributed to villagers regardless of their actual participation in violent class struggle. As Zhou Xiaohong explains, the 1950 Agrarian Reform Law called for less radical economic redistribution because leaders were concerned with economic reconstruction after the war, so they called for protecting the "rich peasant economy" (富农经济) and narrowing the scope of land confiscation to landlords, which left landholders in the middle of the land distribution alone. This policy of "flattening the ends while not touching the center [of the economic distribution]" (中间不动两头平) meant that middle and rich peasants often ended up having more land than the poor peasants and farm workers, who were the main economic beneficiaries of the campaign.[64]

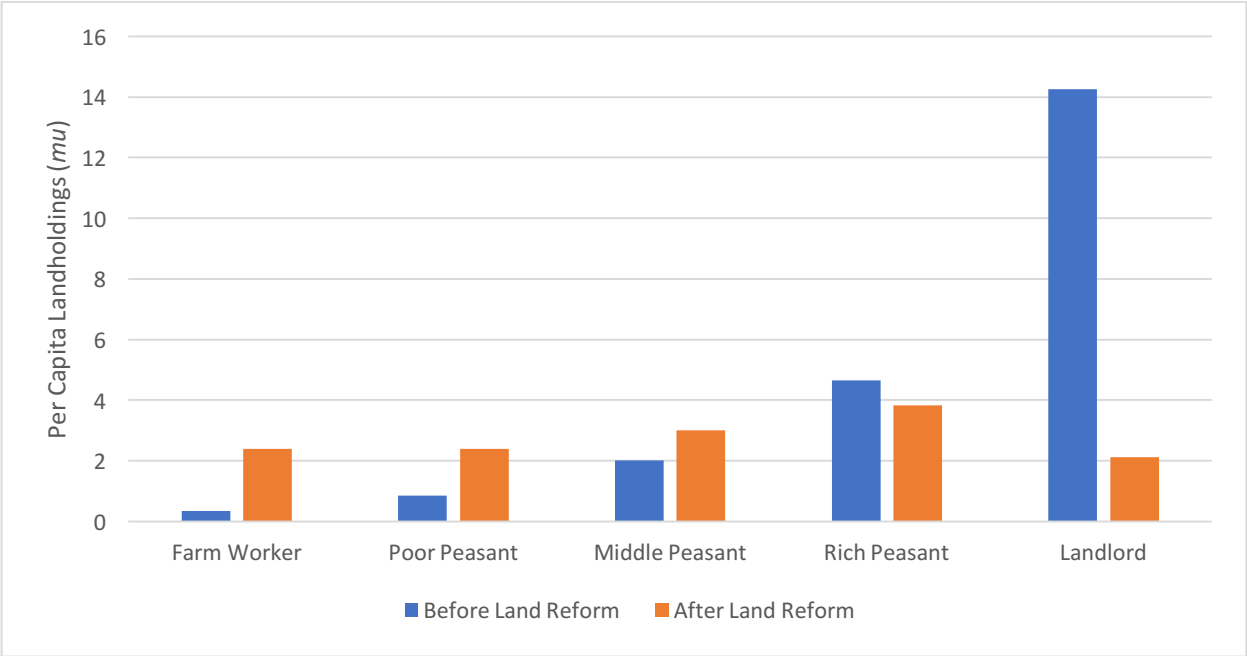
Statistical data on per capita landholdings across the entire region under the jurisdiction of the East China Bureau illustrate this point. Table 1.1 shows that before land reform there was significant landholding inequality in East China: on an average per capita basis, a landlord owned over 16 times more land than a poor peasant and 7 times more than a middle peasant. After land reform, however, the Party flattened the distribution of per capita landholdings by confiscating and redistributing land from landlords and some rich peasants to farm workers, poor peasants, and some middle peasants. Learning from the Soviet experience with anti-kulak violence, the Party leadership wished to avoid alienating the rich peasantry, which is why the average rich peasant witnessed a modest decrease in his or her land, retaining an amount well above the per capita average landholdings of farm workers, poor peasants, and even middle

[63] Lippit, *Economic Development*, 95.

[64] Zhou, *Tradition and Change*, 153. Also see Frederick C. Teiwes, "Establishment and Consolidation," 35.

peasants. The Party even allowed landlords to retain some land, not considerably less than the farmworkers and poor peasants, in order to provide them a "way out" (出路) of complete destitution. Ultimately, this meant that the poorest members of the community received modest, non-selective economic benefits from the post-1949 land reform, which upset the many peasants who were more interested in getting land than participating in violent political struggle.

Table 1.1 Distribution of Per Capita Landholdings Before and After Land Reform in the East China Bureau by Class Label[65]



Significantly, official Party policy proscribed the use of selective economic incentives as a mode of mass mobilization, for both practical and ideological reasons. As Bernstein observes, the Party was particularly worried about how short-term economic gains brought by land reform might generate political apathy and demobilize the local leadership and create a bloc of

[65] Data taken from Land Reform Committee of the East China Military Administration Committee, *Statistics on the Achievements of Land Reform in the East China Region* [华东区土地改革成果统计] (Internal Publication: December 1952), 2, 6-7.

resistance to the further socialization of the rural economy.[66] On the ideological front, officials derided those poor peasants who were solely interested in the Communists' promise of land for their "small peasant mentality" (小农意识) and viewed them as an obstacle to mobilization.

Many peasants had moral reservations about participating in a movement that took land from others and used violence against them: peasants who received land had to be convinced that it was morally acceptable for them to till confiscated land. Aside from fear of retribution by previous owners, a common concern was the justness of the act. Unfortunately for the Party, this sentiment was widespread among the very group that they wanted to empower to lead rural communities—namely, the poor peasants and farm workers (贫雇农). Officials noted that some poor peasants refused to take land because they thought land redistribution was morally wrong or they simply could not imagine living in a new social order. Li Huaiyin recounts a story in Qin village, Dongtai county where an officer asked an old villager about receiving redistributed land, to which the latter replied, "I don't dare receive it…[b]ecause it would be even more troublesome for us to figure out the rent we would owe to our boss."[67]

This is not to say that there were no selective political or emotional incentives. The Party used land reform and other mass campaigns in the early 1950s to recruit promising young people into their ranks.[68] Villagers who participated in the movement as "activists" (积极份子) or as public denouncers (苦主) could possibly gain political office or even Party membership; however, the Party continually vetted and "cleansed" their ranks during and after the land reform

[66] Thomas P. Bernstein, "Problems of Village Leadership after Land Reform," *The China Quarterly* 36 (1968): 3-4.

[67] Li Huaiyin, *Village China Under Socialism and Reform: A Micro-History, 1948-2008* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[68] Bernstein, "Village Leadership."

campaign. It would be an exaggeration to assume that the Party's recruitment efforts were an open-door policy for any and all participants in the land reform movement. Moreover, activists comprised a small proportion of the overall population that participated in the land reform campaign. While selective political incentives may explain activist participation, the Party sought and succeeded in mobilizing a much larger proportion of the local community.

If we frame the problem of mobilizing participation in collective violence during land reform as a collective action problem, I argue that the Party overcame the collective action problem by providing selective moral-emotional incentives. In the context of moral mobilization, participants derive selective emotional benefits from what Elisabeth Wood calls "pleasure of agency"—i.e. the emotional benefits that participants derive from acting on their "moral commitments."[69] It is because of the moralization of the violent act that participation in violence becomes, as Kalyvas terms it, a "selective benefit" in and of itself; one cannot experience this pleasure if one does not participate.[70]

Revenge Motives

Stathis Kalyvas avers that a significant proportion of political violence is revenge-based, vendettas repackaged, often retrospectively, as ideologically-motivated conflict.[71] Central political actors benefit from tolerating revenge-based violence because they can "rely on local conflicts to recruit and motivate supporters and obtain local control, resources, and

[69] Elisabeth Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action in El Salvador* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[70] Kalyvas refers to this selective benefit as acting on revenge impulses, not moral commitments. See Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Ontology."

[71] Kalyvas, "Ontology"; Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*; and Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection."

information—even when their ideological agenda is opposed to localism."[72] The pervasiveness of revenge-based violence masquerading as political violence is undeniable; however, this kind of private-qua-political violence usually contradicts the goals of the political actors who mobilize violence in the first place.

Indeed, the Party frequently reported on revenge-based violence during the land reform campaign, but it saw such unmanaged, parochial violence as a formidable obstacle to its mobilization work, not as a tool to exploit to mobilize the masses. It stressed to cadres that they should avoid being pulled into clan or lineage conflicts and should ensure that political struggle was not merely an outgrowth of local impulses for revenge. For example, around the time of Liberation, central leaders commanded local cadres to intervene to prevent revenge-based violence. As the People's Liberation Army moved south, Mao prepared orders for how to handle the situation in the cities of the newly liberated territories, one of which was to "forbid peasant organizations to enter the city to seize landlords and settle scores with them."[73] In countless Party policy statements and reports during the land reform campaign, officials criticized cadres who participated in local factionalism or allowed revenge politics to overtake the movement. The Party strived to avoid ceding its control over the production of violence to the whims of the locals; while the opinions of the masses mattered greatly in the process of moral mobilization, the Party ensured that it always had the upper hand in its alliance with the local community.

I argue that the Party did not follow a cynical strategy of exploiting petty grievances and vendettas, clothing them in the language of class struggle, and letting private enemies carry out

[72] Kalyvas, "Ontology," 486.

[73] Frederic Wakeman Jr., "'Cleanup': The New Order in Shanghai," in *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Paul Pickowicz. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 22.

vengeance on a public stage, though there is no doubt that this did occur where Party discipline was weak. Instead there was a concerted effort to identify and use personal stories of oppression and moral transgressions as a lightning rod to galvanize the righteous indignation of the public. While officials did exploit local instances of moral violations to mobilize the community to arms, it wanted to keep political violence from devolving into a continuation of intra-communal conflict; importantly, the Party sought to identify targets who fit into its overarching narrative of class struggle, however uneasily. Even where the invocation of moral norms attempted to obfuscate underlying private conflicts, there is something revealing in the use of these appeals, as it "reveal[s] the moral standards of those being appealed to."[74] That is, the ability to mobilize a crowd to condone and participate in violence still lies in the use of moral appeals, even where the individual accusers may have revenge motives.

Lastly, the potency of morally mobilized violence lies in its exploitation of the desire for justice in punishing violators. That is, retribution is not synonymous with revenge. Nozick distinguishes revenge from retribution as follows: "Revenge involves a particular emotional tone, pleasure in the suffering of another, while retribution either need involve no emotional tone, or involves another one, namely, pleasure at justice being done." Aside from providing pleasure from engaging in perceived acts of justice, retributive punishment speaks to "general principles (prima facie) mandating punishment in other similar circumstances."[75]

[74] Alan P. Fiske and Tage S. Rai, *Virtuous Violence: Hurting and Killing to Create, Sustain, End, and Honor Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 9.

[75] Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 366-368.

Coercion

Coercion-based explanations argue that political violence is rooted in political actors' direct coercion of individuals to participate in violence, with other factors like ideology or pre-existing social conflict playing an incidental role. Political elites can force participation through brute force: small groups of thugs can coerce locals to participate in violence or simply carry out violence themselves.[76] The reliance on small groups of thugs, however, does little to mobilize a population because it does not involve them or involves them involuntarily. Moreover, this perspective assumes that people must be coerced to participate in violence. When looking at the universe of cases of state violence, however, we see that people frequently participate in violence without any coercion; indeed, they participate because they desire to and, oftentimes, because they are convinced of the correctness of their behavior.[77]

In its earliest days, the Party explicitly used coercion to mobilize participation in violence. During the failed Autumn Harvest Uprisings of 1927, the Party heavily relied on coercion to mobilize peasants, but this method was so ineffective in mobilizing participation that the Party resorted to using allied bandit groups and their own armed forces to carry out violence. Indeed, the Central Committee attributed the failure of the Autumn Harvest Uprisings in Hunan to the local leadership's use of brute force in lieu of genuine mass mobilization, labeling the entire enterprise a "mere military adventure."[78] Mao and others, it claimed, "[had] made contact

[76] John Mueller, "The Banality of 'Ethnic War,'" *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000): 42-70; Benjamin A. Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

[77] Roy F. Baumeister, *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999); Allan Fenigstein, "Were Obedience Pressures a Factor in the Holocaust?" *Analyse & Kritik* 20 (1998): 1-20; Goldhagen, *Worse than War*.

[78] Stuart R. Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 46.

only with bandits and ragtag troops without getting the broad peasant masses to rise."[79] Reviewing these failed insurrections in January 1928, Ren Bishi, an important high-level Party leader at the time, echoed these critiques. Quoting Engels' remark that "insurrection is a kind of art," Ren warned that struggle needed to begin small before expanding into something bigger and that mobilizing the masses was the fundamental precondition for successful insurrection.[80] From this experience, the Party learned that mobilization could not be forced and required preparation: "In the absence of careful and extended Party work among the rural populations…the masses simply did not respond."[81]

Henceforth, the Party tried to dissuade the use of coercion in mobilization, instead emphasizing the methodical creation of a "mass base" (群众基础) of support as a precondition for violent class struggle. This is evidenced by the timing of violence within the sequence of land reform work in a locality: the Party implemented violence only after having conducted extensive propaganda and "education" work in villages. To discourage cadres from shirking propaganda and education work, official state policy forbade and criticized "commandism" (强迫命令)—basically, coercion—to carry out land reform. And while violence was a critical mobilization tool during the campaign, Party policy discouraged "solely relying on killing people to launch the movement" (单纯依靠杀人展开运动).[82] Central-level policy was also unclear about the

[79] Quoted in Roy Hofheinz, "The Autumn Harvest Insurrection," *The China Quarterly* 32 (1967): 85.

[80] Ren Bishi, "An Opinion Regarding the Problem of Insurrection" [对于暴动问题的意见] in *The Selected Works of Ren Bishi* [任弼时选集] (Beijing: Renmin Chuban She, 1987) 39-40.

[81] Marcia R. Ristaino, *China's Art of Revolution: The Mobilization of Discontent, 1927 and 1928* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 72-74.

[82] Shi Ping, "Summary of Opinions at the Inspection Team Reports Meeting," [对巡视组回报会议上的意见综合] February 1951, *JSTGYD*, 302.

"correct" amount of violence to mobilize, which further constrained officials who would be tempted to unilaterally impose violence from above. Throughout the land reform campaign, the CCP's official policy variously chastised cadres for leftist and rightist "errors" (错误) and "deviations" (偏差)—i.e. for mobilizing too much or too little violence, respectively.[83] Coercion nevertheless did occur and remained a problem during land reform mobilization through the early 1950s, but it is important to understand that the Party did not rely on it as its principal tool for mass mobilization.

The Significance of Morality in Mobilization

I suggest that the missing element in these explanations of land reform violence—and the popular mobilization of political violence more broadly—is morality. Social psychologists have long emphasized the significance of morality—conceptions of right and wrong traits and behaviors—in understanding the conditions under which people participate in violence.[84] At a fundamental level, morality conditions how humans perceive and use violence; there are powerful moral proscriptions against violence that must be eliminated before people will participate in violence. As Beck explains: "Psychological and moral restraints against killing are removed by ideological justifications: the end justifies the means; it is necessary to amputate a desired limb to save a life; subhumans do not deserve to live."[85] Baumeister also emphasizes the importance of being able to justify violence by "high ends":

[83] Yang, "Peaceful Land Reform."

[84] Albert Bandura, Bill Underwood, and Michael E. Fromson, "Disinhibition of Aggression through Diffusion of Responsibility and Dehumanization of Victims," *Journal of Research in Personality* 9, no. 4 (1975): 253-69; Baumeister, *Evil*; Aaron T. Beck, *Prisoners of Hate: The Cognitive Basis of Anger, Hostility, and Violence* (New York: Perennial, 1999); Fiske and Rai, *Virtuous Violence.*

[85] Beck, *Prisoners of Hate*, 172.

> It is apparently necessary to have someone else tell you that violent means are justified by high ends…People seem to need others to validate their beliefs and opinions before they put them into practice, especially in a violent and confrontational way.[86]

While some sort of justification is necessary to lift moral constraints on violence, this justification must alter the moral outlook of the participant(s). As Fiske and Rai elaborate:

> People do not simply justify or excuse their violent actions after the fact; at the moment they act, people intend to cause harm or death to someone they feel should suffer or die. That is, people are impelled to violence when they feel that to regulate certain social relationships, imposing suffering or death is necessary, natural legitimate, desirable, condoned, admired, and ethically gratifying.[87]

It is nonetheless unclear how exactly individuals come to this feeling or understanding that it is necessary to harm or kill another. Social psychologists have written little about the political processes that link political behavior and morality to violent outcomes. Beck acknowledges that political actors are often critical catalysts in this process of mobilizing moral sentiment:

> Whether acting in a group or as individuals, people have built-in mental categories that identify good and bad, right and wrong…When they experience serious damage or a severe threat—whether real or imaginary—the mental categories are primed and transform the 'noxious' entity into an image of *the Enemy*. The priming may also be conducted by other people or by national leaders. They become mobilized to correct the situation: expel, punish, or eliminate the noxious agent.[88]

Overall, these social psychological accounts illuminate the individual-level psychological mechanisms behind the link between morality and mobilization, but they offer little guidance regarding the mobilization process itself.

To be sure, some scholars of social mobilization and political violence have incorporated morality—and emotion—into their accounts of social mobilization.[89] Wood emphasizes the

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[86] Baumeister, *Evil*, 190.

[87] Fiske and Rai, *Virtuous Violence*, 1.

[88] Beck, *Prisoners of Hate*, 171.

[89] See, for example, Jeff Goodwin, "The Libidinal Constitution of a High-Risk Social Movement: Affectual Ties and Solidarity in the Huk Rebellion, 1946 to 1954," *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 1 (1997): 53-69; Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, ed., *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Elizabeth J. Perry, "Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution," *Mobilization: An International Journal* 7, no. 2 (2002): 111-

"pleasure of agency" that participants derive from acting on their moral convictions in a movement,[90] which Viterna extends to the willingness of citizens to accept violence in the name of "righteous" causes, movements where "interested publics believe that the enactors of political violence are defending society's most vulnerable and protecting a morally legitimate social order."[91] Events that provoke outrage and provide justifications for violence, Horowitz argues, can inflame ethnic riots between rival ethnic groups.[92] In the Chinese context, Perry has adapted Arlie Hochschild's concept of "emotion work" to describe the CCP's exploitation of emotion to mobilize the masses.[93]

Moral mobilization builds on these existing moral-emotional accounts of mobilization by elucidating the process by which elites alter the moral imaginary of local communities—i.e. how elites delineate new boundaries that designate victims and transgressors and stimulate feelings of moral outrage to mobilize violence against a targeted group that is not already seen as an antagonistic other. The mobilization process itself must become an object of inquiry because, as Fujii succinctly articulates it, "[i]t takes skill and ingenuity on the part of the norm entrepreneur to establish a new norm, particularly one that conflicts with a longstanding proscription against killing others."[94]

128; Jocelyn Viterna, *Women in War: The Micro-processes of Mobilization in El Salvador* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Wood, *El Salvador*.

[90] Wood, *El Salvador*.

[91] Jocelyn Viterna, "Radical or Righteous? Using Gender to Shape Public Perceptions of Political Violence," in *Dynamics of Political Violence: A Process-Oriented Perspective on Radicalization and the Escalation of Political Conflict*, ed. Lorenzo Bosi et al. (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 191.

[92] Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[93] Perry, "Moving the Masses."

[94] Her account, however, speaks less to the mobilization of moral outrage and more to the mobilization of fear: Hutu authorities used a discourse of fear and threat to convince civilians that they needed to use violence in order to

Three Propositions on Morality, Mobilization, and Violence

Throughout the following chapters, I address three major propositions regarding the mobilization of violence during land reform.

Proposition 1: The Party mobilized villagers to participate in violence by emphasizing and sensationalizing perceived moral violations by members of the landed elite.

Numerous studies have established that political elites often mobilize violence when it is in their strategic or ideological interests,[95] yet we know little about the "meso-level processes" by which elite demands for violence translate into violence on the ground.[96] What remains unclear is how local political elites present central-level demands for violence to a risk-averse public and how citizens understand and react to these exhortations to persecute fellow members of their communities.

I contend that the Party appealed to villagers' moral sensibilities, not class interests, to legitimize and mobilize participation in violence against the landed elite. This process of moral mobilization involved two sequenced mechanisms: moral boundary work and moral shocks (see Figure 1.1). In *moral boundary work*, political actors create a moral boundary between "transgressors" and "victims" by locating and emphasizing the transgressions of moral norms by members of the targeted group, while acknowledging the victimhood and valor of the audience community. Through *moral shocks*, political actors deploy sensationalized examples of norm

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defend themselves from imminent harm. See Lee Ann Fujii, "Transforming the Moral Landscape: The Diffusion of a Genocidal Norm in Rwanda," *Journal of Genocide Research* 6.1 (2004): 100.

[95] Prominent examples include Manus I. Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Scott Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Valentino, *Final Solutions*; Weitz, *Century of Genocide*; Steven Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[96] For a discussion of the importance of meso-level processes in understanding political violence, see Evgeny Finkel and Scott Straus, "Macro, Meso, and Micro Research on Genocide: Gains, Shortcomings, and Future Areas of Inquiry," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 7, no. 1 (2012): 56–67.

violations to generate intense feelings of outrage to justify and promote participation in violent acts against members of this targeted group. I will address each step in turn.

Figure 1.1 The Process of Moral Mobilization



Political actors desire to eliminate or subjugate certain categorical groups for various ideological or strategic reasons, but in the absence of salient social boundaries that delineate these groups, they can change the moral meaning of these boundaries by emphasizing the perceived normative violations of certain members of these groups. To do so, *moral boundary work* uses appeals to the public's sense of right and wrong, just and unjust behavior to change the moral meaning of existing, non-salient social boundaries that define and rank groups, to delineate between "victims" and "transgressors."[97]

Whereas cultural sociologists define boundary work as the "typification systems, or inferences concerning similarities and differences, groups mobilize to define who they are,"[98] I consider moral boundary work as an active political process whereby political actors graft new morally-imbued symbolic boundaries onto a community's existing social boundaries. So while a

[97] This process of changing the moral meaning of a social boundary is an example of what Andreas Wimmer calls a strategy of "transvaluation." See Andreas Wimmer, "Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 6 (2008): 1025–1055. For an in-depth discussion of boundary work and the distinction between social and symbolic boundaries, see Lamont and Molnár, "The Study of Boundaries."

[98] Lamont and Molnár, "The Study of Boundaries," 171.

local community may have already established the social boundaries that demarcate groups—e.g. landless workers, tenants, smallholders, and landlords—the state can reorganize and activate these boundaries by investing them with moral content. As in the Chinese case, the categories of landless workers, tenants, and certain smallholders may be collapsed into the "masses" and set against the "landlord class" using a mixture of economic and moral criteria. Articulating this new boundary using the Manichean language of moral contradictions—e.g. exploiter and exploited, corrupt and pure, criminal and innocent, etc.—makes salient social boundaries that were only intermittently conflictual and creates a new sense of solidarity among economic strata that did not necessarily view themselves as part of the same group.

Drawing new moral boundaries is necessary but not sufficient for moral mobilization: political actors can only mobilize participation through the provocation of moral outrage and righteous indignation. They can accomplish this through *moral shocks*—sensationalized or dramatized accounts of perceived normative transgressions of an individual or group, with the intent to provoke moral outrage and mobilize support for and participation in punishment of the relevant person(s).[99] Moral shocks operate through triggering moral-emotional responses—namely, moral outrage—through the transmission and dramatization of culturally-specific normative violations. Unlike fear, which tends to demobilize, social psychologists have found

[99] This contrasts to Jasper's definition of a moral shock as "an unexpected event or piece of information [that] raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined toward political action." I view moral shocks as information deployed by political actors to emphasize or dramatize the immoral behavior of an individual or group, with the intent to provoke moral outrage and the acceptance of or participation in violent reprisal. See Jasper, "The Emotions of Protest," 409.

that anger and outrage can mobilize participation[100] and reduce an individual's risk threshold.[101] In addition, anger heightens one's desire for punitive action: "[anger is a] cognition that an individual or group has committed a bad action against one's self or group; [with an] action tendency toward punishing that group."[102]

The operative emotion in moral mobilization, however, is moralized anger—i.e. moral outrage or righteous indignation. Emotions are fleeting by nature, but when anger is situated within a moral framework, it has a stronger and more sustained mobilizing effect. Goldberg et al.'s experimental work on "moral outrage" demonstrates the importance of morality in provoking and *sustaining* a desire for retributive reprisal. They find that priming outrage through the revelation of unpunished "normative violations" triggers an "intuitive prosecutor" mindset, whereby affected individuals will more readily accept and propose harsh punishment, not just of the original transgressors but future, unrelated transgressors as well. Significantly, they do not find this effect when they prime anger without a moral frame.[103]

In the context of China's land reform campaign, the theory of moral mobilization predicts that the Party used a narrative of moral transgression to separate out transgressors among the

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[100] Nicholas A. Valentino, Ted Brader, Eric W. Groenendyk, Krysha Gregorowicz, and Vincent L. Hutchings, "Election Night's Alright for Fighting: The Role of Emotions in Political Participation," *The Journal of Politics* 73, no., 1 (2011): 156-70.

[101] Jennifer S. Lerner and Dacher Keltner, "Fear, Anger, and Risk," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81, no. 1 (2001): 146-159.

[102] Petersen, *Western Intervention*, 35-37. Petersen does not appear to differentiate between anger and moral outrage, though his definition of anger suggests the presence of retributivist impulses: "In the case of anger, the event must create a belief in a specific, easily defined perpetrator committing intentional negative actions against a clear target. There should be no ambiguity about the identity or purpose of the perpetrator. There must be an identified causal agent who can become a clear target for the urge to punish. Petersen's definition here is closer to outrage than anger: individuals do not need to perceive intentionality or have a clearly-defined target to feel anger. For example, accidents or general misfortunes, which are unintentional and lack a defined target, can provoke anger. Moral outrage, in contrast, requires a clear narrative centered around a (perceived) intentional normative violation, a victim, and a perpetrator.

[103] Julie H. Goldberg, Jennifer S. Lerner, and Phillip E. Tetlock, "Rage and Reason: The Psychology of the Intuitive Prosecutor," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 29 (1999): 781-95.

landed elite from the community they have supposedly wronged. This means that targets may have been chosen on the basis of several kinds of social boundaries—class, political power, lineage, etc.—but that their selection was rooted in their real or perceived moral transgressions of the community. For example, landlords may be chosen for political struggle not because of the sheer amount of their landholdings but rather because they were known for being notoriously ruthless in collecting rent from their tenants; landlords of similar wealth but without such an accusation against them may be able to escape punishment. Someone could be chosen for political struggle because he was a former official under the Nationalist regime and was thereby associated with the onerous tax burden peasants endured during that time; another person may be chosen for having had a reputation for ratting out other people to the authorities under Japanese occupation. The relevant boundaries here—class, political power, political allegiance—only become salient when imbued with a negative moral meaning, which may or may not be readily apparent to the community at large or even the individuals directly affected. Instead, it is through the Party's efforts at moral boundary work that these associations are activated, underscored, and turned into a legitimate and justifiable basis for the use of retributive violence.

Repeated participation in violence based on morally-inflected class boundaries—between the "exploited" masses and the "exploiter" class, etc.—can crystallize them. Gould notes that participation in conflict reifies new "participation identities" that may have only been weakly felt at the outset of the conflict.[104] Similarly, in the case of the Rwandan genocide, Fujii observes that the "Interhamwe identity" solidified over time through the repeated participation in violence.[105]

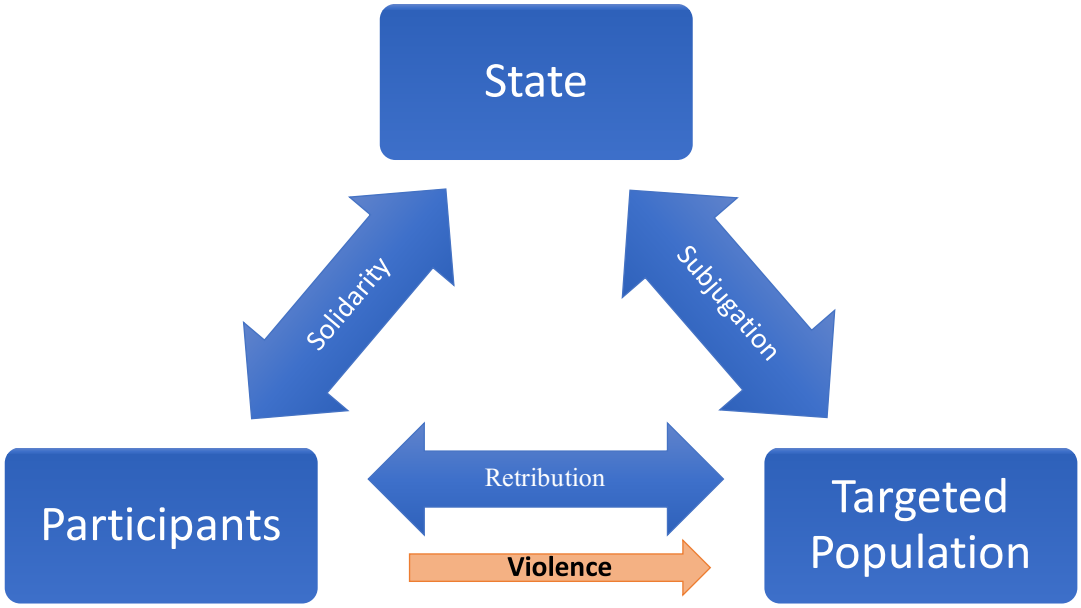
[104] Roger V. Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 15.

[105] Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 186-188.

Not only does violence solidify moral boundaries, it also deepens feelings of solidarity between the state and those it governs. As Fiske and Rai postulate, violence can regulate social relationships between perpetrators, targets, and its audience.[106] Figure 1.2 presents a meta-relational model of how the perpetration of violence regulates the relationship between local leaders, local participants, and targets of violence within the process of moral mobilization. Through their participation in state-sanctioned violence, local participants can act on their moral judgments and indulge in retribution against those whom they consider deserving of punishment. State officials, by providing these opportunities only to those who participate in the official political campaign of violence, build solidarity between themselves and the local population or citizenry, at the expense of the minority of those targeted for violence. Finally, this exercise of violence eliminates perceived or real threats to the authority of local leaders among targeted population and forces those who survive to submit to their authority.

[106] Fiske and Rai, *Virtuous Violence*, 25-34.

Figure 1.2 A Meta-relational Model of Moral Mobilization and Violence



Proposition 1a: Because the Party's mobilization of violence was rooted in punishing perceived moral violations, the violence mobilized was selective and retributivist in nature.

Moral mobilization is a strategy of subjugating political actors' perceived enemies, which requires a great deal of selectivity to ensure the accuracy of targeting and avoid the alienation of the public, who may fall victim to unbridled, indiscriminate violence. The severity of violent punishment—i.e. lethal violence, torture, or minor violence—should therefore vary across struggle targets according to a logic of moral retributivism—or retributive justice—where "the punishment fits the crime."

The subjective perception of the gravity of the original offense matters more than objective reality. As Baumeister argues, there is a "magnitude gap" in which victims tend to perceive transgressions in far more severe terms than their perpetrators. This means that the severity of retaliatory violence often exceeds the severity of the transgression.[107] Thus, I expect

[107] Baumeister, *Evil*, 157-159.

that communities will reserve lethal or unusually severe violence and torture for those who they *perceive* to be "guilty of the most heinous crimes" (罪大恶极) or possess "blood debts" (血债),[108] while they will use minor and non-lethal violence against those perceived to be culpable of lesser transgressions.

This proposition contrasts with two major alternatives. Struggle targets could have received punishments proportional to their class status or economic power or the degree of political threat they posed to the Party. Another possibility is that violence was meted out indiscriminately, without regard to the identity of the struggle target. As I will demonstrate in both Chapters 3 and 4, this violence was proportional to the perceived severity of moral offenses and was relatively selective.

Proposition 2: The targets of land reform violence varied according to the predominant moral norms that characterized local authority relations.

Moral mobilization draws on violations of pre-existing moral norms, which requires sensitivity to local social context. Pre-existing social boundaries and moral norms constrain political actors' moral boundary work by defining the relevant identities and patterns of exclusion and resource distribution within local communities.[109] Gould emphasizes that appeals to certain identities must somehow resonate with the local social context: "[a]n appeal to solidarity will only succeed to the degree that the collective identity it invokes classifies people

[108] Someone who had a "blood debt" (血债) was accused of having taken the lives of others, directly through murder or indirectly through reducing someone to poverty, driving them to suicide, etc. This term frequently appears in material on the land reform to describe "evil tyrants."

[109] Lamont and Molnár, "Boundaries."

in a way that plausibly corresponds to their concrete experience of social ties to others."[110] Similarly, Laclau observes that because "non-class interpellations and contradictions" define the landscape of social conflict, the conflict itself tends to be "doubly articulated" in terms of both class and "popular traditions" rooted in the "unique and irreducible historical experiences" of a people.[111]

Moral norms differ from general social norms in that they relate to what Jonathan Haidt terms "moral foundations." As Haidt explains, while morality is historically and culturally inflected, moral norms tend to cluster around six paired categories: care/harm; fairness/cheating; loyalty/betrayal; authority/subservience; sanctity/degradation; liberty/oppression.[112] Akin to Swidler's cultural "tool kit," political actors draw on moral norms that are most relevant to the social boundaries that are being used as the basis for mobilization.[113] While every society has many moral norms to choose from, historical patterns of conflict may reveal to political actors which group or groups of norms are most salient to a community, though this requires cultural familiarity and even investigatory work.

This kind of cultural familiarity and investigatory efforts were hallmarks of the Chinese Communist Party's mobilization practices.[114] Scholars of land reform have observed that the Party, through land reform work teams, took great pains to investigate local conditions to

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[110] Gould, *Insurgent Identities*, 18.

[111] Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism* (London: Verso, 2012 [1977]), 166-167.

[112] Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012).

[113] Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 2 (1986): 273-86.

[114] On the CCP's masterful ability to leverage traditional Chinese culture in its mobilization efforts, see Elizabeth J. Perry, *Anyuan: Mining China's Revolutionary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

uncover pre-existing conflicts that they could exploit. Chen Yung-fa puts it bluntly: "[t]he outside cadre's job was to locate the most acute tensions in a local community and use them to break the community open, hopefully though motivating the rural poor to action."[115] Wou reiterates Chen's point: "In order to penetrate a settled community, the Communists had to veil their class struggles in terms of weak lineages versus powerful lineages, emergent liberal gentry versus established rural bosses, and disadvantaged communities versus privileged communities. It was by exploiting these cleavages that the Communists conducted their social revolution in the countryside."[116]

While I agree with Chen and Wou's contention that the Party was mobilizing participation by rooting their efforts in pre-existing local conflict, I argue that the CCP specifically drew upon violations of longstanding moral principles regarding the proper behavior of political and economic elites to mobilize violence against them. Because moral mobilization involved dredging up, emphasizing, and sensationalizing memories of moral transgressions to delineate between a community and its enemies, I expect that moral mobilization will target different categories of people across localities according to the moral norms that predominate in local authority relations. I specify authority relations because the Party aimed to mobilize violence against members of the local elite, who differed in their relationship to the community depending on the local social structure. Moral boundary work will necessarily define and select "moral offenders" using the social boundaries that most plausibly differentiate this landed elite from the rest of the community.

[115] Chen, *Making Revolution*, 162.

[116] Wou, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 121.

I argue that in the Chinese context, the two major groups of moral norms that were invoked during land reform were what I term *norms of propriety* and *norms of virtue*. *Norms of propriety* relate to the proper ways in which a landlord and a tenant relate to one another. In line with Haidt's moral foundation of fairness/cheating, violations of norms of propriety in rural China could include a variety of infractions, including extracting more rent than due, extracting rent during a bad harvest, withholding grain from tenants during a famine, refusing to pay or feed farmworkers, swindling others, and amassing land illegitimately by stealing it from others or by exploiting ties with the state. Morton Fried, in his firsthand account social life in Chuxian in Northern Anhui, argues that villagers viewed landlord-tenant relationships, like all social relationships in Chuxian, in terms of positive or negative "feeling" (感情).[117] For Fried, "feeling" was particularly important in relationships between persons of unequal status unrelated by kinship.[118] As he puts it, "[E]ven the wealthiest landlord has a certain interest in *kan-chi'ing* [feeling] because production may be spurred by it, cheating may be reduced by it, and it is only within the bounds of propriety that all relationships can be carried on properly."[119] In many ways these norms trace back to Confucian beliefs regarding inequality. Kuhn observes that in the traditional Confucian system inequality was not unjust; rather, the way in which the rich treated the poor was of much greater concern.[120]

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[117] Morton Fried, *The Fabric of Chinese Society* (New York: Octagon Books, 1969 [1953]).

[118] Though, as Madsen notes, there were similar expectations between wealthy and poor kin. See Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 60.

[119] Fried, *Fabric*, 104.

[120] Philip A. Kuhn, "Chinese Views of Social Classification," in *Class and Social Stratification in Post-revolution China*, ed. James L. Watson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 16-28.

These norms appeared to be particularly relevant in parts of southern China where inequality and tenancy rates were high. In rural Guangdong, Helen Siu observes that villagers differentiated between landowners who fairly or unfairly acquired their land. Some landlords had recently acquired land, others had been landlords for generations, while yet others were local strongmen who acquired land through exploiting their ties to the Japanese or Nationalist regime or using brute force. A local Party secretary she interviewed said:

> One could blame these tenant households for profiting in wartime at the expense of others, but they had worked hard for generations to acquire a piece of land and did not have the chance to lord it over others before the revolution came. Unfortunately, they were all classified as landlords during the land reform. In Meijiang, out of the 500 or so households, 80 were labelled landlords. This was immoral.[121]

While these norms of propriety did not save newly-minted or "hard-working" landlords from being labeled as landlords, it did generally exempt them from violent class struggle, as I show in Chapters 3 and 4.

The concept of norms of propriety shares much in common with E.P. Thompson, Karl Polanyi, and James Scott's moral economic arguments;[122] but the point of focusing on these norms is *not* to assert that market-based, transactional relationships were non-existent or of lesser importance in the Chinese countryside before 1949, but rather to emphasize that ordinary villagers were embedded in a web of moral *and* economic ties. While there were economic contractual relations between landlords and tenants that defined the hierarchical and unequal distribution of political and economic resources, there were nonetheless significant moral norms

[121] Helen F. Siu, *Agents and Victims in South China: Accomplices in Rural Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 125-127.

[122] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001 [1944]); E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 50 (Feb. 1971): 76-136; James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

that governed the proper way in which a landlord treated and behaved towards a tenant and vice versa.[123]

Related to though distinct from norms of propriety, norms of virtue concerned the expectations attached to how local political elites should behave and govern the community. The idea here is that local political elites—whether they be government officials or local powerholders—should protect the community from external harm, not prey on locals, and avoid corrupt activity. These norms center around Haidt's "care/harm" moral foundation in that they are ultimately concerned with protecting the welfare of the local community. In China, the state has long regarded corruption as a moral failing,[124] which facilitated mobilizing moral outrage using examples of corruption. Moreover, the imperial government had historically provided a mix of "authoritarian as well as paternalistic policies" to maintain social stability.[125] Although by the Republican Era local officials could not and were not expected to live up to the Confucian imperative to "educate and nourish" to which their imperial scholar-official predecessors were held,[126] as a political powerholder, taking care of one's community was still seen as important. For this reason, the intense resentment toward the corruption of the Nationalist regime, along with banditry and the other forms of abuse that cropped up in the local power vacuums left by the collapse of the Qing, provided a valuable resource for the Communists to exploit in their

[123] Siu eloquently articulates this point: "[R]elationships permitting the extraction of agricultural surplus were embedded in rural social institutions, the rights and duties associated with which had historically been held legitimate in the popular mind." Siu, *Agents and Victims*, 128.

[124] Patricia M. Thornton, *Disciplining the State: Virtue, Violence, and State-Making in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[125] James W. Tong, *Disorder Under Heaven: Collective Violence in the Ming Dynasty* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 99.

[126] Thornton, *Disciplining*, 65.

moral boundary work.[127] In most parts of the countryside, "local bullies and evil gentry" (土豪劣绅) had replaced the traditional gentry class of scholar-officials. This new rural political elite of strongmen—including current and former bandits—ruled through military power and political connections and, unlike the old gentry, lacked formal education and were not "rigidly bound by Confucian canons in their official conduct." In place of Confucian ethics, they "had no political ideology to teach the villagers except the silent message that there were times when the strongman won regardless of class background or moral conduct."[128] To be sure, many of these corrupt and abusive elites were powerful landholders, though they were not necessarily the wealthiest members of their communities. Even local tax collectors, small-time bandits, and vagrants, who were by no means wealthy, could be lumped together into the catch-all category of "evil tyrant" (恶霸) that the Communists used to describe those who bullied others in the community (see Chapter 4).

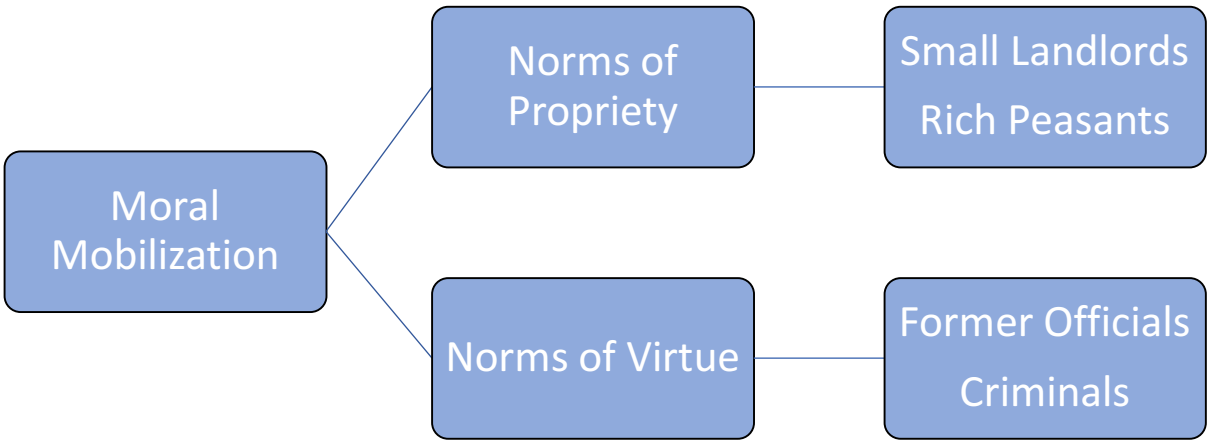
Of course, these sets of norms were not mutually exclusive: communities could come up with examples of cruel landlords, abusive officials, and local strongmen (and those who fell into all three categories). Nevertheless, we can detect broad systematic variation across regions in terms of the predominant kinds of people targeted based on the nature of local authority relations and the kinds of moral norms that characterized them (see Figure 1.3). Unequal and wealthy communities with high rates of tenancy, where landlord-tenant relations were particularly important in everyday life, tended to focus on violations of norms of propriety and therefore mainly—though not exclusively—chose landlords as targets of violence. In contrast, communities in places that had low rates of tenancy and where local strongmen and bandit

[127] Duara, *Culture*; Pepper, *Civil War*.

[128] C. K. Yang, *A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1959), 113-114.

groups held power focused more on norms of virtue in selecting targets. In lieu of landlords, communities in these areas generally targeted former government functionaries, strongmen, bandits, and even petty criminals who were far more relevant to the authority structure of the local community than economically-defined landlords.[129]

Figure 1.3 Predominant Moral Norms and Major Targeted Categories in Moral Mobilization



Proposition 3: The Party mobilized more violence where it had secure territorial control for the duration of the campaign, and it was better able to control the scope of violence where it had a greater organizational presence.

Moral mobilization, like most techniques of political violence, requires political actors to have a near monopoly on military control in the locality. During civil wars, states can more effectively mobilize defection from a community—that is, convince locals to turn on their

[129] The selection of targets during land reform, rooted in moral norms that governed authority relations before 1949, in many ways reflected regional patterns of pre-1949 rural unrest, as Chapter 4 discusses in greater detail.

neighbors—where they have more territorial control.[130] In the case of state-sanctioned violence, mobilizing selective violence is more feasible under high territorial control because it allows local leaders to guarantee protection to informants and acquire information in order to selectively mete out violence.[131] Moreover, moral mobilization required a stable political environment for the Party to carry out weeks, if not months, of mobilization work. Places that enjoyed territorial control were free of external interference and could reduce the locals' uncertainty about the longevity of the Communists' hold on the area. Thus, where the state lacked secure territorial control, moral mobilization failed to produce high levels of violence because of its inability to protect participants and to carry out mobilization work.

At the same time, the Party was concerned about controlling the selectivity of violence during the mobilization process. The Party worried that the degeneration of selective violence into indiscriminate violence could alienate the public and solidify and embolden anti-regime resistance.[132] Strategies of selective violence, however, require both the capacity to mobilize and contain the scope of violence. To control the scope of violence, I argue that the Party required sufficient Party personnel to manage the implementation of mobilization and to train cadres to contain violence once the process of mobilization was underway; in the absence of strong Party leadership, locals could easily commandeer the campaign to settle vendettas or to pursue personal gains.

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[130] Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection."

[131] T.D. Mason and Dale A. Krane, "The Political Economy of Death Squads: Toward a Theory of the Impact of State-sanctioned Terror," *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (1989): 175-198; Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*.

[132] As James Ron asserts, "states are torn by contradictory pressures. While they seek to quickly and brutally end rebellions, they are also beset by cravings for legitimacy in the eyes of significant audiences." James Ron, "Savage Restraint: Israel, Palestine and the Dialectics of Legal Repression," *Social Problems* 47.4 (2000): 446. For more on the logic and benefits of selective violence, see Kalyvas, *Logic*; Mason and Krane, "Death Squads"; and Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Research Design

Data Sources

I address these propositions using a wide array of primary source data gathered in China over twelve months of field research between 2014 and 2015. For the case studies, I use unpublished archival documents from six government and university archive collections. These archival materials encompass Party work team reports, inspection reports by county and regional Party committees, and internal Party committee memos. Because these materials were authored by Party committees, work teams, and inspection groups, these materials provide valuable insights into the perspectives of the Party at various levels of the political hierarchy. Triangulating reports from these different levels of the Party hierarchy, along with the other data described here, enabled me to sketch out a fuller picture of the Party's mobilization process and revealed the areas in which varying perspectives on local events clashed to produce a "Rashomon effect" that frustrated attempts to acquire an "objective" understanding of an event.[133]

I supplement these archival materials with documents from over a dozen rare internally published compilations of Party materials (内部资料) that I acquired through second-hand book sellers. The Party published and circulated these compilations in the 1950s for internal reference; they include many policy directives from the central and regional governments. A tremendous advantage of using these compilations is that they also include reprints of archival materials from Party committees and, rarely, work teams. Considering the severely limited access to archival material in China currently, these internal publications help fill in the many gaps in the archival

[133] For more on the "Rashomon effect" in the study of political violence, see Christian Davenport, *Media Bias, Perspective, and State Repression: The Black Panther Party* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

record. To get a sense of the kind of training local cadres and work teams were receiving, I also use a handful of cadre handbooks (手册) that were also published internally.[134]

For a macro-perspective of patterns of violence and their relationship to important political and socioeconomic indicators, I use an original historical dataset that I hand-coded from 124 local county gazetteers (县志). Missing data is a major problem with the county gazetteers—an issue I discuss at more length in Chapter 5, which analyzes the gazetteer dataset. To mitigate this problem, I draw on the aforementioned archival and internally-published materials that sometimes include data on land reform violence for individual counties or, in the case of Southern Jiangsu, entire regions. Lastly, I use the chronologies (大事记), brief historical accounts of political work in the 1950s, and, on rare occasion, published reports from the 1950s located in the appendices (附录) of these gazetteers to enhance the county-level case studies.

Where possible, I use "popular materials" (民间材料) to provide the perspective of actual participants in the campaign, though this is the area in which I have the least data. I use memoirs (日记) by former land reform work team members to understand how they carried out the campaign and their judgments of its efficacy. Because of the greater constraints on retrieving archival documents for my Baoshan County case, I supplement the case with a small number of oral histories (口述史) conducted in Baoshan and Jiading counties with octogenarians who had witnessed or participated in land reform. I recruited oral history participants through snowballing sampling, initially using personal ties to university students from these counties.

Case Selection and Comparative Framework

[134] For a list of the major archival and internally published materials used in this study, see Appendix A. For a discussion of the biases inherent in these materials, see Appendix B.

I restrict the geographic scope of my inquiry to counties in the northern and southern regions of Anhui and Jiangsu provinces in the East China Bureau (华东局).[135] Geographically, Anhui and Jiangsu provinces are bisected by the Huai River valley into the North China and Lower Yangzi Delta physiographic macro-regions (see Figure 1.4),[136] which were known within these two provinces as Huaibei and Jiangnan, respectively. Huaibei covered the impoverished, ecologically-unstable environs of northern Anhui as well as the old Communist base areas of northern Jiangsu. In contrast, Jiangnan encompassed the wealthy and semi-urban countryside of southern Jiangsu and the lineage-dense locales of southern Anhui.[137]

By looking at localities within the same central-level Bureau, I can hold constant important macro-level political variables like central leadership, guiding policy directives, and timing of land reform implementation. At the same time, I can exploit significant local variation in terms of socioeconomic variables like agricultural economic development, cultivation patterns, ecological volatility, landholding inequality, and local social structure, as well as variation in local political variables like territorial control and Party density. Throughout the dissertation, I leverage the similarities and differences within and between these regions to demonstrate the mechanisms through which moral mobilization produced participation in

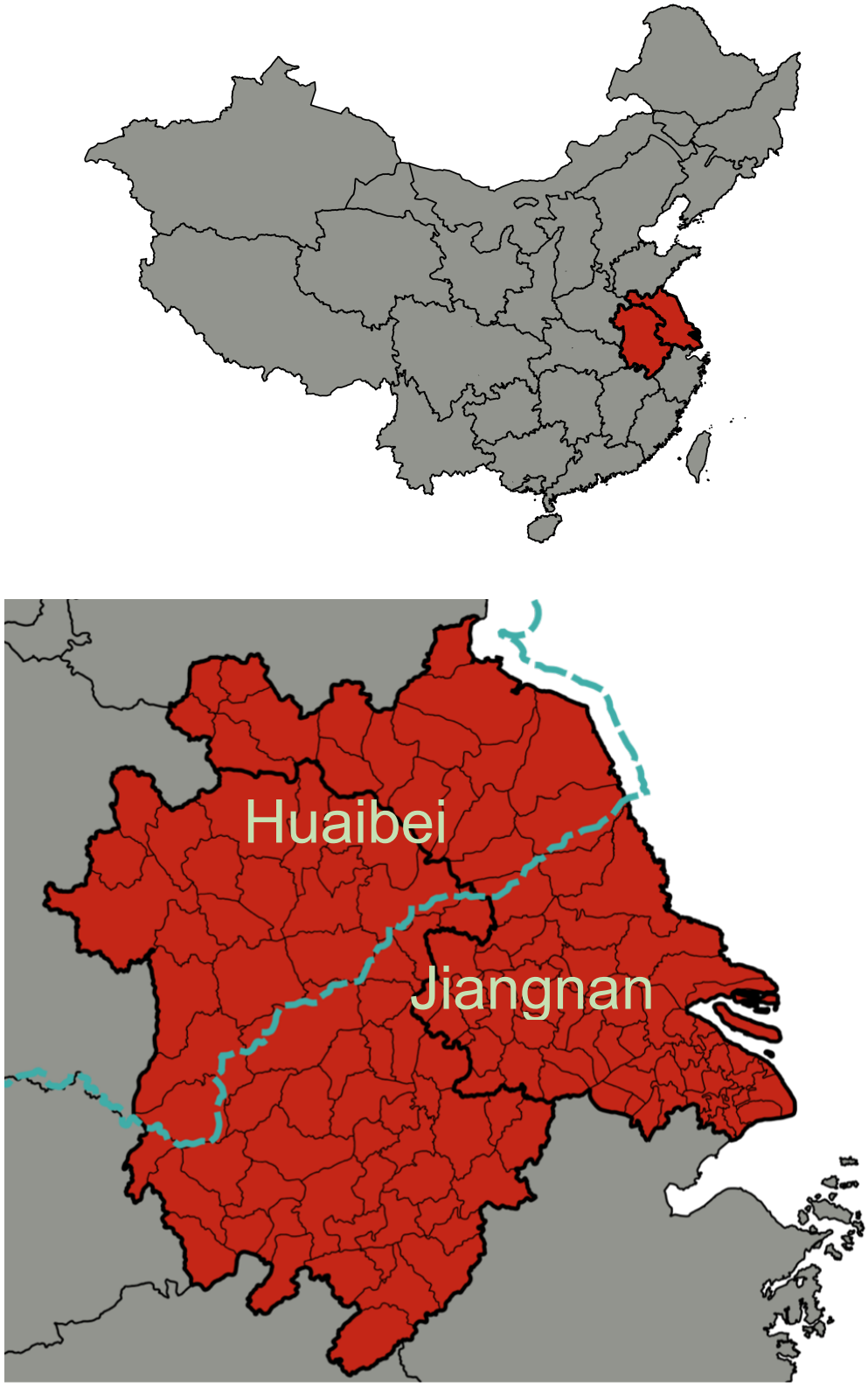
[135] Until its dissolution in 1954, Rao Shushi (饶漱石) headed the East China Bureau, which oversaw the Northern Jiangsu Regional Government, the Southern Jiangsu Regional Government, the Northern Anhui Regional Government, the Southern Anhui Regional Government, Zhejiang Province, Shandong Province, Fujian Province, and the municipalities of Nanjing and Shanghai. The Party used the Yangzi River to split Anhui and Jiangsu into its northern and southern administrative halves, before they were recombined into provinces after the land reform campaign, around 1952.

[136] For the precise division between Huaibei and Jiangnan, I follow G.W. Skinner's division of Anhui and Jiangsu Provinces into the North China and Lower Yangzi Delta macro-regions. See G.W. Skinner, "Regional Urbanization in Nineteenth-Century China," in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. G. William Skinner (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1995), 211-249.

[137] Both Huaibei and Jiangnan are nebulous geographic terms that refer roughly to the area around and north of the Huai river valley and the area around the lower Yangzi delta, respectively. In concrete terms, this study looks mainly at the provinces of Anhui and Jiangsu, which encompass a large part of both regions. See Chapter 3 for detailed descriptions of the geographic and socioeconomic contrast between Huaibei and Jiangnan.

violence and the factors that mediated the targeting practices and intensity of the resulting violence.

Figure 1.4 The Regions of Jiangnan and Huaibei in Anhui and Jiangsu Provinces



To illustrate the Party's use of moral mobilization (Proposition 1), I conduct within-case process-tracing[138] of two "crucial cases" of the relatively equal and poor region of Huaibei in the north and the unequal and wealthy region of Jiangnan in the south. According to the social cleavage or "class struggle" perspective on land reform mobilization, we should see successful mobilization in Jiangnan and weak mobilization in Huaibei. Because of Jiangnan's rich history of rent-based resistance that pitted landlords against peasants, this region should have been fertile grounds for violent mobilization; for this reason I treat Jiangnan as a "least likely" case for a moral mobilization argument. In contrast, Huaibei, which has far lower levels of landholding inequality and less virulent landlord-tenant conflict, would be a "most likely" case because the Party simply lacked salient class cleavages to use as the basis for mobilization. By looking at these two regions, I show how the process of moral mobilization undergirded the production of violence in both regions, despite their wildly different class structures and history of class conflict. Within the same campaign of state violence across these different socioeconomic contexts, the Party did not root its appeals in class grievances to foment class struggle; rather, it drew upon perceived acts of injustice and moral transgression against the community to delineate a moral boundary between an immoral minority of targets and the virtuous masses to encourage and justify mass participation in violence. In addition, I use these regional case studies to demonstrate the selective and retributive nature of the violence the Party mobilized, a major observable implication of the use of moral mobilization (Proposition 1a).

While the regional case studies demonstrate the cross-regional similarities in the meso-level process by which the Party mobilized mass participation in violence, I use county-level case studies drawn from each of these regions to show cross-regional differences in how that

[138] On process tracing and crucial cases, see Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).

process played out according to local variations in the dominant *moral norms* that were at the center of pre-1949 social conflict (Proposition 2). Within Jiangnan, I use the case of Baoshan County to show how the Party used perceived transgressions of norms of propriety to select targets. Within Huaibei, I examine the case of Fengyang County, where violations of norms of virtue undergirded the target selection process. Although data access drove the selection of these two counties, I justify the use of these counties based on their general similarity to the macroregion in which they are embedded (see Chapter 4).

Finally, I turn to an analysis of county-level violence data to understand why moral mobilization resulted in varying degrees of violence (Proposition 3). A statistical analysis of the 124-county historical dataset reveals that the intensity of violence—that is, the number of people arrested or struggled against during the land reform campaign—varied according to the local government's mobilization capacity—its territorial control and the Party's local organizational strength. The results from these tests reveal that socioeconomic indicators—e.g. agricultural development, landholding inequality, etc.—were not significant predictors of levels of violence at the county level. Finally, I find evidence that where the Party mobilized more violence, it was able to recruit more villagers into the Party.

Chapter Breakdown

The rest of the dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2 traces the genealogy of moral mobilization by examining its political and cultural antecedents in Qing practices of moral governance and traditional peasant culture and protest. Chapter 3 illustrates the process of moral mobilization by analyzing how it unfolded in Jiangnan and Huaibei. Chapters 4 and 5 move down to the county-level to look at local variation in the targeting and intensity of violence,

respectively. In Chapter 4, I employ a two-county comparison of Fengyang County in Huaibei and Baoshan County in Jiangnan to show the "localization of violence" under moral mobilization—that is, how cadres adapted their agenda of "class struggle" to local social contexts. Chapter 5 examines patterns of political violence across 124 counties in Anhui and Jiangsu to understand what determined the intensity of violence in a county. Chapter 6 concludes with a discussion of the generalizability of moral mobilization and relevant comparative cases from other countries and historical contexts.

Chapter 2 – Moral Governance and the Cultural Genealogy of Moral Mobilization

"[T]ake every opportunity to instruct villagers in Confucian moral precepts, employing local dialects and colloquial speech, so that all could comprehend."

—The Qianlong Emperor on the use of the "village compact" system, 1753[1]

"Cooperate with the propaganda teams to enter each village and use 'popular script' to write out a broad outline of our policies. Make everyone hate the bandits and evil tyrants until each and every one of them clenches their teeth in anger."

—Fengyang County Party Committee, *Summary of Mass Movements in Fengyang County*,1950[2]

For many observers of the Chinese Communist revolution, the Party's mass mobilization tactics were peculiar in nature and puzzling in origin. "The [Communist] Eighth Route Army is really strange," a Chinese villager remarked. "If they want the poor people to laugh, the poor people will laugh; if they want the poor people to cry, the poor people will cry."[3] Thinking on the possible origins of these strategies of "mass persuasion," Frederick Yu remarked that "[the Chinese Communists] appear as such veterans of what seem to be psychiatric and psychoanalytical practices that one could even suspect that they had read Freud and Jung along with Marx and Lenin in their early revolutionary days. But there is no evidence that they did so."[4] Scholars have also pointed out the many continuities between Confucian and Chinese Communist ideology and practices. Levenson has described Chinese Communism as a syncretic

[1] Quoted in Hsiao Kung-Ch'üan, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), 186.

[2] Fengyang County Party Committee, "*Summary of Mass Movements in Fengyang County*," [凤阳县群众运动总结] *XCSSN*, May 21, 1950, 21.

[3] Quoted in Li, Lifeng. "Rural mobilization in the Chinese Communist Revolution: From the Anti-Japanese War to the Chinese Civil War." *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 9.1 (2015): 109.

[4] Frederick T.C. Yu. *Mass Persuasion in Communist China* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 37.

blend of Marxism-Leninism and Confucianism, "a foreign creed tamed down to Chinese specifications."[5]

Indeed, it is curious how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) learned the art of mobilizing public sentiment, something that distinguished them from both their Nationalist (GMD) and Soviet counterparts.[6] Yet it is clear that by 1949, and at least as early as the Yan'an Period and the Chinese Civil War, the CCP had codified and implemented an effective strategy of mass mobilization capable of redefining the moral boundaries of local communities and eliciting violent moral outrage against specifically defined targets—namely, perceived normative transgressors among the landed elite. Yet the question remains: where did these techniques of moral mobilization come from?

I argue here that the CCP innovated upon techniques and insights from the late-Qing's methods of moral governance and rural folk culture and traditions of protest to create new techniques of moral mobilization. Sociologists have emphasized the significance of culture in understanding how social actors find and innovate upon techniques of social mobilization. Tilly argues that actors do not invent new forms of contentious action but rather innovate upon pre-existing behaviors from their historical context—i.e. their "contentious repertoire." This "paradoxical combination of ritual and flexibility" allows for both innovation and historical continuity.[7] Swidler's "tool kit" conception of culture posits that people can draw on various cultural symbols and practices to create "strategies of action" to solve problems. It is somewhat

[5] Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 161.

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

[7] Charles Tilly, "Getting It Together in Burgundy, 1675-1975," *Theory and Society* 4 (Winter) (1977): 22. Also see Charles Tilly and Sidney G. Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

unclear, however, how people learn about past practices and why they choose to use and innovate upon some practices rather than others.[8] Often, actors build strategies of action from the traditional practices of the very system they oppose. As Traugott points out, contentious behavior uses "tactics normally reserved for use by the authorities, often subjected to some symbolic or parodic reversal, and the tendency to direct such actions to third parties who are invited to intervene on behalf of participants."[9] Regardless of the precise source of cultural influence, a strong argument for cultural continuity must establish the mechanism of transmission of knowledge of existing practices and how this knowledge is melded with other practices to produce a strategy of action.

In the rest of this chapter, I look carefully at how Communist organizers adapted strategies from the late-Qing and local peasant culture to produce its hallmark techniques of moral mobilization—namely, the practices of "speaking bitterness" (诉苦) and "struggle sessions" (斗争大会). By "reading history forward,"[10] I trace the genealogy linking the imperial legacy of moral governance to the Party's techniques of moral boundary work and moral shocks. This trajectory, however, was indirect: the Chinese Communists inherited the techniques of moral governance indirectly through their observations and understanding of rural culture and rebellion, which were more directly influenced by imperial techniques. These techniques filtered into traditional rural culture in two ways. First, they shaped the moral norms by which villagers held officials and the gentry accountable. Second, some of the techniques of moral governance

[8] Mark Traugott, "Barricades as Repertoire: Continuities and Discontinuities in the History of French Contention," in *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, ed. Mark Traugott (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 43-56; Orlando Patterson, "Making Sense of Culture," *Annual Review of Sociology* 40 (2014): 1-30.

[9] Traugott, "Barricades," 45.

[10] Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Ziblatt, "The Historical Turn in Democratization Studies: A New Research Agenda for Europe and Beyond," *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 8-9 (2010): 931-968.

were adapted and turned on their head as part of villagers' contentious repertoire in traditional patterns of rural violence. Thus, we see the legacy of imperial moral governance in both rural folk culture and traditions of rural protest.

I begin by illustrating the centrality of moral governance to the imperial control of the countryside under Qing rule (1644-1912). Here I focus mainly on the "village compact" (乡约) system, a state ritual of moral governance that proselytized Confucian morality to peasants and publicly lauded and shamed moral and immoral figures in local communities. After a brief discussion of how the imperial state moralized corruption, I show how rural folk opera and protest traditions reflected the Qing's concern with public morality through their focus on corruption and retributive justice. Finally, I discuss how the Chinese Communists learned from and adapted elements of imperial moral governance and traditional rural protest and opera into its mobilization work in three areas: 1) the moral discourse of class struggle; 2) moral boundary work through speaking bitterness; and 3) moral dramatization in struggle sessions.

The Political and Cultural Antecedents of Moral Mobilization

Though moral mobilization appears in other historical and cultural contexts (see Chapter 6), China has a long tradition of moral governance that explains how and why the Chinese Communists were able to develop particular techniques of moral mobilization to mobilize the masses. Although many scholars of Chinese politics and history have noted the centrality of morality to Chinese political culture and the Chinese Communist Party's political work,[11] this

[11] See, among others, Eugenia Lean, *Public Passions: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Perry, *Anyuan*; Julia Strauss, "Morality, Coercion and State Building by Campaign in the Early PRC: Regime Consolidation and After, 1949-1956," *The China Quarterly* 188.1 (2006): 891-912; and Patricia M. Thornton, *Disciplining the State: Virtue, Violence, and State-Making in Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

section focuses on the specific political and cultural practices that later influenced the Communists' use of morality in mass mobilization. The village compact system and the portrayal of official corruption as a distinctly moral matter translated into a strong cultural belief in the importance of morality as a barometer of individual official behavior, as seen in traditional folk opera and early twentieth century patterns of rural unrest. In both imperial and socialist practices, we see a clear distinction between moral and immoral individuals perceived as having transgressed norms of appropriateness in the community.

Extolling the Good and Decrying the Bad: The Village Compact System

The Chinese imperial state, in its strong commitment to Confucian principles, was extraordinarily concerned with the regulation and proselytization of public morality, what I call *moral governance*. A Qing-dynasty county magistrate handbook traces this tradition of moral governance back to the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BCE), citing the following lines from *The Rites of Zhou* (周礼): "Signalize the good, separating the bad from them; give tokens of your approbation to their neighborhoods, distinguishing the good so as to make it ill for the evil, thus establishing the influence and reputation of their virtue."[12] The idea of governing thought traces back similarly far. Philosophical writings on "techniques of the mind-and-heart" (*i*心术) predate the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE), and the "Learning of the Heart-and-Mind" (*i*心学) and its associated concept of "the Art of Governing the Mind" (治心之术) were integral to the Song Neo-Confucianism that predominated in later dynasties.[13] Indeed, the Qing state relied

[12] Huang Liuhong, *A Complete Book Concerning Happiness and Benevolence: A Manual for Local Magistrates in Seventeenth-century China* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1984), 532.

[13] Li Fangchun, "Making Revolution on the Mind: Fanxin and the Exercise of Thought-Power in the Land Reform Movement of Northern China (1946–48)," *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 6.4 (2012): 618; William Theodore

specifically on Song Neo-Confucianism as a mode of ideological control because it "stressed social duties and human relationships."[14] The handbook asserts that moral governance provides rulers with important practical benefits. Proper moral education could maintain social stability and ensure the obedience of one's subjects, in ways as varied as refraining from criminal behavior to paying taxes: "If education is neglected the people will not know the principles of filial piety, brotherly love, propriety, and virtue, and all manner of antisocial and disruptive behavior will occur."[15]

The most significant tool of moral governance in the Chinese countryside was the village compact (乡约) system and the reading of the Sacred Edict (圣谕). The village compact system employed lectures on public morality to indoctrinate villagers to be obedient and virtuous subjects. Mandated in 1670 by the Kangxi Emperor, officials used the village compact system to host public readings of the Sacred Edict, which contained sixteen maxims regarding proper behavior in all realms of life. The imperial state even produced an explanatory guide for the Sacred Edict to ensure that its message reached even the most uneducated segments of society.[16] Though village compacts had appeared in earlier dynastic periods, they were heavily promoted during the Qing. As Terada explains, under the Qing the village compact became a "public lecture" circuit concerned mainly with proselytizing an officially-approved moral code, which expanded the system's audience to encompass the entire rural populace.[17]

De Bary, *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy and the Learning of the Mind-and-heart* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 68-69.

[14] Hsiao, *Imperial Control*, 184.

[15] Huang, *Happiness*, 525.

[16] Ibid., 531.

[17] Village compacts had become common practice among local communities by the (mid-) Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and had emerged in some areas as early as the Song Dynasty (960-1279). See Hiroaki Terada, "The Nature of

A village compact meeting began with an elaborate morning ceremony held in a large and clean open space in front of the imperial tablet, situated on a high table in a dragon pavilion along with incense, candles, and flowers. After kowtowing to the imperial tablet, the principal lecturer and his assistant alternated reading and explaining each of the Sixteen Maxims of the Sacred Edict, with each maxim punctuated by a single strike of a sounding board. Also positioned at the meeting site were the "the registers of good and evil deeds." The red-covered register of good deeds listed upstanding villagers, such as chaste women, filial sons, and those who had performed selfless or generous acts, while the black-covered register of evil deeds named those villagers accused of having committed immoral acts.[18] The registers—alternatively known as the "ledgers of merit and demerit"—were originally written and used as guides for moral self-cultivation, but by the time of the Ming-Qing transition they had become a part of the moral governance of local life.[19] The registers of good and evil deeds were posted at "exposition pavilions" alongside imperial edicts; evil deeds, particularly those concerning the negligence of "filial and fraternal duties," would remain in these pavilions until offenders had made amends. Hsiao aptly describes these ledgers as a "spiritual pillory with which the authorities hoped to shame villagers and townsfolk into better behavior or at least to deter them from straying from the prescribed path of duty."[20]

Social Agreements (Yue) in the Legal Order of Ming and Qing China (Part One)," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 2.2 (2005): 321-23.

[18] This is an abbreviated account of the village compact ceremony. For a fuller description, see Huang, *Happiness and Benevolence*, 533-536.

[19] Cynthia J. Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 222, 236.

[20] Hsiao, *Imperial Control*, 186.

The village compact system had fallen into disuse or, ironically, become a vehicle of corruption by the end of the Qing dynasty, though it was still being implemented regularly in many parts of the country. By the early twentieth century the village compact system had lost much of its authority and many peasants viewed the system as being complicit in state corruption. The ceremonies became opportunities for corrupt local officials to extort money and gifts from locals, who were sometimes coerced to attend. The increasingly top-down nature of the system, which had devolved into a mechanical tool of state indoctrination, no longer engaged with local community issues. Strangely, village compact officials even ceased to do moral indoctrination work; in many areas these officials had transformed into tax collectors or political.[21]

Strikingly, the legacy of the village compact system lived on through the rebellious behavior of the peasantry in the late-Qing and Republican periods. Although discredited, it became an important component of the peasantry's contentious repertoire, which provided them the knowledge and tools that shaped the character of rural rebellion. Turning the official system on its head, it became common to see peasants draw on similar rituals from the village compact system when forming coalitions and attacking corrupt officials and landlords. For example, during rent-resistance movements, peasants would sometimes create their own "compacts" (约) to ensure solidarity among members to refuse to submit rents to their landlords; they would then use violence to police the behavior of their members to ensure unity in their ranks.[22] As will be discussed below, peasant rebels even adopted the registers of good and evil as a form of

[21] Kamal Sheel, *Peasant Society and Marxist Intellectuals in China: Fang Zhimin and the Origins of a Revolutionary Movement in the Xinjiang Region* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 133.

[22] Terada, "Social Agreements," 325.

threatening or punishing their opponents, a practice that Mao observed in his 1927 Hunan Report.

The State Moralization of Corruption and Retributive Justice in Rural Folk Opera and Protest

The Qing state, Thornton argues, viewed official corruption and failed policy implementation as individual moral failings.[23] Although the Yongzheng Emperor declared that the "[m]agistrates are the parent officials of the people,"[24] this moralization of officialdom created a Janus-faced image of local officials as benevolent and paternalistic authority figures as well as depraved and predatory crooks. These conflicting images of officials were reflected in imperial law, as Philip Huang writes:

> The structure of official Qing legal discourse was such that moral ideals were generally paired with equally moralistic counterideals. The ideal that local government would be staffed solely by morally superior men led to its counter of a local government corrupted by immoral clerks and runners.[25]

Of course, regardless of the behavior of local officials, the imperial government maintained an image of itself as the ultimate source of benevolent governance to which the peasants could appeal.

Traditional rural opera and protest exhibit strong themes of anti-corruption and retributive justice that mirror the imperial state's moralized view of official corruption, in terms of its moral dichotomy between good and evil officials and the benevolent center and the abusive localities. As Hung writes, "what we do know is that many of these tales [in traditional operas] are saturated with stories about the plight of commoners under evil officials, miserable subjects

[23] Thornton, *Disciplining*.

[24] Quoted in Ibid., 53.

[25] Philip C. Huang, *Civil Justice in China: Representation and Practice in the Qing* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 196.

appealing to benevolent and parent-like higher authorities, and how the bad officials were penalized and avenged in the end."[26] For example, the popular Lord Bao (包公) operas—a Song-dynasty judge known for his impartiality and incorruptibility—dramatize Lord Bao's investigations into and rulings on cases of corruption, murder, and other wrongdoings in which powerful evildoers are brought to justice in the end.[27] In these operas, Lord Bao's facial makeup (脸谱) is predominantly black with a white crescent moon to represent his "iron face without selfishness" (铁面无私)—i.e. his stern impartiality and incorruptibility.[28] Aside from their themes of anti-corruption, these operas sometimes directly influenced rural rebellion by supplying characters and rituals that rebels incorporated into their contentious repertoires. Notably, *The Investiture of the Gods* (封神演义), a novel-turned-opera from which the Boxer rebels drew many of their major deities, portrayed the struggle between the future Zhou dynasty founder and his allied deities and "the least corrupt and evil ruler of the Shang [dynasty]." This opera, among others, Esherick writes, influenced the Boxer rebels' cosmology and provided the "narrative context" for their rebellious behavior.[29]

Rural protest before 1949 reveals that the perception of moral norm violation—including but not limited to corruption—played a significant role in provoking rural violence against landlords and officials. While imperial state morality was not necessarily imbibed by the

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[26] Hung Ho-fung, *Protest with Chinese Characteristics: Demonstrations, Riots, and Petitions in the Mid-Qing Dynasty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 199.

[27] Concerning the contemporary relevance of Lord Bao as a judicial exemplar, see Perry E. Link, *The Uses of Literature: Life in the Socialist Chinese Literary System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 231.

[28] When I visited Bao Zheng's memorial park (包公园) in his hometown of Hefei in 2015, one of the exhibits in his temple celebrated Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign and showcased uncorrupt and selfless officials in China today.

[29] Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 328-331.

peasantry, its system of ethics provided a normative framework that peasants used to hold state officials and landlords accountable. Normative violations were behind a great deal of rural violence in early twentieth century China: peasants were incensed over "the favors, the cheating, the conspicuous injustices—all benefiting privileged people with direct access to the authorities—and the expropriation of land by the rich and powerful."[30] Rural protest in many cases occurred during times of economic crisis or in response to egregious transgressions of moral norms that governed landlord-tenant or official-subject relations.[31] These instances of rural protest—against rents or taxes—rarely escalated into full-blown rebellions intent on destroying the existing socioeconomic order; rather, they responded to perceived unfairness or corruption, particularly in times of economic emergency. During episodes of rent resistance, for example: "There was no fundamental questioning of the principle of tenancy, simply a protest against sudden changes in the status quo."[32]

Research on rural protest during the late-Qing and Republican eras shows that concerns of retributive justice drove protest and shaped the way in which violence unfolded. Hung Ho-fung argues that riots in the late-Qing tended to use retributive violence against abusive or corrupt local officials, in which villagers would seize their homes or beat or kill them. These riots did not challenge the imperial system but rather appealed to higher levels of government for

[30] Lucien Bianco, *Wretched Rebels: Rural Disturbances on the Eve of the Chinese Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 82.

[31] James Tong argues that this occurred during the Ming as well. Though his focus is on the state's coercive capacity to deter violent mobilization from below, he also emphasizes the importance of administrative capacity "to implement benevolent and generous famine relief policies" as a deterrent to state resistance. See James W. Tong, *Disorder Under Heaven: Collective Violence in the Ming Dynasty* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 199.

[32] Lucien Bianco, "Peasant Movements," in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 13, ed. John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 275.

justice against these local abuses.[33] This was true also of rent resistance. Kathryn Bernhardt demonstrates that there was a strong sense of retributive justice in the anti-rent riots of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Jiangnan. Despite attacking large and small landlords, peasants would also selectively target landlords based on the egregiousness of their behavior: they targeted those who collected more than the local average, failed to reduce rents during poor harvests, used unfavorable conversion rates for rents, refused to share tax remissions, or were particularly ruthless and unsympathetic in their collection of rents. Of particular note is that the peasants loathed those who exploited their ties with local officials to collect rents, often by arresting and beating tenants. Those landlords who exhibited some degree of civic virtue by contributing to local community services or public projects could avoid becoming targets of violence, though this was far from a surefire guarantee.[34] Though tendency to focus on retributive justice against corrupt officials resembles the plots of rural operas; in many ways the protestors' behavior was echoing the Confucian imperial state's own moralized understanding of officialdom as a dichotomy between benevolent and evil officials.

Learning from the Qing and the Peasantry: The Development of Moral Mobilization

The idea that the CCP was adept at learning from and incorporating aspects of traditional Chinese culture is far from new. As Elizabeth Perry observes, early CCP leaders, in contrast to their Nationalist counterparts, excelled in the art of "cultural positioning"—i.e. "the strategic deployment of a range of symbolic resources (religion, ritual, rhetoric, dress, drama, art and so on) for purposes of political persuasion." Their interest and experience in rural organizing

[33] Hung, *Protest*, 142-48.

[34] Kathryn Bernhardt, *Rents, Taxes, and Peasant Resistance: The Lower Yangzi Region, 1840-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 75-77.

facilitated their ability to learn from grassroots peasant culture and, importantly, they were open to using traditional forms of expression and protest to mobilize the peasantry.[35] The Party from its earliest days employed traditional art forms and the moral tropes therein to disseminate propaganda. At the Gutian Conference in 1929 and more famously at Yan'an in 1942, the Party promoted the use of art and propaganda to appeal to the masses "in terms of their own psychology and experience." Landsberger continues:

> General political issues were to be linked with everyday life. To successfully bring this about, the pre-existing values and forms of China's 'old culture' were linked to the new political ideals and, where necessary, were manipulated to further the aims of the revolution.[36]

While one could interpret this as cultural utilitarianism, Levenson suggests that the CCP accepted the use of traditionalist art forms to aid the Communist cause not merely as an effective tool of mobilization but as a kind of cultural "reclamation."[37] This is not to say that these artistic efforts were free of foreign influence: at the Jiangxi Soviet some members of the Moscow-trained Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks clique advocated using traditional art forms—e.g. opera, folksongs, drama, etc.—to propagandize Party policies and concerns, to which they added their own understanding of and experience with revolutionary Soviet drama.[38]

I identify three areas in which the Party incorporated imperial ideas and practices of moral governance and traditional rural culture and protest into their techniques of mobilizing class struggle: 1) the moral discourse of class struggle; 2) moral boundary work through speaking bitterness; and 3) moral dramatization in struggle sessions.

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[35] Perry, *Anyuan*, 4.

[36] Stefan Landsberger, *Chinese Propaganda Posters: From Revolution to Modernization* (Amsterdam: Pepin Press, 1995), 34.

[37] Levenson, *Confucian China*, 137-140.

[38] Ellen R. Judd, "Revolutionary Drama and Song in the Jiangxi Soviet," *Modern China* 9, no. 1 (Jan. 1983): 127-160.

1. The Moral Discourse of Class Struggle

The intellectual foundation for moral mobilization was the CCP's moral discourse of class struggle (阶级斗争), which originated in Mao's theoretical innovation upon orthodox Marxism. Mao explicitly called for adapting Marxism to the Chinese context: "[W]e must discard our dogmatism and replace it by a new and vital Chinese style and manner, pleasing to the eye and to the ear of the Chinese common people."[39] Though Maoist thought accepts the Leninist idea of a vanguard party tasked with leading the masses to class consciousness, it distinguishes itself from other brands of communism in its heavy use of moral terminology, much of which is grounded in Confucian thought. Unlike Marx, Mao emphasized the importance of thought in determining behavior, not "objective" class background—i.e. one's relation to the means of production. This modification of Marxist doctrine—"voluntarism"—opened up the possibility of class struggle on highly subjective grounds. Stuart Schram argues that Mao's voluntarism drew on the Confucian link between "moral virtue and correct political behavior."[40]

Moreover, Mao privileged the "relations of exploitation" over "relations to the means of production" in understanding class.[41] An excellent example of this during land reform is the concept of the "small rentier" (小土地出租者). Included as a separate class label in the land reform class labeling system, small rentiers described landowners who did not till their land but rather rented it out for income, which overlapped in large part with the Party's definition of a landlord. While it did not always play out this way in practice, professionals, elderly people,

[39] Stuart R. Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 70.

[40] Stuart R. Schram, "To Utopia and Back: A Cycle in the History of the Chinese Communist Party," *The China Quarterly* 87 (1981): 418.

[41] Arif Dirlik, "The Predicament of Marxist Revolutionary Consciousness: Mao Zedong, Antonio Gramsci, And the Reformulation of Marxist Revolutionary Theory," *Modern China* 9, no. 2 (April 1983): 182-211.

widows, and others who could not till their own land or drew their income primarily from a non-agricultural work, as in the case of professionals like schoolteachers, were to be labeled not as landlords but as small rentiers. This label also helped protect families of "revolutionary martyrs" and soldiers who may have hailed from a landholding background. Because their income was not exploitative per se, those labeled as small rentiers could escape violent class struggle (see Chapter 3).

Scholars of the Cultural Revolution have appreciated the moral content of class struggle, but many of these scholars have argued that Mao's earlier thinking on class was somehow more "objective." Kraus described that land reform operated on the basis of a "property model of stratification," which identified classes using the relationship between individuals and their relationship to economic means of production.[42] In line with this thinking, Strauss has argued that land reform employed a "Marxian system of economic classification" that was "comprehensible and broadly applicable" in certain parts of China—particularly North China, where land reform was carried out first—and far less applicable in the south, where landholding relations were exceedingly complex.[43]

Yet Mao's concept of class was subjective and thoroughly moral from the beginning. According to Philip Kuhn, Mao first uses the term "class" (阶级) in his 1921 article "The Founding Proclamation of the Human Self-Study University." Curiously, he uses the Confucian distinction between physical and mental labor to categorize Chinese society into the "intellectual class" (知识阶级) and "commoner class" (平民阶级).[44] Schram observes that in the early 1920s

[42] Richard C. Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 182.

[43] Strauss, "Morality," 902.

[44] Philip A. Kuhn, "Chinese Views of Social Classification," in *Class and Social Stratification in Post-revolution China*, ed. James L. Watson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 19.

Mao had begun to use a mixture of objective and subjective criteria to evaluate class, which is how he justified recruiting lumpenproletarian elements—namely, bandits—into his forces at Jinggangshan. Yet Schram hesitates to call this a fully moral conception of class, because while Mao did "juxtapose political and moral categories…at that time he did not yet *define* class in moral terms."[45] Kraus, who argues that Mao's conception of class did not become moral until around the time of the Cultural Revolution, admits that Mao always saw class as an impetus for mobilization, apart from its economic definition: "For Mao, the value of the concept of class was never its immediate (and inherently transitory) economic content, but its potential utility as a building block for understanding and then energizing material conflicts in a changing society."[46]

The clearest sign of Mao's moral definition of class appears in the early 1930s. In his 1933 "How to Differentiate the Classes in the Rural Areas" [怎样分析农村阶级], Mao laid out the criteria for categorizing rural people into classes. His definition of the "landlord" (地主) begins with a standard Marxist economic description:

> A landlord is a person who owns land, does not engage in labour himself, or does so only to a very small extent, and lives by exploiting the peasants. The collection of land rent is his main form of exploitation; in addition, he may lend money, hire labour, or engage in industry or commerce. But his exaction of land rent from the peasants is his principal form of exploitation.[47]

The remaining criteria, however, mix the economic with the moral:

> A bankrupt landlord shall still be classified as a landlord if he does not engage in labour but lives by swindling or robbing others or by receiving assistance from relatives or friends, and is better off than the average middle peasant.

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[45] Stuart Schram, "Classes, Old and New, in Mao Zedong's Thought, 1949-1976" in *Class and Social Stratification in Post-revolution China*, ed. James L. Watson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 32.

[46] Kraus, *Class Conflict*, 182.

[47] Within this category of land rent, Mao also included rent from managing communal land—e.g. lineage or temple land. Mao Zedong, "How to Differentiate the Classes in the Rural Areas," [怎样分析农村阶级] in *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965) 137-139.

> Warlords, officials, local tyrants and evil gentry are political representatives and exceptionally ruthless members of the landlord class. Minor local tyrants and evil gentry are also very often to be found among the rich peasants.
>
> Persons who assist landlords in collecting rent and managing property, who depend on landlord exploitation of the peasants as their main source of income and are better off than the average middle peasant shall be put in the same category as landlords.
>
> Usurers are persons who rely on exploitation by usury as their main source of income, are better off than the average middle peasant, and shall be put in the same category as landlords.[48]

Many of these affiliated categories are still "better off than the average middle peasant," but their inclusion rests squarely on the nefariousness of their behavior. The bankrupt landlord retains his or her class label because he or she continues to "swindle[] and rob[] others"; political elites are landlords because they are the "ruthless" mouthpieces of the landlord class; rent collectors and property managers are accessories to landlord exploitation and therefore deserve to be categorized together with them; and "usurers" are, due to the exploitative nature of their income, landlords as long as they are still somewhere above the middle of the wealth distribution, presumably irrespective of the size of their landholdings. There is no sign, however, of using moral assessments to label the non-landlord classes—i.e. rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants, farmworkers—are defined mainly by economic criteria. Mao defines these classes strictly according to the amount of their income they derive from rent, whether they hire labor or sell their own, and how much land they own and rent.[49]

Mao's theory of class struggle, though nominally rooted in Marxism, drew heavily on a Manichean morality rooted in the same kind of Neo-Confucian thought that guided the Qing government in its assessment of its own officials as virtuous or evil. This moralized view of class extended to the Party's understanding of itself. Though not the focus of this study, it is impossible to ignore the significance of Confucian morality in the Party's regulation and

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

disciplining of its ranks. Liu Shaoqi's famous tract "How to be a Good Communist" exemplifies the centrality of morality to Party discipline.[50] Quoting Mencius, Liu wrote of an ideal upright Party member that "neither riches nor honor can corrupt him, neither poverty nor lowly condition can make him swerve from principle, neither threats nor force can bend him."[51] Brokaw observes that the Party used "ledgers of merit and demerit" from the village compact system in its internal political education work.[52]

Ultimately, the existence of "good" and "bad" classes in the Maoist class system were thus defined less by their economic position and more by subjective evaluations of the propriety of their behavior. During land reform, the moral discourse of class struggle distinguished between "good" and "bad" classes and argued that bad classes could be treated violently and without mercy because of their "complicity" in the ages-old feudal system of oppression.[53] Significantly, this moralized view of class formed the ideological basis for two of the major techniques of moral mobilization that the Communists developed for the land reform campaign: speaking bitterness and the struggle session.

2. *Moral Boundary Work through "Speaking Bitterness"*

One of the principal tools of moral boundary work in the repertoire of land reform mobilization techniques was "speaking bitterness" (诉苦)—i.e. the public expression of stories of personal suffering. During land reform, the Party used the technique of speaking bitterness to

[50] Hung, *Protest*, 197.

[51] Quoted in Sulamith Heins Potter and Jack M. Potter, *China's Peasants: The Anthropology of a Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 289.

[52] Brokaw, *Ledgers*, 226n.

[53] Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 196.

conduct moral boundary work in small, face-to-face meetings with villagers, where cadres guided villagers to express and make sense of their suffering in order to draw a symbolic boundary between them as oppressed victims and their oppressors as part of the evil landlord class. Not everyone at small group meetings spoke bitterness, but for both the speaker and the listener speaking bitterness "construct[ed] the old order as oppressive, inherently violent, and immoral by recalling instances of social antagonism between individuals who occupy very different positions within hierarchies of power in Chinese society."[54] In this way, speaking bitterness could create and unify various strata of peasants—the landless, the land-poor, and even the average landholder—as "oppressed class subjects."[55] Later, at mass rallies like struggle sessions, these bitter stories could serve as the basis for moral shocks that roused the crowd to violence.

Though the precise cultural origins of speaking bitterness are unknown, the Party developed it into a structured technique that plausibly drew upon cultural norms regarding the public expression of suffering and storytelling traditions. Anagnost suggests that speaking bitterness may have emerged from norms of public grievance expression in rural Chinese society, though she does not specify the nature of these norms.[56] Wu instead connects speaking bitterness to storytelling traditions:

> From a cultural perspective, speaking bitterness was a political reinvention of public story telling based on the value of past bitter memory to drive a person to pursue a certain political goal. This technique also involves sharing personal trauma to turn it into a collective asset. Open expression of sorrow and crying in public are not stigmatized, but are met with sympathy and are encouraged.[57]

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[54] Ann Anagnost, *National Past-times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 33.

[55] Ibid., 4.

[56] Ibid., 31.

[57] Wu Guo, "Speaking Bitterness: Political Education in Land Reform and Military Training under the CCP, 1947-1951," *The Chinese Historical Review* 21, no. 1 (2014): 21.

It is likely that speaking bitterness is a combination both of norms regarding the function and expression of suffering and traditional storytelling. Speaking bitterness's goal of making its audience sympathize with suffering and demand retribution resembles the Neo-Confucian idea that one can cultivate virtue through witnessing and being upset by suffering. As De Bary explains, "For the Neo-Confucians it was the mark of the humane man that he could *not* endure the sufferings of others, but felt compelled to take action to remedy them."[58] This Neo-Confucian precedent could possibly explain how the Communists came to see this technique as a legitimate and effective form of political education and why ordinary villagers may have considered it a normal mode of grievance expression. As a storytelling technique, the Communist use of sensationalized tales of sorrow to shape public opinion—though on a local scale—has a more proximate precedent: it draws on what Eugenia Lean describes as the media sensationalism of the Nationalist era that sought to solicit the public's "sympathy" (同情) on cases of vengeance.[59]

The structure of speaking bitterness and its attentive focus to public performance appears to be inspired by China's folk operatic tradition. The Party did not simply find those who were aggrieved to serve as accusers—literally, "masters of bitterness" (苦主)—they actively guided them to understand their suffering and trained them to deliver their stories in the most effective way possible. Speaking bitterness, as Anagnost notes, was "not the spontaneous flow of pent-up sorrow but the careful reworking of perception and experience into the narrative frame of Marxist class struggle."[60] The ways in cadres coached "accusers" (苦主) to speak bitterness

[58] De Bary, *Neo-Confucian*, 77.

[59] Lean, *Public Passions,* 6.

[60] Anagnost, *National Past-times*, 28.

resembled acting lessons. In his research on the use of speaking bitterness during land reform in Shandong and Hebei during the Civil War, Li Lifeng observes that speaking bitterness participants received a great deal of instruction on how to deliver their tragic stories: speakers need to learn how "to summarize several most heinous crimes that could make the masses feel a high degree of hatred and thus a desire to join the struggle." Cadres treated accusers like actors playing before an audience. A cadre would push an accuser, when delivering his or her stories, to "wear a sad facial expression" and to "become an actor who can move the people."[61] In fact, when the Party introduced speaking bitterness to the PLA during the 1947 Speaking Bitterness Movement, it used an opera—Wang Keqin's Squad (王克勤班)—to demonstrate the technique: the titular character literally performs speaking bitterness on stage at one point in the opera.[62]

Though in use before then, by 1946 speaking bitterness had become a mainstay of the Party's repertoire of mobilization techniques, a tool for "soliciting tales of suffering for mobilizing the masses."[63] At the heart of the practice of speaking bitterness was moral boundary work. The Party had learned that speaking bitterness could generate both "[e]xtreme hatred toward landlords" and the Nationalists as well as "extreme feelings of love toward the Land Reform Movement and the CCP."[64] This technique of forging and putting into opposition

[61] Li Lifeng, "Mass Movements and Rural Governance in Communist China: 1945–1976," *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 7, no. 2 (2013): 166

[62] Brian J. DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army: Drama Troupes in China's Rural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 98.

[63] Sun Feiyu, *Social Suffering and Political Confession: Suku in Modern China* (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2013), 45.

[64] Ibid., 47.

collective identities was used extensively during the Civil War-era land reform campaign (1946-1948).

It is revealing that the Party used speaking bitterness as a mobilizing technique during the Civil War in the land reform campaign as well as within the ranks of the People's Liberation Army. Wu Guo's thoughtful and fascinating exploration of the PLA's use of "speaking bitterness" illustrates that the Party used speaking bitterness to recruit, build solidarity among, and provoke soldiers to hate and use violence not just against internal "class enemies" but also its military enemy—namely, the Nationalists. Like the moral boundary work conducted in small group meetings and informal chats during land reform, the Party relied on guided discussions among soldiers to encourage them to speak bitterness to draw moral boundaries between themselves and their fellow Chinese nationals who fought for or allied with the Nationalists.[65]

The *Speaking Bitterness and Seeking Vengeance* (诉苦复仇) handbook, published in 1947 by the PLA, contains a collection of "classic" speaking-bitterness materials that the Party used as templates for speaking bitterness work with PLA soldiers. With colorful titles like "How Vicious are the Hearts of the Landlords!" [地主老财的心多狠呀!], "When Will Two Generations of Hatred Be Avenged, Setting One's Mind to Eliminating Chiang Kai-Shek" [两代冤仇何时报，立志消灭蒋介石], and "Tell My Bitterness to the Party" [把我的苦告诉给党], these stories were designed to conform to formulaic templates of narratives of suffering that could trigger the righteous indignation of soldiers before battle. Some of these stories of exploitation were even written in verse.[66]

[65] Wu, "Speaking Bitterness," 14.

[66] For the full listing of "classic" speaking-bitterness stories, see Jin-Cha-Ji Military District Political Department, ed. "Speaking Bitterness and Seeking Vengeance" [诉苦复仇] (N.p.: December 1947), 1-32.

Because speaking bitterness was used to fan hatred against both the Nationalists and landed elite and strongmen who allied with them, cadres drew on examples of injustice from members of the local community to mobilize soldiers. To an audience of soldiers at the battlefield of the Qingcang Campaign in 1947, an elderly man surnamed Liu spoke of his abuse at the hands of the region's notorious strongman—a "traitor-evil tyrant" landlord named Gao Hongji—who beat Liu senseless after failing to extort money from him: "As the soldiers heard this, they became moved, one by one, [until] everyone shouted, 'Resolutely avenge Old Man Liu!'" After hearing more stories of how Gao Hongji raped women, ordered the demolition of people's houses, and otherwise oppressed locals, one of the army commissars (政委) led his troops to yell the slogans "Avenge the people!" and "Resolutely exterminate Gao Hongji!", after which the soldiers "through gritted teeth, avowed to avenge the people."[67]

The dual use of speaking bitterness for land reform mobilization and for war mobilization suggests that speaking bitterness was intended to be used not just as sensemaking process—i.e. helping participants understand and make sense of their grievances—but as a means to facilitate moral boundary work that could delineate between friend and foe and galvanize participation in violence.

3. *Land Reform Operas, Retributive Justice, and the Moral Drama of the Struggle Session*

The inspiration for struggle sessions—mass meetings designed to publicly humiliate, harm, and kill class enemies for their alleged transgressions—can be traced back at least to Mao's famous 1927 Hunan Report, in which he observed peasants terrorizing local landlords and

[67] Ibid., 44-45.

officials.[68] Notwithstanding the likely embellishments of his observations, Mao witnessed and described the decidedly moral flavor of the peasants' violence against their enemies. Based on what Mao observed in his Report, the Communist struggle session formulation appears to inherit elements of the village compact system, traditional peasant protest, and rural folk opera.

Mao reported that the peasants intimidated their opponents by brandishing the "register of good and evil deeds" used during village compact meetings, where locals were lauded or admonished for their behavior. In his Report, Mao described this as the Qing practice of "the other register":

> In the Ching Dynasty, the household census compiled by the local authorities consisted of a regular register and 'the other' register, the former for honest people and the latter for burglars, bandits and similar undesirables. In some places the peasants now use this method to scare those who formerly opposed the associations. They say, 'Put their names down in the other register!'[69]

Mao does not use the term "register of good and evil deeds" or "ledgers of merit and demerit" to describe these two registers, but "the regular" and "the other" most certainly refers to registers used in village compact ceremonies. He also observed that the peasants cast a net far wider than that presupposed by Marxist notions of class: "[t]he peasant movement targeted local tyrants, gentry, and landlords, but also corrupt urban officials, patriarchy, and even bad rural customs."[70] Preempting critiques of the peasants' violent means of resolving local social conflict, Mao claimed that the peasantry used what legalists would call moral retributivism—that is, they tailored their punishments to fit the severity of the crime:

> The peasants are clear-sighted. Who is bad and who is not, who is the worst and who is not quite so vicious, who deserves severe punishment and who deserves to be let off lightly—the peasants keep clear accounts, and very seldom has the punishment exceeded the crime.[71]

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[68] Mao Zedong, "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," in *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1971).

[69] Ibid., 26-27.

[70] Ibid. 25-26.

[71] Ibid. 29-30.

Mao's observations of the peasants' use of the village compact practice of celebrating and denouncing moral virtue and transgression and their emphasis on retributive justice in the allocation of violence appear to have shaped the Communist ritual of the struggle session.

There are no policy documents explicitly linking Mao's Hunan Report to the institution of the struggle session, but there are remarkable similarities in the practices of the struggle session and the situation Mao described in 1927. While far more theatrical and engaging than the old village compact lecture circuit, struggle sessions similarly put good and evil deeds on public display, though with a much greater emphasis on the latter.[72] The Party and the crowd worked together to humiliate, shame, and punish moral offenders and laud and sympathize with those they supposedly victimized. Importantly, the Party guided the masses in labeling and judging targets.[73] The idea of classifying people based on their moral behavior had clear precedents in the village compact system and imperial moral governance more generally. Just as the imperial state categorized people "according to the attitudes and reactions which they showed at a given time" into "good people" and "weed people," "wicked sticks," and "bandits";[74] the Party sought to classify rural society into "good" classes and various kinds of "non-people"—e.g. landlords, counterrevolutionaries, Nationalists, etc.[75] At struggle sessions, offenders were commanded to

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[72] The emphasis on good deeds manifested in the more general use of "model" citizens and Party members in mass mobilization work. Beginning in the Yan'an Period, Li Lifeng notes, nearly "every mass movement produced numerous models and outstanding deeds" that the Party could extol as a way of mobilizing the masses. Of course, the use of revolutionary models has precedents outside of China—namely, the Soviet Union. Li, "Mass Movements," 167.

[73] I elaborate more on this process in Chapter 3.

[74] Hsiao, *Imperial Control*, 412.

[75] Sun, *Suku*, 19.

repent and "bow their heads to the masses" (向群众低头), which could possible earn them a reprieve. As the head of the East China Bureau stated, "landlords who obey the law and bow their heads to the masses should be treated with magnanimity" (对守法并向群众低头的地主, 应宽大处理).[76] Certainly, this form of public shaming and violence pales in comparison to the public display of immoral acts in the registers of good and evil deeds, yet the general spirit of the practice is similar: through the public accounting of immoral behavior, the state could regulate the moral conduct of the masses and establish itself as a legitimate moral arbiter.

Struggle sessions, being performative affairs, took much inspiration from rural folk opera. As Julia Strauss writes, "[struggle sessions were instances of] real theatre in which spectacle, state-sanctioned morality and audience participation coalesced into one remarkable show."[77] This "state-sanctioned morality" of class struggle, however, drew on moral tropes from rural folk opera influenced these public performances at struggle sessions. As Eugenia Lean observes:

> During Yan'an, the civil war years, and into the 1950s, 'spontaneous' struggle sessions against landlords and other 'reactionary' elements of society enflamed the strong affective commitment of the 'masses.' While often touted as spontaneous by leftist organizers, these struggle sessions were, in fact, carefully orchestrated to conform to long-standing and highly familiar moral narratives of good and evil drawn from China's vernacular storytelling and operatic traditions.[78]

Though struggle sessions certainly took cues from traditional folk operas, they absorbed this influence indirectly through Communist-written land reform operas, which were themselves patterned on rural folk operas.

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[76] Rao Shushi, "Summary of Experiences with Classic Land Reform Experiments in East China,' [华东土地改革典型试验经验总结] *People's Daily*, December 20, 1950.

[77] Strauss, "Morality," 907.

[78] Lean, *Public Passions*, 211.

The CCP translated tropes of good and evil from traditional folk operas into the idiom of class struggle through the production and staging of "land reform" operas—e.g. *The White-Haired Girl* (白毛女), *Liu Hulan* (刘胡兰), and *Red Leaf River* (赤叶河). These operas portrayed to their audiences a "rural society [that] was rife with intense class hatreds due to a universally evil and exploitative landlord class."[79] Brian DeMare has shown that Communist cultural troupes modeled land reform operas on folk operas in both content and artistic form. Land reform operas contained similar themes of retribution against cruel and unjust officials that were prevalent in traditional rural opera. One of the prevalent archetypes DeMare identifies in land reform operas is the morally depraved "evil landlord." In "The White-Haired Girl" and "Red Leaf River," the evil landlord antagonist is "notable for both his love of cheating the peasantry and his predilection for sexual assault." These vilified landlords were transgressors on multiple fronts. "The White-Haired Girl" portrays the evil landlord Huang Shiren not just as a sexual predator but also as a kidnapper and a drunk.[80] While many of these operas were based on the traditional *xibanzi* operas, the way in which they used pre-existing artistic conventions aligned with their portrayal of certain characters as valorous or villainous. For example, composers used melodies for "evil or crafty" characters in traditional opera in scenes that portrayed antagonists like landlords and other "reactionary" types.[81] The power of these operas to elicit moral outrage was such that they unintentionally provoked audience members to attack

[79] Brian J. DeMare, "Turning Bodies and Turning Minds: Land Reform and Chinese Political Culture, 1946–1952" (PhD diss., UCLA, 2008), 97.

[80] DeMare, *Cultural Army*, 130-131.

[81] Ibid., 121.

the performers. A troupe performing the White-Haired Girl, for example, reported that audience members would sometimes throw rocks at the actors playing villains on stage.[82]

Although land reform operas were independently important as tools of boundary work that delineated between immoral landlords and the innocent masses, they also helped introduce the ritual of a struggle session to rural audiences.[83] The climax of the White-Haired Girl is in fact a violent struggle session against the landlord antagonist (see Figure 2.1). In front of a peasant crowd, the heroine speaks bitterness against her tormentor, "whipping the crowd into such a frenzy that peasants attending the meeting begin beating the two villains before she could even finish her accusations. After she concludes her story, the two are beaten again and taken away to await trial and execution." By viewing an artistic performance of a struggle session, the actual peasant audience learns how to perform and stage their own.[84]

[82] Ibid., 98.

[83] The independent power of land reform operas to conduct moral boundary work during post-1949 land reform is questionable. DeMare writes that the Central-South Bureau pushed for the use of cultural troupes in its land reform movement, though it only gathered about three thousand participants for the entire region. In my own research on the East China Bureau I have not come across any evidence that shows the Bureau leadership's interest in widely staging land reform operas. DeMare, *Cultural Army*, 160-161.

[84] Ibid., 133.

Figure 2.1 The Struggle Session Scene from The White-Haired Girl[85]



The theatricality of struggle sessions certainly conformed to the kinds of moral narratives presented in land reform operas and traditional folk operas before them, but the selection of targets and the use of violence was grounded in concerns of retributive justice that characterized pre-1949 rural protest. Eye-witness accounts comment on the theatricality of land reform struggle sessions but they also reveal their remarkably retributivist nature. Hinton's description of a struggle session in Longbow Village illustrates the use of theatrics to elicit moral outrage against a man who hoarded grain while his fellow villagers starved. In his description of the first struggle session held in the village for Kuo Ch'ung-wang, who was "not the richest man in the village but…one of the meanest," the organizers of the struggle session clearly wanted to

[85] "Huang Shiren is Struggled Against," [黄世仁被批斗] September 11, 2016. https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/白毛女.

sensationalize the ill-effects of his greed—namely, his seizing and hoarding of grain during a famine year in which his others starved to death:

> On the day of the big meeting [the struggle session], the grain, which could have saved the lives of dozens of people, lay in the courtyard in a stinking mildewed heap. The people who crowded in to accuse walked over the grain and, as the courtyard filled up, some of them sat down on it. The smell and the sight of it reminded them of those who had died for want of a few catties [of grain] and filled them with anger.[86]

The struggle session against Kuo was designed to be a spectacle that could arouse the anger of attendees, but this outrage stemmed ultimately not just from the theatrical setting but from its combination with a moral transgression that provoked in attendees a desire for retributive justice. A similar example on a much larger scale comes from Xu Hongci's recently published memoir, in which he recalled his experience as the former secretary of the Northern Jiangsu Small Group (苏北小组) of the East China Bureau's Rural Committee's Land Reform Inspection Team (中共中央华东局农委土改巡视团). In November 1950, at a meeting with the Northern Jiangsu Party Committee Rural Committee (苏北区党委农委) in Yangzhou, he learned that the Northern Jiangsu government wanted to stage its very own struggle session and execute several landlords as a "test" of its efficacy in mobilizing the masses, who had been reluctant to participate in the campaign. Attending this pre-arranged struggle session in a town in Jiangdu County, the author wrote of its heavy theatricality:

> Fairy Temple was a dilapidated small town; [the County officials] used a clearing on the east side of town as the site for the struggle session. The Jiangdu County Party Committee knew that all these high-level officials were coming, so they fixed up the space to make it very stately; they even carefully selected and organized the peasant masses who were to attend the session. The 'speaking bitterness' session was ordered and methodical (次序井然) and there were frequent climaxes (高潮迭起); it was rich in theatricality (极富戏剧性)…Time passed minute by minute, second by second, and in the final moment, the County Party Secretary announced that these two landlords, guilty of heinous crimes and having refused to reform their ways, would be executed. The soldiers dragged them to the side of the meeting space, the young [landlord] struggled for his life, trying to shout something, but the rope tied around his neck was pulled so tight that

[86] William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review, 2008 [1966]), 134.

> he couldn't make a peep. In a flash, the crowd blocked my view and two gunshots rang out…This was my first lesson in the bloodiness of class struggle."[87]

Xu's account reflects the resemblance between the government-staged struggle session and a morality play, though with meticulously crafted theatricality. As Chapter 3 elaborates, organizers took pains to ensure that these sessions were neither too spontaneous nor too structured so as to maintain the audience's interest and the Party's control over the ensuing violence.

The moral drama at the heart of the struggle session served a function similar to the dramatic displays of egregious behavior in revolutionary operas and plays: mobilizing participation in the revolutionary effort. In struggle sessions, moral shocks sought to galvanize participation in violence against class enemies, with the hope that such participation may translate into long-term mobilization in other areas of political life. Land reform operas and dramas similarly sought participation, though in more activities than just violence. For example, while fending off the Nationalists at the Jiangxi Soviet, the CCP's revolutionary dramas revolved around the theme of "strengthening the resistance of the soviets in the civil war." Judd explains that "[t]he theme is presented through the portrayal of events of violent conflict: looting, rape, and killing are fairly common occurrences in these plays… invariably combined with exhortations to take specific actions (join the army, spy on the enemy, produce more for the front, and so on), and examples of soldiers and peasants courageously taking such action."[88]

Some of the techniques of violence used during struggle sessions were taken from the peasantry's own contentious repertoire. In carrying out terror against the landed elite Mao observed that "[the peasants] tie up the gentry with ropes, put tall paper-hats on them, and parade

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[87] Xu Hongci, *Give Me Back My Freedom* [还我自由] (n.p.) Unpublished memoir given to author. Xu's memoir was recently published in English by Swedish journalist Erling Hoh. See Xu Hongci, *No Wall Too High: One Man's Daring Escape from Mao's Darkest Prison*, trans. Erling Hoh, (New York: Straus and Giroux, 2017).

[88] Judd, "Drama and Song," 147.

them through villages."[89] In the public executions during the Red Terror at Peng Pai's Hai-Lu-Feng Soviet in Guangdong Province, the peasants proactively pushed for theatrical forms of violence, some of which mimicked past state violence used against the local communities. These events became "festival[s] not to be missed which many peasants attended, making themselves hoarse with shouts of 'kill, kill, kill'." The peasants went so far as to use ritualized cannibalism to punish targets, mimicking the cruel local magistrate's practice of forcing family members, often father-son and brother-brother pairs, to kill and eat parts of the victim while he still lived.[90]

While the Party officially proscribed torture, some forms of violence became institutionalized parts of struggle sessions. Oral histories with eye-witnesses and participant memoirs—as well as the archival record—reveal that struggle targets were almost always tied up and paraded to the struggle session site, akin to what Mao originally observed in 1927. A former land reform work team member from Baoshan County in Southern Jiangsu noted that armed guards would bring the accused, hands tied behind his or her back, onto stage and, if he or she refused to be obedient or admit his or her faults, would be hit upside the head, forced to kneel, or even strung up.[91] In this way minor physical abuse—slapping, for example—was completely normalized.[92] In neighboring Jiading County, a longtime resident, who later served as the locality's brigade leader, remarked that various forms of non-lethal violence were commonly

[89] Mao, "Hunan."

[90] Bianco, "Peasant Movements, 311-312. Also see Fernando Galbiati, *P'eng P'ai and the Hai-Lu-Feng Soviet* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

[91] Oral history BS10, May 2015.

[92] In a group oral history with several residents in Jiading County, residents told me that, in their view, land reform was not violent in their village. However, when struggle targets were disobedient or talked back while being struggled against they would be beaten—"only clapped a few times on the head" (打几次耳光)—until he or she relented and continued to cooperate. Minor physical abuse seemed so normalized during land reform that the term "violence" (暴力) seemed only to refer to lethal violence. Oral histories JD02, JD03, JD04, JD05, April 2015.

used during struggle sessions, including hitting targets upside the head (打耳光), applying pressure to their skull (with rocks), and forced kneeling. Yet the degree of punishment used against a target was contingent on his or her behavior during the struggle session itself: "If the landlord showed good behavior (表现好), he or she would be allowed to stand on stage and only beaten lightly to get the point across; if the landlord did not behave well, then he or she would be beaten more severely."[93] Xu Hongci wrote that, in Taizhou County in Northern Jiangsu, PLA soldiers paraded targets sentenced to death to the execution site on rickshaws; the targets were bound with ropes (五花大绑) with execution flags (斩旗) attached to their backs.[94]

Summary

The Party's techniques of moral mobilization were not entirely new. Aside from the well-known influence of Confucianism on Mao's conception of class, the late-Qing's practices of moral governance and its moralization of corruption, the dramatization of moral transgression in traditional folk opera, and the retributivist nature of rural violence all shaped how the Party developed and used techniques like speaking bitterness and struggle sessions. This distinguished genealogy explains the inspiration for the Party's use of moral mobilization, but it also suggests why this approach may have resonated strongly with China's rural population. The imperial practice of proselytizing state morality in the countryside bore some resemblance to the Party's intensive propaganda efforts to change villagers' moral worldview. Aside from this familiarity with state techniques of moral indoctrination, the Communists' use of popular tropes of good and evil officials and themes of retributive justice in moral boundary work and moral shocks may

[93] Oral history JD05, April 2015.

[94] Xu, *Freedom*.

have facilitated the acceptance of using violence against certain members of local society for transgressions ranging from petty corruption to dishonest and cruel behavior. As the following chapter demonstrates, what was truly novel was the Communists' ability to conflate class and morality to mobilize the masses against members of the landed elite, not for their class status or affiliation, but for their perceived moral failings.

Chapter 3 – Moral Mobilization in Huaibei and Jiangnan

"*Believing that they are acting at the behest of a new mandate, the Communist masses are more dangerous when they torture the villains and their families indiscriminately than the self-righteous incorruptible judges of the Qing dynasty, not because the technology of torture has advanced but because there is now a vast number of self-righteous, incorruptible judges*."

—David Der-Wei Wang, *The Monster That Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-century China* (2004)[1]

In the dramatic climax of the 1961 film *The Hurricane,* based on Zhou Libo's novel about his experiences as a land reform cadre in northeastern China, an angry mob wielding spears and rifles drags the villainous landlord Han Laoliu towards the stage, beating and jeering at him along the way. A local cadre, standing on the stage before a banner that reads "The Communist Party is the Savior of the People," announces the start of the "struggle session" (斗争大会). The crowd falls silent as a young woman escorts an elderly couple through the crowd and onto the stage. "Han Laoliu, you beast!" the old man screams. "I never thought you'd get yours today." The man then launches into a dramatic retelling of the night, ten years ago, when Han sexually assaulted and killed their sixteen-year-old daughter. In tears, his wife takes out a long lock of hair, her daughter's hair, and presents it to the audience, saying she has kept it for ten years, waiting for the day when someone would come to redress this injustice. "Today," she exclaims, "the Chinese Communist Party has come! My child, you can finally close your eyes." A cadre calls for revenge and the crowd roars back in agreement. The scene continues with a montage of the faces of additional accusers—men and women, young and old—superimposed on

[1] David Der-Wei Wang, *The Monster That Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 73.

the spectating crowd. At the end, we are given a glimpse of the official pronouncement of Han Laoliu's sentence—execution—along with a description of his many crimes and misdeeds.[2]

Many decades later, a documentary film team visited Yuanbao village, the original site of *The Hurricane*, and discovered that the real Han Laoliu was not the villainous caricature of a landlord as depicted in the movie and novel. In fact, he was not even a wealthy landowner; he was a middleman, a so-called "sub-landlord" (二地主) or "managerial landlord" (经营地主), who collected rents for urban-dwelling absentee landlords. "His house didn't have much of anything in it (屋里没啥玩意)," recalled one villager.[3] Because he was semi-literate, he headed the local Maintenance Association (维持会) that cooperated with the Japanese puppet government to extract resources for the Japanese army and to report on any anti-Japanese activities. Though it is difficult to ascertain how villagers felt about Han Laoliu back then, we can speculate that his unenviable position as a middleman between tenants and landlords and then later between the local community and the Japanese army made him an unpopular figure and a convenient target for the mobilization of public ire. If the villagers of Yuanbao village truly despised Han Laoliu, they did so not because of his class but because of his unsavory role as a tax collector and representative of the puppet government. Even in the film that portrays him as an unsavory member of the gentry class, Han Laoliu is ultimately condemned and punished not for his wealth or his status as a landlord, but for having raped and killed another villager. In

[2] *The Hurricane* [暴风骤雨], directed by Xie Tieli (1961; Beijing: Zhongguo Wencai Shengxiang Chuban Gongsi, 2005).

[3] *The Hurricane* [暴風驟雨], directed by Jiang Yue and Duan Jinchuan (Hong Kong: China Memo Films, 2006). For an extended discussion of the character of Han Laoliu, see Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution, 1945-57* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).

both fiction and real-life, Han Laoliu, as either landlord or middleman, elicited the community's righteous indignation over his past misdeeds and its irrepressible desire for violent retribution.

In this chapter I argue that Han Laoliu's fate reflects the Party's pervasive use of dramatic, morally-charged spectacle to mobilize civilians into sanctioning and participating in political violence. In essence, the Party used moral discourse to mobilize participation in violence through delineating moral boundaries that designate victims and oppressors and sensationalizing the perceived moral transgressions of the latter group. I juxtapose two crucial case studies and use within-case process-tracing to illuminate the causal pathway between morality and violence in two dramatically contrasting geographic regions in central-eastern China—i.e. Huaibei in the north and Jiangnan in the south.

Throughout this chapter I adjudicate between two competing perspectives: the *class struggle* perspective and the *moral transgression* perspective. According to the class struggle perspective, the Party mobilized participation in violence by appealing to socioeconomic inequality, feelings of relative deprivation, and pre-existing class hatred. If the Party was relying on class appeals, they should have tapped into existing discontent over the unequal distribution of economic resources or, if this discontent did not already exist, they should have somehow created dissatisfaction with the economic status quo to motivate participation in the campaign and in the violent persecution of wealthy landholders, purely due to their association with the ruling class. We would expect little differentiation in the treatment of landlords—except perhaps according to landholding size—and we would expect that communities exclusively targeted members of the landed elite. Conversely, the moral transgression perspective asserts that the Party mobilized participation in violence through delineating and activating a moral boundary between the innocent and oppressed masses and a morally retrograde other, whose perceived

transgressions were then used to mobilize moral outrage and violence against them. Communities should choose targets not according to class affiliation but rather their perceived moral violations. Violence mobilized against these targets should differentiate between targets based on the perceived gravity of these violations.

By weighing these competing perspectives, I argue here that the Party found a middle ground: through moral mobilization, the Party mobilized violence by identifying and emphasizing moral transgressions among members of the landed elite—the Party's targeted group—to frame them as morally reprehensible. Because the Party intended to target the landed elite, it guided communities to choose targets who existed in the overlap between moral offenders and landholders. This meant that while many targets belonged to the landed elite, a fair number of targets were chosen purely on the basis of their perceived moral transgressions. Moreover, regardless of class background, communities punished targets according to the perceived gravity of their moral violations.

The rest of this chapter proceeds by first reviewing the structure of the land reform campaign—i.e. the major players and the three major stages of land reform mobilization. I then proceed through each of these stages to illustrate how moral mobilization best explains the popular mobilization of violence in both Huaibei and Jiangnan. Next, I address a major observable implication of moral mobilization: the use of moral retributivist logic to select and punish targets. I conclude with an assessment of failed cases of mobilization in the absence of moral appeals.

The Structure of the Land Reform Campaign in the East China Bureau (1950-1952)

Before conducting the process tracing analysis of how the Party used moral appeals to mobilize land reform violence, it is first necessary to explain the official procedures that structured the course of the land reform campaign. Since the case study region lies entirely within the East China Bureau, I draw from central Party documents and official directives and reports issued by the East China Bureau's leadership. I first introduce the major actors in the land reform campaign and then discuss the campaign's official mobilization procedures before moving on to the question of how the Party mobilized this and subsequent waves of violence in Huaibei and Jiangnan.

The Major Players

Theoretically, the two guiding forces of the campaign were the local Peasant Association (农民协会), and the Party work team (工作队). The local Peasant Association was a mass organization, established by local cadres, that was primarily constituted of farmworkers, poor peasants, and middle peasants. The Party intended farmworkers and poor peasants, being landless and land-poor, respectively, to assume leadership positions within the Peasant Association, though middle peasants were far more likely to take active roles in the Association, most likely because of their relative economic security. The Peasant Association, as one of the two main organizations in charge of the campaign, was technically allowed to decide how to distribute class labels and select struggle targets during land reform. The Land Reform Work teams—usually a small handful of young Party members and urban intellectuals trained and sent down by the county Land Committee (土地委员会)—were to advise and guide the Peasant

Association, with the assistance of local cadres and activists.[4] These cadres may or may not have been Party members, but they had posts in government organs or Party-organized mass associations and were usually from the locality where they worked. Activists (积极分子), politically ambitious or zealous villagers, helped with the logistics and held key positions in local mass organizations, such as the Peasant Association.

There was an unmistakable tension between the objectives of the work teams and local cadres and the activists and villagers. The Party wanted to establish political and ideological control in the localities, which meant identifying and eliminating political threats, mainly from the landed elite. Political threats encompassed a large range of categories: former officials (township heads, *baojia* heads, etc.), secret society leaders, bandit leaders, GMD agents, and politically powerful landlords. Learning from their mistake of not managing the selectivity of land reform violence during the Civil War,[5] the Party wanted to minimize the number of people targeted and executed; this was called constraining the "scope of attack" (打击面). Work team members and cadres were warned that if they allowed locals to expand the scope of attack recklessly, they would risk creating a unified bloc of resistance among the large number of those persecuted.[6]

Local activists and villagers, on the other hand, were much more interested in retribution or even petty revenge. They were particularly interested in taking down the "evil tyrants" (恶霸)

[4] Vivienne Shue, *Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development Toward Socialism, 1949-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 66.

[5] Ren Bishi, in his well-known speech critiquing the leftist errors of Civil War-era land reform, warned: "No matter what, [we] should limit the scope of attack to the truly exploitative feudal class [真正的封建剥削阶级], [we] absolutely cannot permit this scope to be exceeded." See Ren Bishi, "A Few Problems in Land Reform," [土地改革中的几个问题] January 12, 1948, *CCPM*.

[6] See Chapter 5 for a description of Party policy on containing the "scope of violence" (打击面).

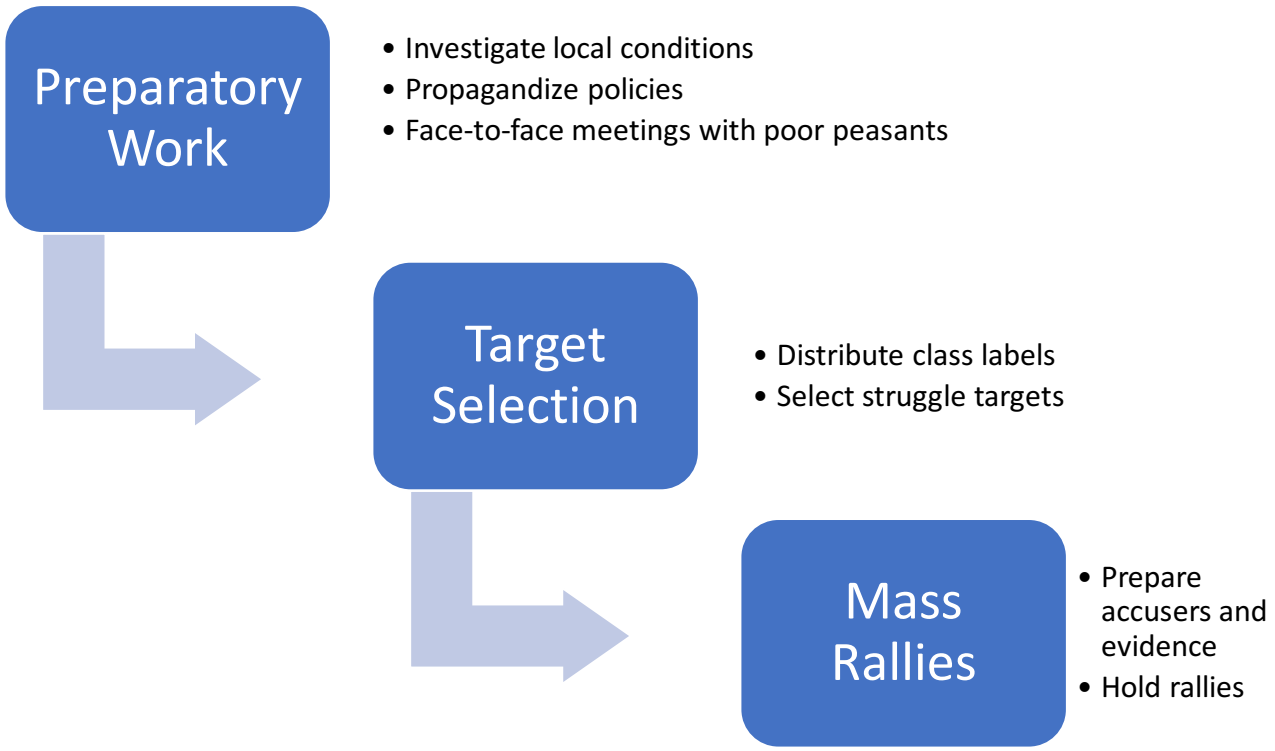
who had taken advantage of the chaos of war to oppress and cheat the local community and those who had collaborated with the Japanese or GMD; locals often tried to frame their personal enemies in these terms as well. Thus, locals tended to select "evil tyrants," notorious vagrants, criminals, or bandits, corrupt former officials, Japanese collaborators, and other members of the community locals thought of as crafty, dishonest, and cruel. Unlike the Party, they wanted retribution above all, which meant expanding the scope of attack as much as necessary.

Party work teams and local cadres, therefore, were tasked with a daunting balancing act: they needed to constrain the campaign's scope of attack while ensuring that serious political threats were eliminated and the locals' desire for retribution against moral offenders was at least somewhat satiated. The principal way of accomplishing this was to use political struggle to persecute those social categories that both the Party and locals wanted to eliminate: hated former officials, Japanese collaborators, "evil tyrants," and notorious bandits or criminals. Outside of this area of overlap, work team members had to work with the local Peasant Association to manage the local community's expectations and desires for retribution, selecting only those whom the locals especially wanted to see punished.

The Three Stages of Land Reform Violence

The Agrarian Reform Law and the East China Bureau's directives on land reform detail an elaborate set of procedures for the land reform campaign; however, only some of these procedures related to the mobilization of violent political struggle. Consequently, I simplify the mobilization of land reform violence into just three stages: *preparatory work*, *target selection*, and *mass rallies* (see Figure 3.1). I will address each stage in turn.

Figure 3.1: The Post-1949 Land Reform Campaign's Procedure for Mobilizing Class Struggle



1. *Preparatory Work*

The Party mandated extensive preparatory work to establish a foundation for mobilizing participation in mass political violence. In its official directive on land reform preparatory work, the East China Bureau stated that Party and government organs at all levels should begin this preparatory work in the spring of 1950 and finish it by the end of fall so that they could launch the campaign by winter. The first step was to investigate local conditions, draft a plan for carrying out land reform, and report back to superiors for comments and approval. Before and after the summer harvest, Party work teams and local cadres received intensive training in official land reform policy in which they learned the intricate details of land reform policy and were made aware of the harsh disciplinary punishment they would endure if caught engaging in

corrupt acts—e.g. embezzling, taking bribes, etc. Even before the arrival of the work team, cadres were to begin widespread propaganda and education efforts to dispel any misunderstandings or misgivings locals had about the movement and to explain to them the "righteousness" (正义性) and "necessity" (必要性) of land reform. Cadres would also help establish Peasant Associations (农民协会) if they had not already been formed. By the time of the fall harvest, Party work teams descended onto the villages to assist the Peasant Association and local cadres in carrying out land reform.[7] Land reform work teams, soon after their arrival, began by investigating local socioeconomic and political conditions, after which they inspected and rectified mass associations and conducted further propaganda work.[8] Much of this propaganda and education work was carried out in small face-to-face meetings—e.g. "informal chats" (漫谈会，座谈会) and "small group meetings" (小组会).[9] It was also during this preparatory stage that the Party implemented "model experiments" (典型试验) in one or two "key-point" (重点) villages in each county and compiled summary reports of their experiences to help guide future work once the campaign was fully underway.[10]

[7] Rao Shushi, "East China Military and Political Committee Directive on Land Reform Preparatory Work" [华东军政委员会关于土地改革准备工作的指示] *CCPM*, March 21, 1950.

[8] Shue, *Peasant China*, 72-73.

[9] For a detailed discussion of the importance of small groups as a tool of indoctrination, see Wang Cheng-Chih, *Words Kill: Calling for the Destruction of "Class Enemies" in China, 1949-1953* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

[10] Liu Ruilong, "Liu Ruilong's Report on Land Reform Work in East China" [刘瑞龙关于华东土地改革工作的报告] *CCPM*, March 19, 1951.

2. Selecting Targets

After the end of the preparatory stage, the Party organized the poor and farmworker peasants to distribute "class labels" (阶级成份) and choose people for violent political struggle, so-called "struggle targets" (斗争对象). According to the Agrarian Reform Law of 1950, local cadres were to demarcate class boundaries according to the amount of land owned, the percentage of land tilled by one's own household, the percentage of income derived from "exploitation"—e.g. rents, interest—and the amount of hired labor.[11] The principal goal of establishing these class labels was to foster solidarity among the farmworkers, poor peasants, and middle peasants while "isolating" (孤立) the landlords from the rest of the community; rich peasants were left somewhere in the middle, for the Party regarded them as "neutral" players.[12]

It is noteworthy that the Agrarian Reform Law provided little guidance for the selection of targets of violence. The phrase "struggle session" (斗争大会), or even "struggle" (斗争), does not appear in the document, and only Article 32 touches on target selection and punishment using People's Courts (人民法庭). Article 32 of the Agrarian Reform Law states:

> [E]vil tyrant elements (恶霸分子) whom the majority of people loathed and wanted to punish, along with those who had resisted or tried to sabotage land reform, should be punished according to the law; while 'indiscriminate detainment, beating, and killing and all forms of corporal punishment were strictly prohibited' (严禁乱捕，乱打，乱杀及各种肉刑和变相肉刑).[13]

[11] Though, as Chapter 2 has shown, Mao's definitions of the various classes included many non-economic, moral criteria. For an exhaustive discussion of the official policy on the distribution of class labels and their economic definitions, see Shue, *Peasant China*, 47-56.

[12] Shue, *Peasant China*, 44.

[13] See "The Agrarian Reform Law of the People's Republic of China" [中华人民共和国土地改革法] June 28, 1950 in *Collection of Important Documents on Land Reform* [土地改革重要文献汇集] (Beijing: Renmin Chuban She: 1951), 9. On the punishment of "unlawful landlords" (不法地主), see "Severely Punish the Criminal Behavior of Unlawful Landlords Who Sabotage Land Reform" [严厉制裁不法地主破坏土地改革的罪行] *People's Daily* October 21, 1950.

Significantly, the term "evil tyrant elements" did not specify class affiliation but rather public sentiment toward a target. Resistance to the land reform campaign—commonly referred to as sabotage (破坏)—also qualified a person for political struggle, though, as will be discussed later in this chapter and Chapter 4, these targets accused of political crimes like sabotage tended to endure lighter or less harsh punishment when paired together with the "evil tyrant elements" who bore the brunt of lethal violence. The ambiguity of this language and the conspicuous lack of class-based criteria established the importance of public input in the selection process and granted considerable leeway to local communities and Party work teams to decide who deserved to be punished. How local communities and Party work teams made use of this leeway in target selection is one of the central issues this chapter explores and the principal subject of Chapter 4.

3. Staging Mass Rallies

The culminating event in the mobilization of violence during land reform was the staging of mass rallies during which struggle targets would be publically humiliated, denounced, beaten, and possibly tortured or killed. Struggle sessions and public sentencings marked the apex of violence during the mobilization waves of the land reform campaign. Many scholars have remarked on the theatricality of struggle sessions during land reform, as well as the campaign to suppress the counter-revolutionaries.[14] Strauss observes that, unlike Soviet show trials, these were exceedingly dramatic affairs: "[they were] quite literally, a show put on by the new state,

[14] See Chen Yung-Fa, *Making Revolution: The Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Elizabeth J. Perry, "Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution," *Mobilization: An International Journal* 7, no. 2 (2002): 111-128; Li Lifeng, "Rural Mobilization in the Chinese Communist Revolution: From the Anti-Japanese War to the Chinese Civil War," *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 9, no. 1 (2015): 95–116; Julia Strauss, "Morality, Coercion and State Building by Campaign in the Early PRC: Regime Consolidation and After, 1949-1956," *The China Quarterly* 188, no. 1 (2006): 891-912.

replete with staging, props, stock characters, rough working scripts, dramatic peaks and a good round of final applause."[15]

A struggle session typically conformed to the following sequence. The struggle target (or targets) would be paraded to a clearing or onto a stage, bound with ropes and accompanied by armed guards. Accusers would then stand up and tell a story about how the target had supposedly wronged him or her, a practice known as "speaking bitterness" (诉苦). Activists (积极分子) were on hand to maintain the enthusiasm of the crowd and help analyze these stories of bitterness to the crowd—usually by framing and identifying the source of the speaker's suffering; sometimes they themselves participated in the criticism of targets.[16] Once all accusers had spoken against the target or targets in question, the crowd would be called upon to recommend a punishment. Though Party officials were, theoretically, supposed to weigh public input in the final decision, they could override the crowd and provide a different sentence.[17] This would continue until all targets had been struggled against; those condemned to death would have their sentences carried out immediately—if the accusers and the crowd had not already killed the victim by the end of the session, that is.

The public could participate in a struggle session in a variety of ways. Accusers publicly "spoke bitterness" at struggle sessions in face-to-face confrontations with the targets of violence.

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[15] Julia Strauss, "Morality," 906.

[16] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Report on the First Phase of Land Reform Work in Six Townships of Fenglin District [16], Fengyang County, Anhui Province," [关于安徽省凤阳县凤临区六个乡土地改革第一阶段工作报告] August 30, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW11_50-57.

[17] According to the archival record, if cadres intervened they almost always reduced the severity of the crowd's recommended punishment. There is no data that can determine how often cadres increased or decreased the harshness of punishments, but it is revealing that the Party tended to *pull back* the violence of the crowd. This is also in line with the finding I present in Chapter 5 that areas with a larger Party presence tended to exhibit lower rates of violence, which I argue is due to the Party's insistence on carefully controlling the scope of violence. Lucien Bianco has made similar observations. See Lucien Bianco, *Peasants Without the Party: Grass-root Movements in Twentieth Century China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 235.

Significantly, authorities conferred the title of aggrieved victim (苦主) to these public denouncers, not to the victims of violence standing on stage with them. This meant that the accusers, as aggrieved victims, were legitimized in "spontaneously" beating, if not killing, their targets. While this contradicted official policy, which proscribed "reckless beatings and killings" (乱打乱杀), many policy documents advised that local officials not "pour cold water" (泼冷水) on the "overheated" (过火) masses, especially those making accusations. Local officials often condoned this violence due to their sympathy with and anger towards the targets of violence, ever the more inflamed by the theatrical denunciations during struggle sessions. Those in the audience also played an important, active role during struggle sessions. As an audience member, one was part of the masses who would assist in pronouncing the sentence for the target. Acquiring the local community's mandate for the selection and distribution of punishment created the appearance of democratic political participation, though often cadres and accusers deliberated on punishments before struggle sessions.

A single struggle session could last for hours and possibly involve tens of struggle targets—some of whom would be struggled against together (this was usually the case for couples)—and even more accusers. The number of accusers per struggle target varied, though there is little systematic evidence to ascertain the connection between the identities of struggle targets and the number of accusers who spoke against them. Archival data indicates that a single struggle target endured public criticism and humiliation—and often physical violence—from a sizeable number of accusers. According to data from eight struggle sessions (seven village level and one township level) from a "keypoint" township in Lutang District of Fengyang County (see Table 3.1), the number of accusers per struggle target ranged from 15 to 38, while the number of overall attendees at each struggle session varied from 100 to 808. Accusers comprised at least ten

percent of those in attendance and, in the case of Wudai Village, almost one third of all attendees. While the rate of direct participation in large county- or district-wide struggle sessions, where thousands may have been in attendance, was much lower, these data suggest that audiences were not passively observing the work of one or two local villagers during a struggle session.

Table 3.1 Number of Attendees, Struggle Targets, and Accusers at the Village- and Township-Level in a Township in Lutang District, Fengyang County[18]

Location of Struggle Session	Hongtang Village	Daqian Village	Zongnan Village	Zongbei Village (1st struggle session)	Zongbei Village (2nd struggle session)	Wudai Village (1st struggle session)	Wudai Village (2nd struggle session)	Township-wide Struggle Session
Number of Attendees	169	100	120	250	160	129	126	808
Number of Struggle Targets	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	3
Number of Accusers	NA	NA	15	18, 20, 30 (separate)	18 (together)	39 (together)	NA	18, 28, 38 (separate)

The length of these rallies posed a challenge for organizers, who had to ensure that people not only attended and made public denunciations but also that they would stay for the entire session. In one town in Fengyang County in Northern Anhui, the crowd eventually lost interest in the struggle session, so performers began to play the flower drum (花鼓), a traditional folk performance unique to the county, before the struggle session ended.[19] As a solution for keeping

[18] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Land Reform Work Report for Each Township in Lutang District (12/11-12/20)," [鹿塘区各乡土改工作情况报告 12 月 11 日至 20 日] December 21, 1952, *CCDC*, 1952XW08_28-3.

[19] "Liufu Town's Work Report," [刘府镇工作汇报] November 1, 1950, *CCDC*, no. 1949XW08_1-7. Author unspecified but most likely the Fengyang County Party Committee.

the public engaged, an official from the Southern Anhui Regional Party Committee recommended that cadres continually change up the sequence of events so that speaking bitterness and political struggle would not devolve into a monotonous routine that would "fatigue the masses" (疲劳群众).[20]

Attendance at struggle sessions was high, though by no means complete. As with accusers, systematic data on audience attendance is not available, though there are some summary statistics for parts of Jiangsu and Anhui. The Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee reported that, on average, 58.66 percent of locals attended struggle sessions across all counties under their jurisdiction.[21] Statistics for Anhui show attendance rates of 76.53 percent in Southern Anhui and 66.46 percent in Northern Anhui.[22] These figures demonstrate that a significant proportion of the population did not even attend struggle sessions, which refutes the idea that the Party made attendance compulsory. While local officials in some areas most likely coerced some locals into attending, these efforts did not achieve full attendance.

Despite mobilizing villagers to identify, denounce, and attend mass rallies for the public persecution of targets of violence, there would often be the issue of who would throw the first punch. As Randall Collins notes in his analysis of the micro-foundations of violence, participants need to overcome the "tension and fear" inherent in a violent confrontation, which means few individuals will actually engage in the physical act of violence itself once they are confronted

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[20] Ma Tianshui, "Report on Problems in Land Reform," [关于土改问题的报告] May 25, 1951, *AHSTDGGZL*, 26.

[21] Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Summary of Southern Jiangsu Land Reform Work," [苏南土地改革工作的总结（附表）] August 28, 1952, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-001-066.

[22] "Statistical Table on the Scope of Struggles during Land Reform in Anhui Province," [安徽省土地改革中斗争规模情况统计表] *AHSTDGGZL*, p. 26 of appendix.

with their victim, despite having possibly aided in the entire process leading up to the violent act.[23] Villagers could be timid about being the first to act. Because Party work teams and cadres were technically not allowed to hit or kill targets, they relied on activists to rile up the crowd or call on accusers to initiate physical violence.[24] Nevertheless, villagers could still be timid about being the first to act. For example, in Jiading County's Beiying Township, during a public sentencing:

> A village cadre yelled from within the crowd, "Do you want to punch him [the struggle target] in the mouth?"
> "Yes!" the crowd responded.
> "How many times?" the cadre asked.
> "Two!"
> "Who should do it?"
> "The accusers!"
> But the accusers said that they had never attacked someone before and refused to do so, yet the cadre continued yelling "Hit him!" so they did. The cadre continued to shout for them to hit him and even said that not to hit him is to protect him.[25]

Evidently, in this instance, peer pressure from the crowd and the cadre's continual prodding pushed the accusers to use physical violence;[26] however, the emotionally-charged environment that officials created at these rallies primed participants to accept and use physical violence in the absence of additional pressure.

Moral Mobilization during Land Reform in Huaibei and Jiangnan

[23] Randall Collins, *Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 19.

[24] For a discussion of how cadres encouraged civilians to use physical violence during struggle sessions, see Mo Hongwei, "The Bloody Struggles During Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu," [苏南土地改革中的血腥斗争] *Modern China Studies* 4 (2006), http://www.modernchinastudies.org/cn/issues/past-issues/94-mcs-2006-issue-4/989-2012-01-05-15-35-10.html.

[25] Southern Jiangsu Land Reform Inspection Team, "Excerpted Materials Regarding the Mobilization of Mass Struggle,"［关于发动群众斗争的材料摘录］*JSPA*, 3006-03-271. Quoted in Mo, "The Bloody Struggles."

[26] The cadre's use of psychological pressure to push participants to use violence against struggle targets bears an eerie resemblance to the lab coat-clad experimenter's role in Milgram's famous shock experiments. See Stanley Milgram, "Behavioral Study of Obedience," *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67, no. 4 (1963): 371-378.

How did the CCP mobilize villagers to participate in violence against members of the landed elite? I examine the interplay of morality and class using the regional cases of Huaibei and Jiangnan. Although Huaibei and Jiangnan were under the jurisdiction of the East China Bureau—thereby receiving the same policy directives from the central government, they varied significantly in terms of local socioeconomic conditions and their history with Communist mobilization. While we may have expected the Party to alter their method of mobilization according to each region's particular socioeconomic characteristics and local history, I find striking similarities in the tactics the Party used to mobilize political violence during the land reform campaign.[27] Across different socioeconomic contexts, the Party did not simply attempt to foment class struggle, the official narrative of the land reform campaign, but rather redefined local social boundaries—including class, political power, lineage, etc.—in terms of injustice and moral transgression against the community, delineating a new boundary between an morally retrograde minority of targets and victimized masses, and sensationalizing examples of these transgressions to encourage and justify retributive violence against perceived offenders.

I use Huaibei and Jiangnan as crucial case studies. Because of the weakness of pre-existing class boundaries, I posit Huaibei as a "most likely" case for moral transgression-based mobilization and a "least likely" case for class-based mobilization. With high rates of tenancy and a history of landlord-tenant conflict, Jiangnan is a "least likely" case for moral transgression-based mobilization and "most likely" case for class struggle-based mobilization: the Party should have easily been able to mobilize according to class boundaries and would have had little reason

[27] Though, as I argue in Chapter 4, the kinds of people targeted during the process of mobilization varied according to pre-1949 social boundaries. That is, while the form of the process did not vary, the material local officials drew upon to carry out boundary work and deliver moral shocks was grounded in social boundaries that existed before the revolution.

to resort to moral appeals. The rest of this section provides further background on Huaibei and Jiangnan.[28]

Located in "the heart of China's so-called flood and famine region" between the Huai and Yellow Rivers, Huaibei is a nebulously defined area that encompasses northern Anhui and northern Jiangsu, and, more broadly defined, parts of eastern Henan and southwestern Shandong. As Perry discusses in her study of peasant rebellion in Huaibei, the region's resource-poor environs—impoverished by its harsh ecology and recurrent war due to its geopolitical significance as the dividing pass between northern and southern China—created the conditions for fierce resource competition between predatory groups of wandering bandits and locally-armed community defense groups organized to fend off rapacious outsiders.[29] Typical of northern China, landholdings were larger here, though the soil quality was poorer; tenancy rates were relatively low.[30]

Class stratification in Huaibei was weak due to the crushing poverty of the region and its cyclical turnover of population and land. A "hydraulic cycle" involving the diking, silting, and flooding of rivers fueled this cyclical overpopulation, depopulation, and resettlement of land.[31] Compared to the Lower Yangzi Delta, which experienced twenty floods in 500 years, the Yellow River caused 1,593 floods in North China, of which Huaibei was a part, throughout its recorded

[28] For an excellent, succinct comparison of the socioeconomic characteristics of the North China plain and Lower Yangzi Delta regions, see Philip C. Huang, "Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution," *Modern China* 21.1 (1995): 105-143.

[29] Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 10, 16.

[30] Lloyd E. Eastman, *Family, Fields, and Ancestors: Constancy and Change in China's Social and Economic History, 1550-1949* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[31] Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries*, 12-14.

history.[32] This severe ecological instability, combined with the region's prevalent banditry, effortlessly destroyed the fortunes of well-to-do households and contributed to the fluidity of the region's social structure.[33] This helps explain why Huaibei's socioeconomic structure lacked a clear middle stratum of well-to-do peasants and was instead bifurcated into a large mass of poor peasants and a small number of so-called "landlords."[34]

Jiangnan, in its simplest definition, refers to the areas in and around the Yangzi Delta, which includes Shanghai, the whole of Southern Jiangsu—the part of Jiangsu province south of the Yangzi River—northeastern Zhejiang, and part of southeastern Anhui. Compared to the North China plain, the Yangzi delta had a 46 percent higher agricultural output per capita, which, combined with the region's accessible water transportation network, led to historically higher per capita incomes and levels of commercialization. Most notably, the region's cotton cultivation supported a thriving household-based textile industry that provided families with sideline incomes. The commercialization of Jiangnan's economy, its high crop yields, and its remarkably stable ecology led to high rates of land concentration as families accumulated wealth across generations.[35] In Southern Jiangsu, which was part of the wealthy core of the Jiangnan region, even so-called "middle peasants" were relatively well off. Li Liangyu estimates that about 37

[32] Philip C. Huang, *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta 1350-1988* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 43.

[33] Ma Junya, *The Sacrificed Land: A Study of the Changes in the Society and Ecology of Huaibei, 1680-1949*, [被牺牲的"局部": 淮北社会生态变迁研究, 1680-1949] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011), 339.

[34] This is the essence of what Ma Junya describes as Huaibei's "dumbbell-shaped social structure" (哑铃型的社会结构). See Ma, *The Sacrificed Land*, 335-344.

[35] Huang, *Yangzi Delta*, 41-43.

percent of peasants in Southern Jiangsu were well off while about half could fairly easily meet their basic needs.[36]

When looking at counties across Jiangsu and Anhui, landholding inequality in Jiangnan was actually almost double that of Huaibei: Jiangnan's ratio of landlord per capita landholdings to average per capita landholdings was 8.83 compared to Huaibei's 4.76; while Jiangnan's ratio of landlord per capita landholdings to poor peasant was 37.64 to Huaibei's 22.14.[37] Table 3.2 reveals that agricultural productivity—i.e. grain output per *mu* of land—in Jiangnan was about double that of Huaibei, which reflects, in part, the superiority of the former region's soil quality and irrigation infrastructure. The regions differed in their political attributes as well. Huaibei hosted more long-lived Communist base areas than Jiangnan, which was the center of Nationalist power. When looking at patterns of rural rebellion before 1949, Jiangnan was a hotbed of rent-based resistance in China, while Huaibei was more notorious for its many anti-state and anti-tax rebellions.

[36] Li Liangyu, "Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu and the Question of Modernizing Tradition," [苏南土改与传统文化问题] *Jiangsu Daxue Xuebao (Shehui Kexue Ban)* 8, no. 3 (2006): 6.

[37] Calculations made using author's county gazetteer dataset.

Table 3.2 Regional Descriptive Statistics for Jiangnan and Huaibei[38]

Variable	**Jiangnan Region (South)**	**Huaibei Region (North)**
Central Bureau	East China	East China
Prevalence of Pre-1949 Base Areas	Low	High
Landholding Inequality	8.83	4.76
Agricultural Productivity	112.14 kg/mu	50.5 kg/mu
Major Crops	Rice; Cotton	Wheat; Sorghum
Predominant Social Structure	Lineages; High Tenancy	Small landholders; Low Tenancy
Predominant Mode of Peasant Resistance	Anti-Rent	Anti-Tax

In examining these cases, I draw on data from archival documents (档案), internally published Party materials (内部资料), policy directives (指示), diaries (日记), and gazetteers (县志). The reason for focusing on the process behind land reform violence is to distinguish between the tactics and motives of political actors in fomenting violence, many of which are observationally equivalent when looking at large-N data.[39] In essence, this chapter is an attempt to understand the "interaction between political and private identities" that has only recently been acknowledged and explored by social scientists.[40] Because I wish to demonstrate the similarity between Huaibei and Jiangnan in its mobilization of violence, I will present data from each case together for each of the three major stages of land reform: preparatory work, target selection, and staging mass rallies.

[38] Statistics calculated using author's county gazetteer dataset.

[39] See Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Promises and Pitfalls of an Emerging Research Program: The Microdynamics of Civil War," in *Order, Conflict and Violence*, ed. Stathis N. Kalyvas, Ian Shapiro, and Tarek Masoud (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 397-421.

[40] Kalyvas, "Ontology," 475.

Preparing for Land Reform in Huaibei and Jiangnan

Investigatory Work

Work teams began their work by investigating local social conditions to understand what the relevant, though often latent and not explicitly conflictual, social boundaries were within a community to establish the foundation for further mobilization work. In both Huaibei and Jiangnan officials found that they could rarely rely on economic definitions of class as the principal foundation for political struggle. Once faced with this obstacle, cadres turned to locating other, non-class boundaries that could be used for mobilization, and engaged in an extensive process of moral boundary work to construct conceptual distinctions between "transgressors" and "victims."

Class was a poor basis for mobilization in Huaibei. The Communists discovered for themselves the feebleness of class identity in Huaibei back in the early- to mid-1940s during their protracted campaign of rent reduction, when both tenants and landlords resisted their efforts to reduce rents.[41] Regional inspection reports conducted after 1949 uncovered that class remained a weak cleavage. A summary report by the Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee reported that "some parts of the countryside, due to the dispersion of land, have few landlords and no "feudal forces" (封建势力); [instead] the small peasant economy is predominant."[42] Tan Qixiang, the famous Chinese historical geographer who served as a land reform work team official in Su County in Northern Anhui, wrote in his diary about the lack of class consciousness

[41] Bianco, *Peasants*, 234.

[42] Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee, "The Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee's March and April Two-Month Summary Report on Land Reform Work Submitted to the Center and the East China Bureau" [中国共产党皖北区委员会三，四两月份向中央及华东局关于土地改革工作的综合报告], *Tugai Tongbao*, no. 2-2-82, 19. Quoted in Ma, *The Sacrificed Land*, 343.

among the peasants: “The work over the past several days was difficult; the masses’ hatred towards the landlords is not high, though they bitterly hate the local former officials (顽干) and vagrants (二流子).”[43]

The Party encountered similar difficulties in Jiangnan. According to the East China Bureau leadership, out of all of the regions under its control, Jiangnan was home to the most “wily” (狡猾) landlords, whose methods of exploitation and oppression were also the most varied.[44] Despite these colorful claims, Party inspection teams sent to survey the region struggled to understand local class relations using official class labels. A Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee survey of pre-land reform economic conditions stated that the region’s interdependence of urban and rural markets in Southern Jiangsu made “making sense of [local] class relations extremely complicated” (搞成阶级关系十分复杂).[45] More shocking was the discovery that class consciousness was weak among Jiangnan villagers.[46] An investigative report from Wu County of Southern Jiangsu found that, “In the surveyed areas [of the county], the peasants and the landlords do not know one another. . . [the peasants'] political consciousness is

[43] Tan Qixiang, *The Diary of Tan Qixiang* [谭其骧日记] (Shanghai: Wenhui Chubanshe, 1998): 3-4.

[44] Liu Ruilong, “Liu Ruilong’s Report on Land Reform Work in East China” [刘瑞龙关于华东土地改革工作的报告] *CCPM*, March 19, 1951.

[45] Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “On the Basic Situation and Economic Situation of the Countryside in Southern Jiangsu before Land Reform,” [关于苏南区土改前农村基本情况和经济情况] March 14, 1951, *JSPA*, no. 3006-0265.

[46] Though these findings accord with what other scholars have argued about landlordism in Jiangnan. Namely, local landlords who lived in the countryside tended to be tied to the local community through kinship ties; and most landlords rarely were in direct conflict with their tenants because they lived in the cities. See Zhou Xiaohong, *Tradition and Change: The Social Psychology of the Peasantry of Jiangsu and Zhejiang and Its Modern Evolution* [传统与变迁:江浙农民的社会心理及其近代以来的嬗变] (Beijing: Shenghuo Dushu Xinzhi Sanlian Shudian, 1998), 151.

low."[47] In Jiading County, where landlords had twenty times more land than poor peasants,[48] a land reform cadre remarked that she had become an activist during the land reform campaign, not only because she was one of the few literate people in the village, but also because "other people weren't very [politically] active and their political awareness was low."[49]

At this point the Party could have chosen to do at least one of three things: it could have moved forward committed to identifying and persecuting the wealthiest members of the landed elite—a class struggle approach; it could have ignored class analysis and focused primarily on non-class factors rooted in moral violations—a moral transgression approach; or it could have taken a more nuanced approach that focused on both class identity as well as perceived moral wrongdoing. In Jiangnan, the Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee chose the third path. It released a notice (通知) regarding the collection of personal information and other materials on the "historical crimes and illegal saboteur behavior" of landlords in the region. The notice suggested that localities collect materials regarding:

> 1. Pre-liberation historical crimes (历史上的罪恶) of the landlord class, such as methods and styles of feudal exploitation, tyrannical behavior, etc.
> 2. Post-liberation styles, methods, and concrete examples of sabotage by landlords.
> 3. The situation of reprisals by landlords in areas where land reform has been completed.[50]

Intriguingly, the notice recommended that localities gather materials on the behavior of landlords before, during, and after the land reform campaign. In order to mobilize the moral sentiment of

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[47] Southern Jiangsu Peasant Association, "Southern Jiangsu Peasant Association Investigation of the Rural Economic Situation in Jurong, Wujin, Wu, and Wuxi Counties," [苏南农协会关于句容、武进、吴县、无锡县农村经济情况的调查] July 30, 1949, *JSPA*, no. 3006-0248.

[48] Shanghai Municipality Jiading County Gazetteer Compilation Committee, ed. *Jiading County Gazetteer* [嘉定县志] (Shanghai: Shanghai Remin Chuban She, 1992).

[49] Oral history JD13, July 2015.

[50] Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Notice on Collecting Materials on the Landlord Class's Historical Crimes and its Unlawful Behavior of Sabotaging Land," [关于收集苏南地主阶级的历史罪恶和破坏土地改革不法行为材料通知] January 29, 1951, BSDA, no. 1-2-001-064.

the local community, cadres needed to have an understanding of both the community's past and present.

Huaibei proceeded in a similar fashion. Fengyang County's November 1949 summary work report, in a section entitled "How to Organize Key-point Struggles," spelled out the proper procedure for collecting materials on bandits and evil tyrants, a remarkably meticulous process of researching local grievances and channeling them into organized struggle sessions:

> First understand the political situation in the entire village, which villages have a relatively large number of bandits and tyrants, which villages have a relatively good "mass foundation" (群众基础), how many activists are there, and which bandits and tyrants the masses hate (群众对哪些匪霸仇恨).
> …
> How many real activists are there? How many fake activists are there? How many aggrieved households (苦主) are there…which aggrieved households have singled out which targets [for political struggle] and what are their demands?[51]

The Fengyang County work report demonstrates that the Party prioritized identifying social fault lines and existing levels of Communist support in local communities before mobilization. Party leaders wanted to know where it could recruit more activists—who could potentially join the Party—and where the public was already sympathetic to the Communist cause. While leaders were also interested in identifying villages that had the largest number of potential targets for the campaign, they were even more interested in understanding the nature of the locals' grievances, to the extent that they wanted precise information on who was upset with whom and why. This fine-grained knowledge of local grievances would provide the raw material with which the Party could articulate and activate social antagonisms to mobilize violence.

[51] Fengyang County Committee. "November Summary Work Report for the Urban Districts of Fengyang County, Anhui Province," [关于安徽省凤阳县城区十一月工作总结报告] December 2, 1949, *CCDC*, no. 1949XW08_42-61.

Moral Boundary Work in Face-to-Face Meetings: Informal Chats and Speaking Bitterness

After finishing their investigatory work, work teams organized small face-to-face meetings, most notably "informal chats." These meetings were nominally for the purpose of propagandizing land reform policy, but they also involved a process of "emancipating the heart" (翻心): cadres used these meetings to "enlighten" (启发) the masses as to how their poverty was ultimately rooted in their exploitation by the landlord class; these efforts would then "advance and incite their desire for revenge against the landlords" (进而激发其对地主的复仇心理).[52]

In these meetings—which could last hours at a time over several days—cadres guided locals to dredge up old and recent grievances and to share them with the small group. Working in Su County of Northern Anhui, Tan Qixiang wrote that his land reform work team first met with the poor peasants and farmhands to listen to their grievances. After holding several other meetings, it returned to have "informal chats" with those who had grievances, staying with them until late at night. The work team, Tan remarked, was overwhelmed by the intensity of the work (应接不暇).[53]

Through informal chats and small group meetings, the Party explicitly sought to draw new moral boundaries between the landed elite and the rest of the community by discussing episodes of perceived moral transgression that had been collected during the investigation stage or that had been revealed in the course of these meetings. The Fengyang County Committee instructed cadres to use them as opportunities to bring out pre-organized materials on evil tyrants "to whip up the broad masses into a craze" (给广大群众造成热潮). One example taken from

[52] Li Lifeng, "Speaking Bitterness in Land Reform: A Microanalysis of a Kind of Mass Mobilization Technique," [土改中的诉苦：一种民众动员技术的微观分析] *Nanjing University Bulletin* 44, no. 5 (2007): 99.

[53] Tan Qixiang, *The Diary of Tan Qixiang* [谭其骧日记] (Shanghai: Wenhui Chubanshe, 1998), 3.

Lushan District noted that cadres had used cartoons to illustrate how an evil tyrant had brought thugs to beat a villager to death, which had made the masses particularly amenable to subjecting him to harsh political struggle.[54] In Chengbei Township of Fenglin District, the Party also had the masses "mull over" (酝酿) the incriminating materials they had collected on those landlords suspected of the "most heinous crimes" (罪大恶极).[55] Party work team members and locals in Jiangnan also reviewed collected materials and shared grievances in small groups. A cadre from a township in Baoshan County remarked on the efficacy of "using the landlords' schemes and tricks to educate the peasants."[56]

These meetings not only designated some people as the "aggrieved" (苦主), they also empowered them to act. As one Southern Jiangsu Regional Committee report emphasized, cadres were to use these meetings to "establish among [the poor peasants and farmworkers] a mentality of being masters of the house (当家做主的思想)."[57] They were also to designate transgressors. Through speaking bitterness sessions, cadres were to clarify for villagers that "bitterness is what the landlord class has given us."[58]

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[54] Fengyang County Party Committee, "*Summary of Mass Movements in Fengyang County*," [凤阳县群众运动总结] *XCSSN*, May 21, 1950, 21.

[55] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Summary Report on the Situation of Village Associations Approving Class Labels and Linking with Key-point Struggles in Fenglin District," [凤临区(六个乡)村民会通过阶级成份结合重点斗争情况综合汇报] September 7, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW11_82-85.

[56] Panshi Township Cadre, "Baoshan County Changxing District Panshi Township Summary Report on the Anti-Black Field Struggle," [宝山县长兴区潘石乡反黑田斗争汇报总结］January 19, 1950, *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-060. The report is authored by an unnamed Panshi Township cadre.

[57] Southern Jiangsu Regional Committee, "The Southern Jiangsu Regional Committee's Summary of Land Reform Work in Southern Jiangsu," [中共苏南区委关于苏南土地改革工作的总结] August 28, 1952, *JSTDGGYD*, 201.

[58] Baoshan County Party Committee, "The Specific Process for the Anti-Black Land Struggle," [反黑地斗争具体过程] December 17, 1949 *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-001.

Aside from providing a space for the expression of one's suffering, informal chats and small group meetings actively situated these grievances in a larger political context. It was standard practice for cadres leading these meetings to bring up fundamental questions about why the poor are poor and "who provides for whom (谁养活谁)?"[59] These meetings were also critical in helping peasants shed their fears about the new moral framework. A Northern Jiangsu Rural Committee report on Fangxiang Township in Jiangdu County, in analyzing the success of mobilization efforts in the various villages under its jurisdiction, attributed the noteworthy success of one village to its use of informal chats:

> [The cadres working in the village] had a good grasp on proper propaganda work. For example, the poor and tenant farmers refused to join the Peasant Association because they were still scared of a "change in heaven" (变天), of the return of the old central government, of being illiterate and being useless in the peasant association, etc. So once the leadership discovered these concerns, they held informal chats (漫谈会) and different kinds of other meetings in order to explain and educate the peasants about the situation at hand.[60]

Another village in the same township, according to the report, had failed to mobilize the peasantry because "they convened meetings of the poor, farm worker, and middle peasants without any objective in mind." Instead, the report recommended: "it should also be repeatedly stressed [in these meetings] how to be one's own master (做主), how to emancipate oneself (翻

[59] These questions appear in many accounts of land reform as well as archival documents. See Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee. "The Rural Committee of the Regional Party Committee's Comprehensive Report on the Inspection of Land Reform Work in Eight Townships in the Five Counties of Taicang, Jiangyin, Yixing, Shanghai, and Fengxian," [区党委农委关于太仓，江阴，宜兴，上海，奉贤，五县八个乡土改运动检查综合报告] Nov. 15, 1951, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-001-052; Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Materials on Fangxiang Village, Huaisi District, Jiangdu County, " [江都县槐泗区方巷村材料] November 13, 1950, *JSPA*, no. 7001-003-0108; Fengyang County Party Committee, "Yaowan Township Land Reform Work Summary," [姚湾乡土改工作总结] October 1950, *XCSSN*, 43; and Fengyang County Party Committee, "Report on the First Stage of Land Reform Work in Six Townships in Fenglin District of Fengyang County, Anhui Province," [关于安徽省凤阳县凤临区六个乡土地改革第一阶段工作报告] August 31, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW11_50-57. For a great account of how these questions were used in small group meetings during the Chinese Civil War, see William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review, 2008 [1966]), 128.

[60] Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Materials on Fangxiang Village, Huaisi District, Jiangdu County, " [江都县槐泗区方巷村材料] November 13, 1950, *JSPA*, no. 7001-003-0108.

身), who exploits whom (谁剥削谁), and who provides for whom (谁养活谁); this is the only way to raise the consciousness of the poor and farm worker peasant class."[61]

Crucially, these meetings were psychological bonding experiences for the peasantry. These various non-landlord strata of peasants did not necessarily view themselves as a coherent community bound by a shared identity. Work teams, therefore, worked to guide the poorest members of this community—the poor peasants and landless farm workers—to view themselves not only as "the oppressed" (被剥削者) but also as leaders at the helm of the revolutionary effort; they were then encouraged to unite (团结) with the middle peasantry to form a cohesive front against the landlords and their allies. This bonding was accomplished through additional face-to-face moral boundary work at expanded Peasant Association meetings where everyone, including the middle peasants, could participate in speaking bitterness. For example, the aforementioned Jiangdu County report from Northern Jiangsu suggested cadres help the poor and farmworker peasants bond with the middle peasants by having them jointly "accuse the landlord class" (控诉地主阶级) in these small group sessions so as to help them "closely unite" (密切团结) their ranks.[62] Similarly, a 1951 report on land reform propaganda work from Northern Anhui urged cadres to "repeatedly discuss with the poor peasants and farmworkers whom [they should] unite with and rely upon [and to] establish a mindset of 'being masters of the house.'"[63] A land reform work report from Yaowan township in Fengyang County in Northern Anhui laid out its

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Report on the First Stage of Land Reform Work in Six Townships in Fenglin District of Fengyang County, Anhui Province," [关于安徽省凤阳县凤临区六个乡土地改革第一阶段工作报告] August 31, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW11_50-57.

procedures for this process of gradual boundary work. After uniting the poor peasants and farmworkers, cadres were to incorporate the middle peasants by revealing to them that they, too, were oppressed:

> First mobilize the poor peasants and farm workers.
>
> Hold a Peasant Association meeting of poor peasants and farmworkers—make sure the ranks are pure, middle peasant delegates can also attend—and carry out class education. Begin by talking about why they are poor and hold a speaking-bitterness session.
>
> Accuse the landlord class and link them together with Chiang Kai-shek and American imperialism (把地主，蒋介石，美帝国主义联系起来) and excite class hatred (激发阶级仇恨). Also emphasize closely unifying with the middle peasants and becoming the 'new masters of the house.'
>
> Next, hold a meeting of the middle peasants, with poor and farmworker peasant delegates in attendance, and start out with comparing the two governments (GMD and CCP), bring together actual examples—how they were victimized and reduced to poor peasants under the old administration; how the middle peasants were also oppressed—and [tell them] how they should closely rely on the poor and farmhand peasants to eliminate class enemies together.[64]

Speaking bitterness was an important part of unifying the ranks and creating a moral boundary that united the various strata of peasantry into victimized "masses" (群众). Indeed, in an attempt to bond the poor peasantry together, the Yaowan Township's small group meeting had thirteen people speak to the group about their plight and how they lived on the brink of starvation without land or draft animals. Touting the success of this session, the report notes that "there were three people at the meeting who 'spoke bitterness' until they were in tears. Class consciousness, therefore, greatly increased."[65]

Cadres spent an extraordinary amount of attention and time to psychologically "breaking through" (打通) the mindsets of the villagers. There is only some evidence regarding the effectiveness of this slow, methodical process of moral boundary work, though, as will be

[64] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Yaowan Township Land Reform Work Summary," [姚湾乡土改工作总结] October 1950, *XCSSN*, 43.

[65] Ibid.

discussed later, participation was more difficult to mobilize where this boundary work was absent. In one stunning example, cadres spent a month to sever the emotional bond that tied a farmworker to his landlord:

> Ji Xiaocheng was a farmworker in Gao Aohan's household and 'was numbed by his landlord' (受了地主的麻痹) and thought that his landlord was guilty of no crime, but after a month of having his thinking straightened out (打通思想) and class education he was brave enough to speak bitterness against his landlord and spoke until he broke down in tears; as a result, he no longer lives with his landlord.[66]

While it is unclear whether Ji Xiaocheng's landlord had actually wronged him, local cadres were determined to transform his understanding of his hitherto ambivalent relationship with his employer. Those who underwent this kind of moral boundary work during the preparatory stage of land reform spoke of it in markedly psychological terms. A local pastor in the suburbs of Shanghai described his experience in land reform as follows: "two months of land reform 'class' [大课] has clarified [澄清] my thirty years-old way of thinking and has made me capable of distinguishing between right and wrong [使我能辨别是非]."[67]

Selecting Targets in Huaibei and Jiangnan

After the end of the preparatory stage, the CCP organized the poor and farmworker peasants to choose people for violent political struggle. This process of identification and prescription of punishment went one step further beyond the small group meetings, which attempted to situate grievances in a larger moral context and cultivate a shared identity among the poorest segments of society. This next stage attempted to use these newly moralized social boundaries to separate out the exploited masses and those who had committed real or perceived

[66] Changhuai District Party Committee, "Report Concerning the Inspection of Several Problems in the Land Reform Work of Weidongwan Village," [关于检查卫东湾村土改工作中几个问题报告] October 21, 1951, *XCSSN*, 44.

[67] Shanghai Suburban Party Work Committee, "Summary of Land Reform in the Suburbs," [关于郊区土改总结] November 25, 1952, *SHMA*, no. A71-1-71.

"crimes" (罪恶) against them—in essence, to create a new conceptual distinction between the "oppressed masses" and the "oppressor landlord class."

As described above, central policy directed Party work teams and Peasant Associations to distribute class labels on the basis of landholdings and sources of income; however, the criteria for the selection of struggle targets—those who would be subjected to violent political struggle—were relatively unclear and localities had considerable leeway in how they chose targets. Although villagers and work teams did assign class labels using economic criteria, they often added prefixes to class labels or even additional labels that described targets' perceived transgressions. Within the general category of "landlord" there was a distinction between "regular landlords" (一般地主) and "unlawful landlords" (不法地主). Unlawful landlords, according to official East China Bureau regulations, included anyone who engaged in any kind of behavior that "sabotaged" land reform (破坏土改)—e.g. selling off or destroying one's property, killing livestock, spreading rumors, sowing discord or promoting factional conflict among the locals, bribing, intimidating, killing or harming others, etc.[68] As will be discussed later, unlawful landlords were more likely to become targets of political violence than those defined merely by their economic position. One of the most common prefixes was a term that the Communists borrowed from the peasantry: "evil tyrant" (恶霸). Evil tyrant was a general label used to describe local strongmen, many of whom were also landlords—and thus labeled "evil tyrant landlords" (恶霸地主)—because they had amassed land and power by serving as "entrepreneurial brokers" who collected taxes and maintained the public order for the Nationalist

[68] For a lengthy, detailed list of the many possible crimes that could earn one the label of "unlawful landlord," see "The East China Bureau Promulgates Regulations on the Punishment of Unlawful Landlords, Ensuring the Orderly Implementation of Land Reform and Protecting the Wealth of the People," [华东颁布惩治不法地主条例,保证有秩序地进行土地改革及保护人民财富] *People's Daily*, October, 21, 1950.

state or the Japanese.[69] The locals' hatred of evil tyrants, however, stemmed not from their class identity but rather the egregiousness of their behavior.

This process of identification and prescription of punishment went one step further beyond the small group meetings, which attempted to situate grievances in a larger moral context and cultivate a shared identity among the poorest segments of society. This next stage attempted to use these newly moralized social boundaries to separate out the exploited masses and those who had committed real or perceived "crimes" (罪恶) against them—in essence, to create a new understanding of "us" and "them."

On the surface, land reform used the language of class struggle to distinguish friend from foe, but the terms "landlord" (地主) and "counterrevolutionary" (反革命分子) were deliberately broad umbrella identities that relied heavily on moral criteria to classify locals. Another term used to describe struggle targets was "obstinate" (顽固), which referred to people, often GMD officials, who "obstinately" refused to accept the correctness of Marxism-Leninism; this was essentially a term to define Chinese who resisted the CCP's authority before liberation. During the Anti-Japanese War, the term "false" or "puppet" (伪) described officials and military officers who worked for the Japanese occupational administration. Later the CCP combined these terms into an umbrella term, "false and obstinate" (伪顽), to describe those who were associated with the Japanese or Nationalist regimes.

[69] Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

Finding Moral Transgressors

Localities in Huaibei and Jiangnan both relied on moral assessments in classifying potential targets. In Huaibei, Fengyang County drafted a guideline on anti-evil tyrant work that provided an explicitly moral—and broad—definition of "evil tyrants":

> All evil tyrants—that is, the landlord power-holding class—use their authority or violence to harm the lives and property of the people. Examples of these kinds of people include:
>
> > Those who use force to seize large tracts of peasant land and property or public land and property.
> >
> > Those who murder, intentionally injure, or beat up people.
> >
> > Those who rape women or take them by force.
> >
> > Those who take advantage of crises and collaborate with the enemy to take back rents and land and force the peasants to buy or sell [land].
> >
> > Those who collaborate with major bandit or armed counterrevolutionary groups to rob or kill people.
> >
> > Those who organize or spur secret societies (会道门) to participate in counterrevolutionary armed rebellion or kill or otherwise harm the people.
> >
> > Those who are corrupt and embezzle and seize the opportunity to blackmail peasants, driving them into bankruptcy and poverty.
> >
> > Those who have in the past committed many evil acts (作恶多端); who today still, secretly or openly, wield their political power to sabotage the "reasonable burden" [campaign] (把持政权破坏合理负担), sabotage waterworks construction, democratic laws, and continue to oppress the people.[70]

At times the CCP explicitly broadened the term "landlord" to include political elites who were "obstinate," "false," or otherwise corrupt and disliked. The Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee's Land Reform Work Committee sanctioned the labeling of former officials who worked for the old regime as landlords; it even permitted local citizens to struggle against individuals who had been accused of corruption or were simply unpopular:

> Some former township heads (伪乡长), although they are not technically landlords, built up a fortune through corruption (贪污起家) during their tenure as officials and are hated bitterly by the masses (为群众所痛恨者), so they may be treated as landlords…As for former *baojia* heads accused by the masses of

[70] Fengyang Party County Committee. "Guidelines for the Anti-Evil Tyrant [Campaign] (Initial Draft)," [关于反霸纲领(初步草稿)] 1949, *CCDC*, No. 1949XW05_13-14.

> wrongdoing, they should not "have their accounts settled" (清算) economically, but politically they may have an accusation struggle session organized against them. As for those who have engaged in corrupt behavior or have seized the property of others, and whom the masses hate bitterly, the masses may accuse them; the judicial organs should sentence them and carry out their punishments.[71]

Similarly, Zeng Xisheng, the Party Secretary of the Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee, stated in a report just months after the establishment of the PRC:

> Quickly terminate the use of and reliance on old township and *baojia* heads. Realize the previous use of these people was necessary, but if we continue to use them we will estrange ourselves from the masses and commit an error of political principle. Of course, we shouldn't adopt a kick-them-all-out (一脚踢开) policy and should instead go through the masses to differentiate between them. The ones the masses are satisfied with, we can continue using; the bad ones whom the masses oppose or sorely hate must be purged or given over to the masses to perform self-criticisms.[72]

Yet it was communities' assessments of the behavior of other locals that mattered the most: those whom the locals hated were redefined as class enemies and enemies of the revolution. The Songjiang Prefectural Party Committee in Southern Jiangsu cautioned that "power-holding landlords are not all evil tyrants because they have not held power for very long" and, importantly, that "the landlords and evil tyrants who are hated bitterly by the masses are the main power-holders but not the current power-holding clique (当权派)." The report continues: "[we] must proceed from concrete situations, people, and facts, especially the masses' demands [underlining in the original]...and not from abstract concepts (抽象的概念)."[73] The core of the definition of terms like "landlord" and "evil tyrant," therefore, was rooted more in the way the local population viewed these people and their past behaviors, even more so than the amount of power they currently held. The exhortation to focus on "concrete situations, people, and facts"

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[71] Northern Jiangsu Party Regional Committee Land Reform Work Committee, "Directive on the Problem of Mobilizing the Masses to Bring Back Unlawful Landlords Who Sabotage and Transfer Wealth," ["关于发动群众追回不法地主破坏，转移财产等问题的指示"] February 1951, *JSTGYD*, 293.

[72] Zeng Xisheng, "The Current Situation of Northern Anhui and Its Tasks," [皖北当前情况和任务] in *Zengxi Sheng Wenxuan: 1939-1961.* [曾希圣文选*: 1939-1961*] (Beijing: Renmin Chuban She, 2008), 75.

[73] Songjiang Party Prefectural Committee, "Problems Regarding the East China Bureau's Definition of 'Evil Tyrant.'" [华东局关于"恶霸"的定义问题], November 14, 1949, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-001-045.

instead of "abstract concepts" suggests that the Party wanted local cadres to flexibly adapt these definitions of class to local social conditions. Similarly, the Chuxian Prefectural Party Committee in Northern Anhui recommended that local cadres focus on perceived crimes committed against the local community, not the Party, when propagandizing against bandits and evil tyrants. The report states:

> Explain that when looking at bandits and local bullies' crimes and counter-revolutionary behavior committed after liberation (post-Huaihai battle) and all harmful acts against the people in the past, harmful acts against the people should be privileged over those against the Party. This is the only way we can gain the majority of the masses' sympathy for our method of handling (只有这样才能争取大多数群众对我处理之同情).[74]

The conflation of class and moral character sometimes confused cadres who were assisting in implementing the campaign. In a striking incident from a village in Fengyang County in Northern Anhui, one cadre did not believe that the person whose land he was instructed to confiscate was a landlord because of her personal disposition:

> When confiscating landlord XX's assets, she cried and yelled and kowtowed to the cadres. Group Leader Tang Dejun then said, 'This [person] does not resemble a landlord.' Nobody said a word. After discussing things with the masses and doing additional research [it was determined that she] was a landlord after all, and they went back to confiscate [her assets].[75]

Here, the landlord's surprising subservience made this group leader doubt that she was even a landlord. So deep was this intertwining of class and morality that some observers went so far as to stereotype landlords in moral terms. An urban schoolteacher sent to observe the land reform campaign in Southern Jiangsu concluded, "There is not a single landlord who is honest.

[74] Chuxian Prefectural Party Committee, "Notice on the Treatment of Bandits and Evil Tyrants," [关于对匪霸处理的通报] November 9, 1949, *CCDC*, no. 1949XW05_26.

[75] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Yaowan Township Land Reform Work Summary," [姚湾乡土改工作总结] October 1950, *XCSSN*, 50.

There is not a single landlord who in the past did not use their authority to get rich or to bully the peasants."[76]

The culminating event in this phase of moral boundary work was the formal selection of struggle targets (斗争对象). Small groups of poor and farmworker peasants, with guidance from the Party work team, oversaw the selection of struggle targets, often in secret.[77] The Yaowan Township Land Reform Work Summary noted that small group meetings of the poor and farm worker peasants decided who would be struggle targets as well as the order of the lineup of people who would make accusations against them (串联苦主) in the struggle sessions.[78] With these new boundaries set, local officials had the foundation they needed to begin preparations for the mass mobilization of violence.

Staging Struggle Sessions in Huaibei and Jiangnan

After altering the moral content of a community's social boundaries, the Party set about to galvanize the local community's righteous indignation against selected offenders. Because class enemies were defined in terms of their moral turpitude, cadres could readily justify violent reprisal against them, especially by tapping into the public's outrage. To do this, the CCP used

[76] Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, *The Land Reform I Witnessed in Southern Jiangsu* [我所见到的苏南土地改革] (Shanghai: Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, 1951), 128.

[77] This appears to have been standard practice during the Civil War-era land reform campaign as well, as eyewitness accounts from this period also indicate that poor and farm worker peasant small groups selected struggle targets in secret. See Isabel Crook and David Crook, *Ten Mile Inn: Mass Movement in a Chinese Village* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979). According to Li Maoxiu, a landlord interviewed in the 2006 Hong Kong documentary "The Hurricane" [暴風驟雨], which interviewed eyewitnesses to the land reform campaign in a northeastern village during the Chinese Civil War, the poor and lower-middle peasants held secret meetings to decide the fate of potential struggle targets. Those under consideration for struggle had no say in their selection and were simply informed of the small group's decision. See Jiang and Duan, "The Hurricane."

[78] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Yaowan Township Land Reform Work Summary," [姚湾乡土改工作总结] October 1950, *XCSSN*, 43-44.

struggle sessions and public sentencings to provoke the outrage of the local community against targets of violence. These well-orchestrated, highly-theatrical public meetings appealed directly to the moral sentiments of the local community who were expected to evaluate the behavior and character of those targeted for violence. The rest of this section details the preparatory work for these mass meetings and how they mobilized moral outrage and incited mass violence.

Struggle sessions and public sentencings required an enormous amount of preparation. While these events were meant to be mass participatory affairs, the Party heavily managed and staged them like theatrical productions. A 1949 report from Chuxian Prefecture on organizing public sentencing meetings for bandits and evil tyrants advised the following:

> Prepare well before public sentencing sessions (公审会). Think through how to prepare verdicts (判决书), public notices (布告), verbal testimonies (口供), and the people's written accusations (状子). It's best to have both eyewitnesses and physical evidence. The meeting place should be well-organized—i.e. [decide] who will attend, to avoid accidents or anything else that might have ill-effects (以免意外或造成不良影响).[79]

Fengyang County's November 1949 summary work report spells out the proper procedure for organizing struggles against bandits and evil tyrants, which is remarkably meticulous about researching local grievances and channeling them into organized struggle sessions:

> 2. Carry out education:
>
> i. Organize a meeting of reliable activists and some aggrieved households; conduct research about the bandits and tyrants; research everyone's grievances; discuss which aggrieved households were wronged by which bandits and tyrants and who will dare to struggle and who will not…and establish a reporting system.
>
> ii. Organize a meeting of Party members, old and new activists, and aggrieved households, carry out anti-tyrant education…decide who will lead the speaking bitterness session…decide who will be the [struggle] targets.
>
> …
>
> iii. Explain the schedule for the struggle session…notify friends and neighbors and spare no effort to propagandize that a struggle session will be held.

[79] Chuxian Prefectural Party Committee, "Notice on the Treatment of Bandits and Evil Tyrants," [关于对匪霸处理的通报] November 9, 1949, *CCDC*, no. 1949XW05_26.

> iv. Hold a village-wide meeting of aggrieved households, [discuss] how to kick off the struggle session…compile a list [of participants], settle the order, each person will "speak bitterness" how many times, go through drills…[80]

Just before the struggle session began, activists prepared the site and distributed tea, while the local militia stationed itself at the site to keep order.[81]

Many localities delineated outlines of procedures to collect persuasive evidence of the "crimes" of struggle targets. Of course we cannot assess the veracity of this "evidence," but the Party's serious concern with investigating local conditions and finding truthful and persuasive evidence of wrongdoings against the community indicates their desire to use reasonable—or reasonable sounding—claims of sufferings and injustice to mobilize moral outrage. Evidence against class enemies was supposed to be extremely detailed and rich; in fact, those who had plentiful evidence against them were often struggled against first. A Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee report emphasized that cadres and locals should collect extensive "eyewitness material" on landlords, including the time and location of the offense. "The more vivid, concrete, and detailed the better (越生动具体详细越好)," the report continued. "Be sure not to have holes [in the evidence] or stray from reality (切忌空洞不符实际)." The report even called for the careful photographic documentation of material evidence, such as bloody clothing, murder weapons, rent receipts, hidden wealth, granary placards, burnt-down houses, organized riots, etc.,

[80] Fengyang County Committee. "November Summary Work Report for the Urban Districts of Fengyang County, Anhui Province," [关于安徽省凤阳县城区十一月工作总结报告] December 2, 1949, *CCDC*, no. 1949XW08_42-61.

[81] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Summary Report on the Situation of Carrying Out Struggle Work in Six Townships of Fenglin District, Fengyang County, Anhui Province Between August 1 and September 10," [关于安徽省凤阳县凤临区六个乡八月一日至九月十日展开斗争工作情况综合回报] September 11, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW11_93-96.

which was then to be sent to the county government for storage and inspection.[82] The public delivery of personal stories of woe—a key component of these mass meetings—also required preparation. In Fenglin District of Fengyang County, accusers were organized into small groups and given training before struggle sessions, in which work team cadres individually gave the participants policy instructions and explained to them how to "speak bitterness." The work team emphasized that they should provide concrete reasons and details and quickly get to the "bitter parts" (速出苦处) when relating their tales of personal woe before the crowd.[83]

Because moral mobilization aimed to rouse up the indignation of "the masses" (群众) against moral transgressors, cadres were careful to ensure that those participating in the struggle sessions represented a broad spectrum of the local community in terms of age and gender. This was a difficult process, as the young tended to participate more readily than the old and men were more willing to participate than women. The Changhuai District Party Committee reports that in Dongwan Village of Fengyang County cadres struggled to simultaneously mobilize men and women, and they were able to mobilize young women more easily than older women. Despite these difficulties, the village managed to cobble together a somewhat diverse array of participants: 66 people—41 men, 19 women, and 6 children—"spoke bitterness" against six landlords, four of whom were struggled against two to four times.[84]

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[82] Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Notice on Collecting Materials on the Landlord Class's Historical Crimes and its Unlawful Behavior of Sabotaging Land," [关于收集苏南地主阶级的历史罪恶和破坏土地改革不法行为材料通知] January 29, 1951, BSDA, no. 1-2-001-064.

[83] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Report on the First Phase of Land Reform Work in Six Townships of Fenglin District [83], Fengyang County, Anhui Province," [关于安徽省凤阳县凤临区六个乡土地改革第一阶段工作报告] August 30, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW11_50-57.

[84] Changhuai District Party Committee, "Report Concerning the Inspection of Several Problems in the Land Reform Work of Weidongwan Village," [关于检查卫东湾村土改工作中几个问题报告] October 21, 1951, *XCSSN*, 44.

Cadres were meticulous in their sequencing of struggle targets according to the perceived severity of their transgressions. One of the most powerful elements of moral mobilization was its ability to arouse outrage towards perceived moral transgressors, which could be harnessed to use violence against other targets who were accused of much milder, often political, offenses or against whom there was weak evidence. The rationale was that by attacking the most hated local figures at the beginning of the campaign would mobilize mass enthusiasm for violence against subsequent targets. This recalls Goldberg et al.'s "intuitive prosecutor mindset" and the "spillover effect" of outrage: when political actors mobilize outrage against a clearly defined transgressor who was perceived to have escaped justice, the effect of this outrage continues to encourage participants to demand harsh punishment of unrelated targets.[85] By first attacking targets who could be best portrayed as contemptible, officials harnessed and sustained the moral indignation of the crowd to use against a large number of targets during a struggle session.

The pairing of perceived moral transgressors and people accused of "sabotaging land reform" (破坏土改) mobilized outrage and encouraged violence against both categories of targets, if both kinds of targets were struggled against simultaneously or consecutively at the same struggle session. In Jiangnan, a report on land reform in Fengxian County in Southern Jiangsu explained the effectiveness of a sequencing strategy:

> At the beginning of the movement, [we] struggled against and suppressed counterrevolutionary bandits and agents (反革命匪特) who had been locked up for a year and the power-holding clique of evil tyrants in the entire county and/or district (全县全区性的恶霸当权派). Quickly taking care of this group of people was very effective in raising the fighting spirit of the masses (斗志). After the campaign was in full gear, the spearhead [of the campaign] was directed towards evil tyrants, power holding landlords, and unlawful landlords. Former cadres at the township level and above were almost all struggled against.[86]

[85] See Chapter 1 for fuller description of the psychological mechanism of moral outrage. Also see Julie H. Goldberg, Jennifer S. Lerner, and Phillip E. Tetlock, "Rage and Reason: The Psychology of the Intuitive Prosecutor," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 29 (1999): 781-95.

[86] Zhang Yan, "Zhang Yan's Report to the Party Committee on Land Reform Work," [张彦关于土改工作向区党委的汇报] December 31, 1950, *JSPA*, no. 3006-0081.

Essentially, the Party put the "worst offenders" for whom there was the most "compelling" evidence to initiate a wave of mass violence. In Huaibei, Fengyang County's Yaowan Township Land Reform Work Summary instructed local cadres to "struggle against big ones first" (先斗大的).[87] In an eyewitness account of a struggle session in Jiangdu County, situated on the periphery of the Jiangnan region, a former land reform official remarked on how the organizers had paired moral transgressors with those who had merely resisted the land reform campaign:

> The old man was seventy-eight; he was a local 'evil tyrant landlord' (恶霸地主) who had hounded people to death (逼死过人). The young one was thirty-three; his crime was concealing his land deed and 'preparing a counterattack' (准备反攻倒). Although I was young at the time and didn't really understand the law, I always thought that killing people like this was too careless. Especially that young landlord, it was indeed questionable if he should have been killed for his crime.[88]

Although this land reform official morally opposed the use of violence against both targets *ex post*, this distinction was blurred—intentionally—during the struggle session itself. If the Party was solely concerned with using class identity as a means of mobilizing the masses, it either would have not worried about sequencing or pairing targets as such; if it were mainly concerned about class, it would have focused on struggling against the wealthiest members of the community first. This is simply not the case.[89]

When a particularly odious individual was up for judgment, this kind of well-orchestrated moral theater easily roused the crowd to anger and demands for violent retribution, usually

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[87] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Yaowan Township Land Reform Work Summary," [姚湾乡土改工作总结] October 1950, *XCSSN*, 43-44.

[88] Xu Hongci, *Give Me Back My Freedom* [还我自由] (n.p.) Unpublished memoir given to author. Xu's memoir was recently published in English by Swedish journalist Erling Hoh. See Xu Hongci, *No Wall Too High: One Man's Daring Escape from Mao's Darkest Prison*, trans. Erling Hoh, (New York: Straus and Giroux, 2017).

[89] A great example of privileging moral contemptibility over wealth in target sequencing comes from Hinton. When describing the first struggle target in Long Bow Village, Hinton wrote: "He was not the richest man in the village but he was one of the meanest." Hinton, *Fanshen*, 133-134.

execution. During the public sentencing of evil tyrant and landlord Chen Chansan in Tianjin township of Huaining County in southwestern Anhui, an old couple entered the stage, sobbing, to tell the crowd their story of how Chen had beaten their son to death while attempting to settle a debt owed to him, hounded their daughter-in-law to death, and rendered them destitute, causing their newly-born grandson to die of starvation. The crowd of over two thousand people were so enraged by the couple's story that they began to yell, "Down with the evil tyrant landlord, a blood debt must be repaid in blood" (打倒恶霸地主，血债要用血来还).[90]

Cadres sometimes described these violent outbursts as "spontaneous" (自发) outgrowths of the aggrieved participants' "righteous indignation" (义愤). A Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee land reform report cites two examples of "spontaneous" violence induced by the morally charged atmosphere of struggle sessions and public sentencings:

> At the public sentencing of landlord XX in Suining County, an old grandma beat a landlord twice with her cane while sobbing and speaking bitterness [against him], because her family fell apart after her son was killed. In XX Township of Pisui County, the little sister of a village head spontaneously slapped a landlord who raped her and called him an animal.

The report also mentions instances of people hitting struggle targets in the face with their shoes and even organizing groups to beat people up (打人团). Yet the Regional Party Committee attributed these instances of violence to the understandable outrage of those who had been wronged by these struggle targets; they suggested cadres tolerate and sympathize with this violent behavior, which they claim was also widely supported by the spectating crowds.[91] Of course, this violence was hardly spontaneous: it occurred during meticulously organized mass

[90] Huaining County Local Gazetteer Compilation Committee, *Huaining County Gazetteer* [怀宁县志] (Hefei: Huangshan Shushe, 1996), 366.

[91] Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Circular to All Prefectural Party Committees on Some Problems in the Current Land Reform Movement," [中共苏北区委员会对当前土地改革运动中的几个问题向各地委的通报] January 4, 1951, *CCPM*.

rallies convened after weeks of face-to-face boundary work. Yet it is significant that the Party presents land reform violence emanating from righteous indignation or outrage as "spontaneous," as it reveals the desired goal of this mobilization strategy to instigate violence in a way that can appear to be both popular—as in coming from the people—and legitimate in its cause.

The Selective and Retributivist Nature of Land Reform Violence

A major observable implication of moral mobilization is that the violence it mobilizes is selective and follows a distinctly retributivist logic. The Party's official narrative on political violence during this period portrays the Party as the reluctant dispenser of justice—that is, official propaganda claims that the Party was constantly restraining and managing the explosive hatred of the peasantry towards class enemies. This narrative is partly true: the Party did want to manage violence, not because it had any reservations about the use of violence, but rather because it wanted to channel the public's moral outrage against a select number of targets who had been identified as morally suspect. This strategy aimed to mobilize the masses and then contain the scope of violence to prevent it from devolving into indiscriminate violence.

It is critical to note that violence during struggle sessions was highly selective not only in the selection of targets, as described earlier in the moral boundary work stage of moral mobilization, but also when mobilizing moral outrage and punishing offenders.[92] The violence used during struggle sessions and public sentencings followed a clear logic of moral retributivism—i.e. the punishment was to fit the perceived severity of the crime. Like their

[92] According to Jeremy Weinstein, political actors use selective violence to identify and attack their enemies while reassuring civilians that they will be safe as long as they cooperate with the group. In contrast, indiscriminate violence does not reward supporters or "punish defectors." See Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge, University Press, 2007).

imperial predecessors, the Party differentially treated political threats (分别对待), promising leniency to followers who confessed and executing only the most important local power-holders or bandit and sectarian group leaders.[93] A Xinhua editorial by East China Bureau leader Rao Shushi spelled out the Bureau's commitment to selective punishment:

> The struggle against the landlord class adopted a policy of differential treatment (分别对待的政策). Regarding landlords and local bullies guilty of great crimes (罪大的恶霸地主), the government should actively arrest them and bring them to justice. This not only facilitates mobilizing the masses, it also can avoid the occurrence of random beatings and killings (乱打乱杀). Regarding unlawful landlords who sabotage land reform, they should be punished according to the Regulations on the Punishment of Unlawful Landlords—[officials] should widely use the People's Courts along with mass movements to resolutely suppress them. Regarding regular landlords who have committed wrongdoings (有劣迹), [officials] should mobilize the masses to carry out face-to-face "reasoning struggles" (说理斗争). Regarding landlords who obey the law and bow their heads before the masses, they should be treated with magnanimity. Regarding the "enlightened gentry" [landlords who early on joined the Communist cause] should be treated with consideration.[94]

Local governments in Anhui and Jiangsu released similar policy statements. In Northern Jiangsu, landlords guilty of relatively serious crimes (罪恶较大) were to be sentenced through the People's Courts—where they would possibly be publicly executed—while face-to-face struggle sessions were deemed more appropriate for landlords who had committed relatively light crimes.[95] A report on land reform from Fengxian County to the Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee claimed that it implemented the policy of "striking correctly" (打得准) by differentially punishing targets according to their crime, reserving execution only for those who had committed the most egregious crimes (罪大恶极). Landlords who were "innocent" of such

[93] Elizabeth J. Perry, "Rural Violence in Socialist China," *The China Quarterly* 103.1 (1985): 417.

[94] Rao Shushi, "Summary of Experiences with Classic Land Reform Experiments in East China,' [华东土地改革典型试验经验总结] *People's Daily*, December 20, 1950.

[95] Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Directive on the Current Land Reform Work," [关于目前土地改革工作的指示] December 15, 1950, *JSTGYD*, 250.

crimes escaped any kind of punishment: "Those who were...spared were mainly small landlords, [and] orphaned or widowed landlords."[96]

In practice, the severity of violence appears to have varied according to the identity of the struggle targets, suggesting that the Party was concerned with reserving lethal violence for those deemed most "deserving" of it. Struggle sessions and public sentencings meted out violence that matched the perceived gravity and nature of the crime. For example, in Jiangyin County, two "henchmen" of landlords Henchmen in Jiangyin County were forced to bark, crawl around, and gnaw on bones like dogs, a form of public humiliation that reflected their status as "lapdogs" (走狗) of local power holders.[97] A report on the punishment of unlawful landlords and counterrevolutionaries from Gaoqiao Township of Jiangdu County presented the following statistical table on the differential treatment of its struggle targets:

[96] The report indicates that over half of those executed had some sort of "blood debt" (血债). Zhang Yan, "Zhang Yan's Report to the Party Committee on Land Reform Work," [张彦关于土改工作向区党委的汇报] December 31, 1950, *JSPA*, no. 3006-0081.

[97] Mo Hongwei, "The Bloody Struggles During Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu," [苏南土地改革中的血腥斗争] *Modern China Studies* 4 (2006). Http://www.modernchinastudies.org/cn/issues/past-issues/94-mcs-2006-issue-4/989-2012-01-05-15-35-10.html.

Table 3.3: Differential Punishment of Struggle Targets in Gaoqiao Township, Jiangdu County[98]

Target Type	**Executed**	**Imprisoned**	**House Arrest**
Unlawful Landlord	1	3	8
False Township Head	1		
Counterrevolutionary		2	
Other		1	1
Total	2	6	9

While several landlords and their henchmen—dubbed "the landlords' claws and fangs" (地主爪牙)—were struggled against, only the former township head (乡长) and one other "unlawful" landlord were actually executed. Although the report does not provide any information regarding the accusations against them, it is likely that the township head, due to his holding of an official position, was a powerholder accused of violating norms of virtue regarding corruption and the correct use of political power. Whether he had committed any such transgressions is irrelevant: as Chapter 4 elaborates, these former local officials often attracted the ire of the public simply because they held power in an administration that presided over rampant corruption and abuse. Tellingly, despite having apprehended around a dozen landlords, the community singled him and one other out for execution.[99] Perceived transgression, not class identity per se, majorly influenced the severity of violence a target would endure during the land reform campaign.

[98] The category of "other" was annotated "the landlords' henchmen" (地主爪牙). Data for Table 1 reproduced from "Statistical Table of Punished Evil Tyrants, Unlawful Landlords, and Counterrevolutionaries in Gaoqiao Township, Jiangdu County," *SBTGWX*, 180.

[99] As noted in the previous discussion of moral boundary work, former local officials were often hated by the local community because of their corruption or their association with the Japanese or Nationalist regimes; they were in the unenviable position of mediating between the community and the Japanese or the ineffectual Nationalists. See Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*.

Aggregate data from Huaibei suggests this may have been a general pattern. Comparing rates of house arrests and executions in Northern Anhui, unlawful landlords were treated much more leniently than evil tyrants. Unlawful landlords comprised the majority of those put under house arrest yet only about fifteen percent of those executed; conversely, only fifteen percent of those put under arrest were evil tyrants, who constituted the majority of those executed (see Table 3.4). This is particularly important because evil tyrants—without any further specification—could refer to someone of any class background, while unlawful landlords referred exclusively to landlords who resisted the campaign. The perceived severity of transgression, more so than class label, influenced the severity of punishment. A breakdown of 6,730 arrests and 1,100 executions during land reform reported by the Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee shows that, as an aggregate category, landlords and evil tyrants made up a quarter of those apprehended, and only a somewhat smaller percentage of those executed. Former officials and "secret agents" (特务) constituted a slightly larger proportion of those executed than arrested, while bandits were represented in much greater proportions among those executed than those arrested (see Table 3.5). The combination of evil tyrants and landlords obscures the relationship between class and moral transgression in determining punishment severity, though bandits and former officials, as the Fengyang County case in Chapter 4 argues, were often targeted for their violations of norms of virtue—i.e. perceived corruption and abuses against the local community. If we consider evil tyrants, former officials, and bandits as likely candidates for accusations of moral transgressions, these breakdowns reveal that these categories of targets endured much harsher violence than regular law-breaking landlords, secret society followers, and others.

Table 3.4 Percentage Breakdown of House Arrests and Executions During Land Reform in Northern Anhui by Target Identity (1951)[100]

Target Identity	**% of House Arrests**	**% of Executions**
Evil Tyrants	15.08	44.14
Unlawful Landlords	67.95	14.67
Bandits	2.83	12.38
Counterrevolutionaries	8.45	22.02
Sectarian Group Members	2.13	2.72
Other	3.56	4.06

Table 3.5 Percentage Breakdown of Arrests and Executions During Land Reform in Northern Jiangsu by Target Identity (1951)[101]

Target Identity	**% of Arrests**	**% of Executions**
Landlords & Evil Tyrants	27	23.68
Former Officials	20.3	23
Secret Agents	15.5	18.56
Bandits	8	17.8
Sectarian Group Members	8	0.54
Other	24	16.5

[100] "Statistical Table on the Situation of Struggle and Handling [of Targets] during Land Reform in the Northern Anhui Region," [安徽省皖北区土改中斗争处理情况统计表] *AHSTDGGZL*, p. 26 of appendix.

[101] This figure only includes arrests and executions during Northern Jiangsu's land reform campaign by February 1951. See Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Report on the Present Situation of Land Reform Work Submitted to the East China Bureau and Center," [中共苏北区委员会关于目前土地改革工作情况向华东局并中央的报告] February 27, 1951, *AHMCLR*, 716. Unfortunately, this is an incomplete number. According to a 1952 Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Report, 12,241 unlawful landlords and evil tyrants were arrested by July 1952, which is almost double the number of arrests reported in the February 1951 report. Nevertheless, the point of these figures is to demonstrate the relative proportions of those arrested and executed, which likely remained roughly the same throughout the campaign. See Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Office, "Northern Jiangsu Situation Report," [苏北情况汇报] October 1952, *JSPA* 301-48; figures cited in Ma Junya, *The Sacrificed Land: A Study of the Changes in the Society and Ecology of Huaibei , 1680-1949*, [被牺牲的"局部": 淮北社会生态变迁研究, 1680-1949] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011), 360.

Failed Mobilization in Jiangnan and Huaibei

In the previous sections of this chapter I have argued that the Party focused on the perceived moral transgressions of a minority of the landed elite to create a new moral boundary between the masses and class enemies; the use of sensationalized accounts of these normative violations provoked popular outrage and participation in violence. Because the Party used moral mobilization throughout the East China Bureau in the early 1950s, it is easier to understand the form of the mobilization process than its efficacy. It is another task entirely to show that the Party was unable to mobilize participation in the absence of moral mobilization. By turning to regional inspection reports on failed instances of mobilization we can explore the question of efficacy. A review of the problems encountered in "third-type" (第三类型) localities—the appellation accorded to places that struggled or failed to mobilize violence—can provide insights into the efficacy of morality as a mobilization tool. Based on limited evidence of failed mobilization attempts, mobilization appeared to require extensive preparatory work that altered the moral boundaries of local communities and located mostly unsympathetic targets for political struggle.

During the land reform campaign, the Southern Jiangsu Regional Government sent inspection teams to survey fifty-one townships across southern Jiangsu to understand the extent of mobilization. According to the report summarizing the inspection teams' findings, seven of the surveyed townships had failed to mobilize any violence against local landlords. The summary report blamed the failure to mobilize on local cadres: poor cadre discipline and training had undermined mobilization efforts. In face-to-face meetings and propaganda work, "cadres haven't been trained to be patient with the locals."

While there are no non-government documents or testimonies to compare with, reading between the lines of the report provides another perspective. Though poor cadre discipline and training were crucial factors, it was precisely the failure to use the techniques of moral mobilization—moral boundary work and moral shocks—that stymied mobilization. The report chastised cadres for not holding small group meetings or holding poorly attended ones. Recalling the function of these meetings, cadres and peasants engaged in extensive moral boundary work in these meanings, where cadres guided peasants in a discussion of the roots of their problems and perceived transgressions against them and others in the village. The Party strived, through these meetings, to establish new moral boundaries that separated the innocent and oppressed masses—whom the Party had aided in becoming aware of and capable of articulating their grievances—from the morally retrograde landlord class. With these new boundaries drawn, locals would feel justified and encouraged in punishing members of the landed elite for their alleged moral transgressions. This clearly did not happen in the townships where mobilization failed. According to local testimonies inspectors collected during their investigations, some locals said things like: "The landlords' land is passed down from their ancestors, now you've divided their land and want [us] to struggle against them; frankly, it's just too much."[102]

The report continued to criticize cadres in Fubei Township of Taicang County for their "crude implementation" of mobilization practices. Not only had they carried out insufficient mass education, but they selected inappropriate targets for political struggle. The report cited the following incident:

[102] The Rural Committee of the Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "On the Rural Committee of the Regional Party Committee's Report on the Second Meeting of the Land Reform Inspection Teams,"［关于区党委农委关于第二次土地改革检查队会议的报告] April 9, 1951, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-001-054.

> Women ran away in tears when they saw a female landlord being unjustly struggled against. One of them said, 'Landlord Cao was very friendly to people and barely received anything in rent; to struggle against her was really wrong (真作孽).'[103]

Without moral boundary work and well-organized moral shocks, the Party struggled to mobilize locals to participate in the campaign.

Reports of failed mobilization in Huaibei evince a similar phenomenon: the public's response to the Party's mobilization efforts was tepid where moral boundary work and moral shocks were not implemented or were poorly carried out. As mentioned earlier, a Northern Jiangsu Rural Committee report on Fangxiang Township in Jiangdu County, in analyzing the success of mobilization efforts in the various villages under its jurisdiction, attributed the noteworthy success of one village to its adroit use of informal chats.[104] In contrast, a "third-type" village in the same township, according to the report, had failed to mobilize the peasantry because "they convened meetings of the poor, farm worker, and middle peasants without any objective in mind." Instead, the report instructed further work in the village "to repeatedly stress [in these meetings] how to be one's own master (做主), how to emancipate oneself (翻身), who exploits whom (谁剥削谁), and who provides for whom (谁养活谁); this is the only way to raise the consciousness of the poor and farm worker peasant class."[105]

Mobilization also stalled in Dacheng Township, a third-type township in Feidong County of Northern Anhui. Similar to its failed counterparts in Southern and Northern Jiangsu, the region's Land Committee blamed this failure on the inexperience and "impure" (不纯) backgrounds of the cadres. Despite the existence of fifty landlords in and around the township,

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Materials on Fangxiang Village, Huaisi District, Jiangdu County, " [江都县槐泗区方巷村材料] November 13, 1950, *JSPA*, no. 7001-003-0108.

[105] Ibid.

none had been subjected to political struggle; alarmingly, the landlords counter-organized and intimidated locals who "did not dare to speak" (不敢言) against them. Unlike the other cases, however, Dacheng's failure was reportedly rooted in the corruption and inactivity of local cadres: they took gifts and bribes from landlords and apparently conducted little mobilization work. Six of the seven Peasant Associations were headed by vagrants or decommissioned soldiers who used the campaign to attack ordinary peasants.

The inspection team's method of overcoming these problems and mobilizing violence is revealing. Aside from purging negligent and corrupt cadres, they quickly set to conducting moral boundary work with the locals. They brought together poor villagers and farmworkers for propaganda work and sent cadres to visit peasants' homes and collect their stories of suffering (访苦). They then used small group meetings to bring together peasants to share their grievances. After apprehending four landlords who were accused of "the most heinous crimes" (罪大恶极) and five cadres who had colluded with them, locals held a public sentencing in which over fifty aggrieved villagers spoke bitterness against the struggle targets, culminating in the execution of two "evil tyrants."[106]

Discussion and Conclusions

I have argued here that the Party used moral appeals rooted in a narrative of retributive justice to reframe certain members of the landed elite as evildoers deserving of violent punishment. Although moral mobilization used pre-existing social boundaries as its basis, its

[106] Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee Land Committee Work Group, "Land Reform Conclusory Work Experiences in Dacheng Township (Third-Type Township)," [大成乡（第三类型乡）土改结束工作的经过] n.d., *AHSTDGGZL*, 211-212.

significance lay in its ability to change the norms of behavior associated with these boundaries—i.e. how individuals defined by these group boundaries should be viewed and treated. Where once villagers feared, resented, or perhaps felt apathetic towards certain locals who owned more land or possessed formal or informal power in the community, under the Party's guidance they began to see themselves as both victims and judges of these individuals' moral degeneracy. By placing them in this position to judge, the Party empowered locals to carry out a kind of retributive justice that they otherwise would not have seen as necessary or proper.

This process has some affinities with what James Scott calls "speaking the hidden transcript"—i.e. instances where the subaltern voice their grievances against the powerful that they could hitherto only express in private, if at all.[107] Yet as China's vibrant legacy of rural protest demonstrates, the peasantry's "hidden transcript" was hardly hidden: during times of natural disaster, disagreements over the proper collection of taxes and rents sparked uprisings against state officials and landlords. This combination of economic exigency and perceived corrupt or unfair practices was sufficient to motivate peasants to use violence, reactively, to ensure their economic security; the peasants' sense of economic jeopardy was further enhanced by the belief that their cause was righteous and just.[108] What the Party needed to do in the early 1950s was to convince the peasantry that it was somehow right and proper—morally correct and just—to use and condone violence against members of the landed elite *proactively*, outside of a concrete crisis context.[109]

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[107] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[108] Consider the sense of righteousness in popular sayings like "officials drive the masses to revolt" (官逼民反), which Chinese protestors continue to use today. See Bianco, *Peasants*, 249-250.

[109] Tilly's distinction between competitive, reactive, and proactive protest is illuminating here. See Charles Tilly, "Rural Collective Action in Modern Europe," in *Forging Nations: A Comparative View of Rural Ferment and Revolt*, ed. Joseph Spielberg and Scott Whiteford (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1976), 9-40.

The argument presented in this chapter is essentially a reconciliation of the class struggle and moral transgression hypotheses, each of which views class or moral appeals as the exclusive force behind popular mobilization. While the Party did employ moral appeals to reshape the way locals viewed themselves and other members of the community and to mobilize outrage against struggle targets, the Party nevertheless couched these appeals in the rhetoric of class struggle. Chapter 4 demonstrates that the scope of violence was by no means confined to economically-defined landlords, but it is significant that the Party attempted to focus the community's attention on landed elites who could be framed as violators of moral norms.

Chapter 4 – Selecting Targets

"Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution."

—Mao Zedong, "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society"[1]

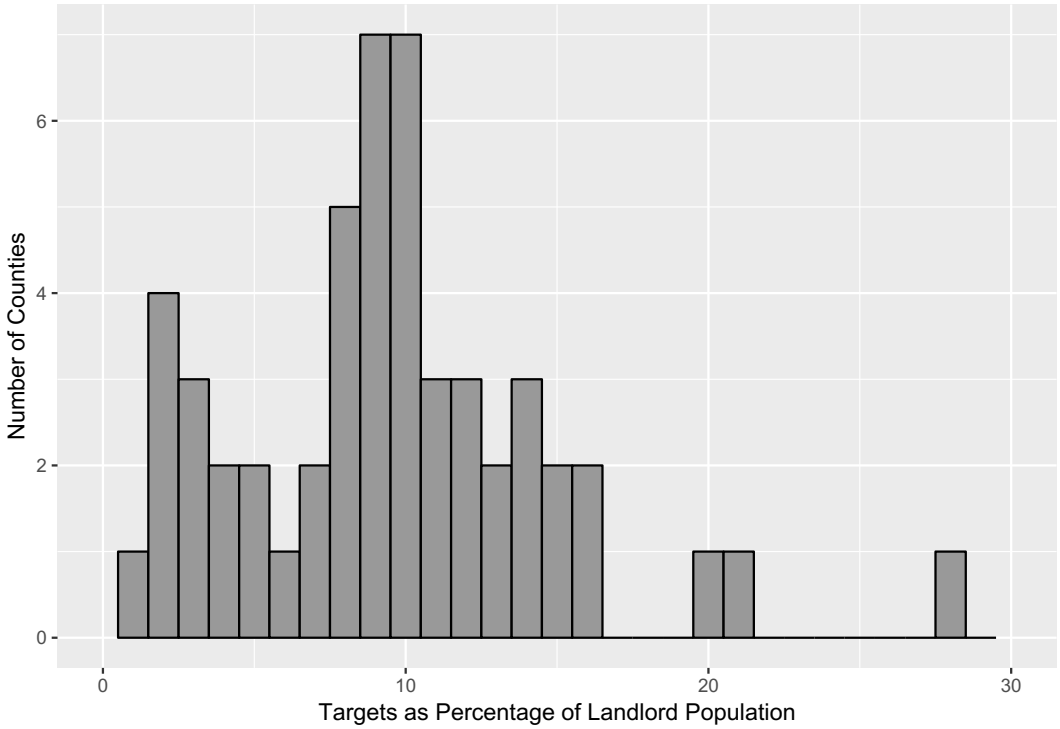
How are targets of political violence selected during a campaign of state violence and why are some targets punished with more severe forms of violence than others? Campaigns of state violence—which by their definition intend to govern, not eliminate, their target population—tend to eschew indiscriminate violence in favor of selective violence.[2] A cursory review of political violence during China's post-revolutionary land reform campaign reveals that it was a relatively selective process: "struggle targets" (斗争对象) represented a small fraction of the overall population that was, according to the campaign's guiding ideology of class struggle, at risk of being chosen for political persecution—i.e. those with bad class labels like "rich peasant" (富农) or "landlord" (地主). As Figure 4.1 illustrates, across counties in Anhui and Jiangsu only about 9.5 percent of the entire landlord population was subjected to political struggle, on average, assuming all targets were labeled as landlords.[3]

[1] Mao Zedong, "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society," in *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung*, ed. Committee for the Publication of the Selected Works of Mao Tsetung (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1971), 11.

[2] State violence contrasts with genocidal violence, which intends to eliminate the targeted population. For more on the differences between civil war, state violence, and genocide, as well as a thorough discussion of selective versus indiscriminate violence, see Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Also see T.D. Mason and Dale A. Krane, "The Political Economy of Death Squads: Toward a Theory of the Impact of State-sanctioned Terror." *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (1989): 175-198.

[3] Political struggle was by no means restricted to those labeled as landlords—as the rest of this chapter illustrates—but the point still stands: only a small percentage of the landlord, and the overall, population endured political struggle.

Figure 4.1 Struggle Targets as a Percentage of the Landlord Population by County



On what basis, then, was this minority of targets selected and punished? In this chapter, I use a boundary-centric approach to determine which social boundaries were most likely to be used in the selection of targets of violence and why these targets endured varying degrees of punishment. I argue for both regional differences and similarities:

1. *The kinds of people targeted varied according to the predominant moral norms that governed the social boundaries between local elites and the rest of the community*. Social boundaries have both categorical and socio-behavioral facets: they define membership in a category but they also determine how individuals relate to or treat members who belong to that category. It is the socio-behavioral aspect of social boundaries that I refer to as moral norms—i.e. the expectations regarding how members on either side of a social boundary should behave

toward one another.[4] Moral boundary work in different localities drew on examples of violations of predominant norms of appropriate and good behavior to typecast community elites and non-elite transgressors as morally retrograde. Because the Party wanted to target members of the landed elite, it sought to identify moral violations that occurred in the context of local authority relations as opposed to moral violations generally construed. At the same time, the focus on moral transgressions meant that a non-negligible share of targets came from non-landlord class backgrounds; it was impossible for the Party to rely on the use of moral transgression as the basis of mobilization work and restrict the scope of violence solely to its preferred target category of the landed elite.

Of course, in any given locality many social boundaries distinguished local elites from the rest of the community; however, the *predominance* of certain boundaries varied by socioeconomic and political context. The nature of these boundaries tended to relate to different sets of moral norms that constrained the selection of struggle targets. In Jiangnan, where tenancy rates were high and rent resistance common, economic boundaries that distinguished landlords from tenants were significant in everyday social life. Here, *norms of propriety* governed the landlord-tenant relationship: landlords were expected to compensate workers fairly, reduce rents for tenants in times of bad harvest, and be honest and fair in their collection of rent. In Huaibei, where tenancy rates were low and landlord-tenant ties less important, the relationship of officials and local strongmen to the local community was central to local authority relations. Locals evaluated these political elites according to *norms of virtue*—i.e. expectations that political elites should protect the local community and not engage in corrupt behavior or abuse their power at

[4] Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9. Also see Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2002): 167–195.

the community's expense. Concerned with protecting their communities, peasants in these areas primarily targeted "tax collectors, local officials, or local bullies" instead of the wealthy in retribution for local abuses.[5] Again, both sets of norms existed in Jiangnan and Huaibei: communities in both Baoshan and Fengyang selected struggle targets for supposedly transgressing norms of propriety and norms of virtue. The difference, I argue, is the relative salience of these norms in each case.

2. *Regardless of the kind of moral norms violated, the punishment of targets operated according to a logic of moral retributivism, whereby the degree of one's perceived moral degeneration dictated the severity of one's punishment*. That is, lethal and severe violence—execution, torture, etc.—was reserved for those considered to have committed the most egregious offenses, while less severe violence—minor beatings and public denunciation—was used for those guilty of lesser crimes.[6]

Comparing Baoshan in Jiangnan and Fengyang in Huaibei

To show how moral mobilization targeted different kinds of people according to the configuration of pre-1949 social boundaries, I analyze two counties from two contrasting geographic regions: Baoshan County in Jiangnan and Fengyang County in Huaibei. While no county is representative of a region, let alone all of China, Baoshan and Fengyang are fairly similar to the overall political and socioeconomic characteristics of the Jiangnan and Huaibei regions, respectively (see Table 4.1). I hold constant major political variables that could affect patterns of targeting: both counties received policy directives from the East China Bureau; had

[5] Lucien Bianco, *Peasants without the Party: Grass-root Movements in Twentieth Century China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe) 2001, 232.

[6] This is a test of Proposition 1a (see Chapter 1), which was explored at a higher level of analysis in Chapter 3.

experienced some Communist mobilization before 1949; and were hit by brutal "mopping-up" campaigns and occupied by the Japanese during World War II. Nevertheless, the counties differed substantially in terms of their socioeconomic and ecological conditions, which shaped their pre-1949 social boundaries and the kinds of community elites who held power. Because the social boundaries and their governing moral norms are endogenous to these socioeconomic variables, I use process-tracing within each county case to adjudicate between the competing propositions on the targeting of violence.[7]

Table 4.1 Summary Statistics of Case Study Counties and Their Corresponding Regions[8]

Variable	**Jiangnan Region**	**Baoshan County**	**Huaibei Region**	**Fengyang County**
Central Bureau	East China	East China	East China	East China
Japanese Occupation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Landholding Inequality	8.83	6.25	4.76	4.48
Agricultural Productivity	112.14 kg/mu	223.5 kg/mu	50.5 kg/mu	40.08 kg/mu
Dominant Mode of Peasant Resistance	Anti-Rent	Anti-Rent	Anti-Tax	Anti-Tax

[7] See Andrew Bennett, "Process Tracing and Causal Inference," in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, ed. Henry Brady and David Collier. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 207-220.

[8] The data presented here come from the author's county gazetteer dataset. Central Bureau refers to the central-level administrative region that governed the region or county. Japanese Occupation is an indicator of whether the region or county was hit by a mopping-up campaign by the Japanese army during the Second World War. Landholding Inequality was calculated using the ratio of landlord per capita landholdings to average per capita landholdings at the county level. Agricultural Productivity is the amount of grain produced per *mu* of land in 1949. For Dominant Mode of Peasant Resistance, I consulted Kathryn Bernhardt, *Rents, Taxes, and Peasant Resistance: The Lower Yangzi Region, 1840-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Bianco, *Peasants*; Philip C. Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985); Philip C. Huang, *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta 1350-1988* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); and Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980)

Throughout the rest of this chapter I show how the Party used these pre-existing social boundaries to guide the selection and differential punishment of targets in both Fengyang and Baoshan. I find that the majority of targets varied according to each county's pre-1949 social boundaries and the relevant moral norms they transgressed. In wealthy, highly unequal localities like Baoshan County in Jiangnan, communities tended to target local, relatively small, landlords for their perceived transgressions of *norms of propriety*—i.e. norms governing the proper way in which landlords should treat their tenants and collect rents. These norms of propriety undergirded the cohesion of local society before 1949; peasants did not challenge the legitimacy of the unequal landholding system but they maintained certain expectations about the landlord-tenant relationship. In contrast, poor, relatively equal places like Fengyang County in Huaibei mainly targeted and punished political elites—e.g. local officials, strongmen, and bandits. Some of these political elites often owned a great deal of land but, because many locals were small "owner-cultivators" who did not rent land, they did not have a landlord-tenant relationship with these elites.[9] Rather, locals were more concerned with elites' transgression of *norms of virtue*: expectations that political powerholders protect the community and not allow harm to come to it, through predation, corruption and abuse, or criminal activity. Despite these differences in social boundaries and their attendant moral norms, I find similarities in the process by which each locality differentially punished these targets: both counties employed lethal violence, torture, or minor violence against targets according to the gravity of their alleged moral transgressions.

To summarize, if the CCP was in fact engaged in moral mobilization, it should be reflected in how local communities selected targets, the rationales provided for their selection, and the backgrounds of the targets. We should expect communities to choose targets on the basis

[9] Huang, *Yangzi Delta*, 149.

of their perceived moral failings—e.g. their alleged cruelty, slyness, abuse of power, acts of rape, murder, etc.—as opposed to their class identity or past political allegiance. Cross-regional variation in pre-existing social boundaries should also matter: wealthy places with relatively clear class stratification like Baoshan should be selecting proportionately more landlords for alleged violations of norms of propriety, while poor, relatively equal places like Fengyang should be choosing struggle targets for their abuse of power and other violations of norms of virtue. In both cases we would expect to see moral retributivist concerns drive the differential punishment of struggle targets on the basis of their perceived moral transgressions instead of their class status or the political threat they pose to the state.

Transgressing Norms of Propriety in Jiangnan: The Case of Baoshan County

Baoshan County was a generally prosperous county in the fertile Lower Yangzi Delta, not far outside Shanghai. Compared to many Chinese counties, Baoshan—present-day Baoshan District—is relatively young: it emerged in 1724 during the Yongzheng Emperor's rule from the counties of Kunshan and Jiading.[10] Class relations in Baoshan were complex because of the intertwined nature of rural and urban markets. Party officials disparaged the locals' entrenched "sideline and light agricultural industrial mentality" (副业轻农业的思想), referring to the tendency of many locals to migrate to Shanghai to work in light industry or to engage in profitable sideline work.[11] Baoshan's economic situation resembled the greater Jiangnan region: despite the region's unusually high levels of commercialization and marketization, land relations

[10] In 1958, Baoshan County, along with the rest of Jiangsu's Songjiang Prefecture, again fell under the administrative jurisdiction of Shanghai Municipality, where it remains to this day.

[11] See the section on Baoshan County in Chapter 2 of Zhongguo Gongchandang Jiangsu Sheng Weiyuanhui Bangongting, ed. *The Agricultural Situation in Jiangsu Province* [江苏省农业生产情况], vol. 1 (Internal Publication, 1955).

between landowners and tenants were not inherently antagonistic; these social boundaries were more market-based than feudal in nature. The exchange of land use rights allowed the small peasant economy to increase the efficiency of its land use and to provide land for land-poor peasants in need of land to till.[12]

Norms of propriety appear to have been important in governing landlord-tenant relations in Baoshan. A former land reform activist in neighboring Jiading County noted that landlord-tenant relations were embedded in familial relations and subject to certain normative expectations. Her family's landlord was kin so they did not have to submit rent. Between strangers, though, it was expected that landlords abide by particular rules of conduct: "If you had peasants work for you, to provide them food to eat and to treat them well was only right and proper."[13] Compared to the rest of Jiangnan, landlord-tenant ties were particularly significant here because of a peculiarity unique to Baoshan—and neighboring Jiading County: the *juese tian* (脚色田) rent system. *Juese tian* was a rent system that extracted payment mainly in the form of uncompensated labor for one's landlord. Landlords stipulated the number of days of labor to be levied per *mu* of land—about 20 days per *mu* in Baoshan—and determined a wage equivalent for each day worked; if the tenant failed to work for the stipulated number of days, he or she would have to pay the landlord the equivalent amount of wages, while landlords were obligated to pay tenants wages for every day worked in excess of the stipulated amount. This system was prevalent in Baoshan and other counties proximate to Shanghai because of the acute labor shortages during the agricultural busy season caused by the large number of local labor that

[12] Li Liangyu, "Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu and the Question of Modernizing Tradition," [苏南土改与现代化传统问题] *Jiangsu Daxue Xuebao: Shexue Kexue Ban* 8, no. 3 (2006): 4.

[13] Oral history JD13, July 2015.

migrated into the city for work.[14] The difficulty and hassle of renting land in this manner from afar meant that absentee landlords tended to avoid using this rent system; rather, medium and small landlords and rich peasants, many of whom cultivated some of their own land, typically relied on the *juese tian* system. Moreover, landlords and rich peasants only rented out two or three *mu* of land per tenant household using this system.[15]

Violations of norms of propriety were often at the heart of pre-1949 social conflict in Baoshan. As discussed in Chapter 2, rent riots often emerged in response to a combination of economic crisis and perceived injustice; in Jiangnan, this occurred when landlords refused to reduce rents or sent thugs to extort and collect rent during a bad harvest. In many townships in Baoshan, landlords drew up lists of tenants who owed them rent and submitted them to the county government, which would send runners (差人) to extort money from the tenants, sometimes imprisoning those who were unable to pay. There was also outright violent conflict between landlords and tenants. According to Baoshan County's local gazetteer, landlords murdered 603 people, hounded another 176 to death over rents and debts, raped 104 women, and stole 38,990 *mu* of land.[16] It is probable that landlord-tenant conflicts escalated over the previous decades because Baoshan, unlike other areas of Jiangnan, which did not experience significant

[14] It is unclear how long the *juese tian* system existed, but it was particularly prevalent during the years between the Japanese occupation and Liberation. Locals do not know the origin of the phrase juese tian or its Mandarin pronunciation because they only heard the term used in Shanghainese (Wu dialect). See Pan Guangdan and Quan Weitian, "An Analysis of Two Kinds of Rent Systems in Southern Jiangsu," [苏南农村两种租佃制度的分析] in Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, ed., *The Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu I Witnessed* [我所见到的苏南土地改革] (Shanghai: Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, 1951), 23-24. For more on Baoshan's rent system, see Shanghai Shi Baoshan Qu Difang Zhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, ed. *Baoshan County Gazetteer* [宝山县志] (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1992), 151-152.

[15] Pan and Quan, "Two Kinds of Rent Systems," 24.

[16] *Baoshan County Gazetteer*, 152.

changes in rents during the Republican Era, was one of the few counties that witnessed rent increases, owing to its identity as a primarily cotton-growing county.[17]

In many ways, these landlord-tenant antagonisms in Baoshan reflected that of the greater Jiangnan region. Landlord-tenant conflict became somewhat of a problem after the conclusion of the Taiping Rebellion in 1864, when county governments began to set rent rates in conjunction with large landlord families. This conflict began to decline and shift because of increased state intervention in rent collection during the Nationalist decade (1927-1937), which caused state officials to replace landlords as the primary target for the peasantry's ire.[18] Bernhardt's data on targets of violence during episodes of collective action in Jiangnan from the late-Qing to the Nationalist era illustrate this trend (see Table 4.2). According to Bernhardt, by the Republican era only eight percent of targets during episodes of collective action were landlords, with the vast majority of targets being officials and tax collectors. Namely, those most proximate to the rent collection process, which was fraught with unfair and corrupt practices, became the primary targets of peasant unrest. A notable example of this change in collective resistance targets occurred in October 1934 in Suzhou. Across multiple townships in Suzhou, over a thousand peasants launched insurrections to protest tax collectors' (催甲) unfair and inaccurate assessment of the bad harvest, burning down the houses of a notorious local tax collector's family.[19]

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[17] Bernhardt, *Peasant Resistance*, 179. Indeed, before 1949 Baoshan was one of Jiangsu Province's principal producers of cotton. Because of its focus on its comparative advantage in cotton production, it was not a self-sufficient producer of grain. See *Baoshan County Gazetteer*, 152. Huang notes that the county's high soil salinity prevented the cultivation of crops other than cotton. See Huang, *Yangzi Delta*, 87.

[18] Bernhardt, *Peasant Resistance*, 191-192, 205. This distinction helps clarify how officials and landlords were overlapping yet separate categories; as Bernhardt notes, despite their history of collusion beginning in the late Qing, there were still significant antagonisms between officials and landlords in the Nationalist era.

[19] Shao Min and Ye Yongjian, "Jiangsu Peasant Movement Annual Chronological Table," [江苏农民运动大事年表] *JSNMYD*, 462.

Table 4.2 Percentage of Collective Action Incidents in Jiangnan from the Late-Qing through Nationalist Period that Targeted Landlords, Officials, or Private Tax Collectors/Dunners[20]

Target Identity	**1840-1859**	**1873-1911**	**1912-1936**
Landlords	87%	52%	8%
Officials	35%	45%	83%
Private Tax Collectors/Dunners[21]	9%	21%	25%

We can expect, then, that norms of propriety in landlord-tenant relations would have mattered tremendously in local authority relations in Baoshan. Where would we expect the transgressions of these norms to occur? The prevalence of the *juese tian* system suggests that everyday social interactions in communities in Baoshan was between tenants, small- and medium-sized landlords, and the agents of absentee landlords. It would be more likely, therefore, that locals would target these smaller landlords who relied on the *juese tian* rent system of corvée labor, and local tax collectors because they had more face-to-face interactions with their tenants than large, absentee landlords. These small landlords and collectors essentially were the face of the rent collection system for the local community; that is, issues arising out of the proper treatment of tenants and the fair collection of rents would most likely involve them.

Selecting Struggle Targets in Baoshan

As in other parts of the East China Bureau, the selection of targets came after extensive preparatory work. The county's three-step mobilization process for land reform required

[20] Data reproduced from Table 6.3 in Bernhardt, *Peasant Resistance*, 203. The percentages reported here do not total to 100 because collective actions usually targeted more than one kind of target. This dataset only includes cases of "spontaneous" collective action—that is, actions not organized by the GMD or CCP.

[21] Bernhardt uses the term "private dunners" to refer to this category of private tax collectors who helped the government press locals for taxes. During the land reform campaign, Party documents often referred to these individuals as *cuijia* (崔家).

township cadres first to establish a Peasant Association and carry out survey work to "grasp class relations" (掌握阶级关系) and understand the distribution of landholdings. After investigating local conditions, cadres drafted concrete plans for carrying out land reform, propagandized official policy, began demarcating classes and talking with the local community to win its support for the movement and to "isolate the landlords" (孤立地主). Finally, work team and local cadres worked with locals to settle class labels and mobilized political struggle sessions against targets.[22]

Countywide statistics illustrate that those labeled as landlords represented the majority of struggle targets. A statistical report from late 1950 specifies the identities and class labels for all struggle targets during Baoshan's land reform campaign thus far (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4).[23] The identity categorization specified an individual's purported crime (or in the case of "ordinary landlords" the lack thereof), while the class label categorization referred to the formal economic designation given to an individual on the basis of his or her landholdings and sources of income. Out of the county's 337 struggle targets, 73.6 percent were struggled against primarily for being landlords of some kind. Although an overwhelming majority of targets were attacked as landlords, about 45 percent of all struggle targets had labels that indicated that they had committed some kind of moral transgression or political crime, such as being an evil tyrant, breaking the law, engaging in counterrevolutionary activities, or serving as henchmen for local

[22] Baoshan County Party Committee, "Baoshan County's Preliminary Opinion Regarding Land Reform (Specifically Methods on How to Implement Land Reform)," [宝山县关于土改的初步意见 （具体如何实施土改的办法）] May 13, Year Unknown, BSDA 1-2-004-001. The document does not list a year, but it was most likely issued in 1950, just before the beginning of the land reform movement in Baoshan.

[23] This is an incomplete report, as the county's land reform campaign had not yet finished. The county's November 1951 land reform statistics indicate that 850 people were struggled against in total; unfortunately, it only provides a partial breakdown of its struggle targets. See Baoshan County Party Committee, "Statistical Table on the Struggle Situation during the End of Land Reform Work in Baoshan County," [宝山县结束土改工作斗争情况统计表] November 18, 1951, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-011-034.

strongmen or landlords. Of these 337 struggle targets, about a third were former officials who held political or military positions before 1949.[24]

Table 4.3 Breakdown of Land Reform Struggle Targets by Identity, Baoshan County (1950)[25]

Identity	**Number Struggled Against**
"Ordinary" Landlord (一般地主)	185
Unlawful Landlord	63
Evil Tyrant	38
Other	32
Henchman (狗腿子)	9
Counterrevolutionary	6
Saboteur (破坏分子)	4
Total	337

[24] Notably, 67 of these former officials, or around twenty percent of all targets, were former district, township or *baojia* heads, or officials above the district level (区长以上). See ibid.

[25] Baoshan County Party Committee, "Statistical Table on Mass Struggle During Land Reform," [土改中群众斗争统计表] 1950, *BSDA*, No. 1-2-011-019. Although the statistical table is only dated 1950, a marginal note in the document indicates that some of the land reform data is from at least early November.

Table 4.4 Breakdown of Land Reform Struggle Targets by Class Label, Baoshan County (1950)[26]

Class Label/Background	**Number Struggled Against**
Landlord	256
Rich Peasant	26
Middle Peasant	17
Poor Peasant	16
Other	11
Vagrant	5
Businessman	4
Worker	2
Total	337

Notwithstanding the preponderance of landlords selected as struggle targets, one did not even have to have been formally labeled as a landlord to be struggled against, which suggests the existence of non-class criteria in selecting struggle targets. Table 6 shows that one fourth of struggle targets were not even labeled landlords; a small number even had "good" class labels such as "poor peasant" or "worker." This is particularly surprisingly because of the wealth and inequality of Baoshan. A class-based account of land reform violence would predict an exclusive focus on landlords in a locality situated in the heart of the Lower Yangzi Delta. If a quarter of targets here were not economically defined as landlords, one must imagine that this percentage would be significantly higher in poorer, more equal parts of China.

Since about twelve hundred households were labeled as landlords,[27] what distinguished these targeted landlords from the rest? More micro-level data elucidates that perceived normative

[26] Ibid.

[27] *Baoshan County Gazetteer*, 152.

transgressions were significant factors in the selection of struggle targets. In an oral history, a former worker who lived in Baoshan but worked in a factory near Shanghai, remembered seeing and hearing struggle sessions during land reform. He noted that many landlords were small, owning upwards of 30 *mu* of land, but that they were subdivided into three types: evil tyrant landlords (恶霸地主), destitute landlords (破落地主), and unlawful landlords (不法地主):

> Evil tyrant landlords were the local people who had power, whom you'd have to kiss up to (需要拍他们马屁). They often didn't work themselves and exploited the local folk, making them help them till the fields; the local folk would have to treat their land as their number one priority, regardless of whether it was a windy and rainy or extremely hot day. Destitute landlords once had a lot of land but they had sold it all. Unlawful landlords were those who sold off their livestock, spent their wealth, or intentionally broke policy and didn't turn over their assets. Some would even make visits to the local secret society head (拜老头子).[28]

This differentiation of the economic category of landlords reveals that the community's assessment of moral behavior guided the selection of a minority of evil tyrants. Not just holding power but also forcing tenants to work in inclement weather distinguished evil tyrants from the majority of landlords. According to the logic of class struggle, however, evil tyrants were identical to any other member of the landlord class, as they all economically "exploited" their tenants simply by owning the land and extracting rents. In practice, communities viewed evil tyrants as a category of their own because of their unrelenting treatment of their workers and the way in which they lorded their power over locals.

Small landlords who had more frequent face-to-face interactions with their tenants comprised the majority of those singled out for political struggle. Chief among these landlords were those who used *juese tian*, as described above. One Baoshan resident, when asked to recall her memories of violence during land reform, remarked that "it was usually landlords and bad people (坏人) who were dragged onto stage to be struggled against. All of these landlords were

[28] Oral history BS09, May 2015.

ones who exploited landless peasants who tilled *juese* land (做脚色)."[29] Little systematic data exists on the backgrounds of struggle targets, but descriptive lists of struggle targets, despite their small sample size, provide a useful glimpse into the characteristics of those chosen for political violence. According to a detailed list of 39 landlords struggled against during autumn grain requisition across three districts in Baoshan County, it is evident that many landlords had relatively small landholdings. To begin with, the landholdings of the struggle targets varied wildly, from 24 to 300 *mu* of land, with a median of 80 *mu* (see Figure 4.2).[30] While all of the targets listed had at least 20 mu of land, which was twice the middle peasant household landholding average (10.56 *mu*), the landholdings of some of these struggle targets was actually below the rich peasant household landholding average (28.95 *mu*).[31]

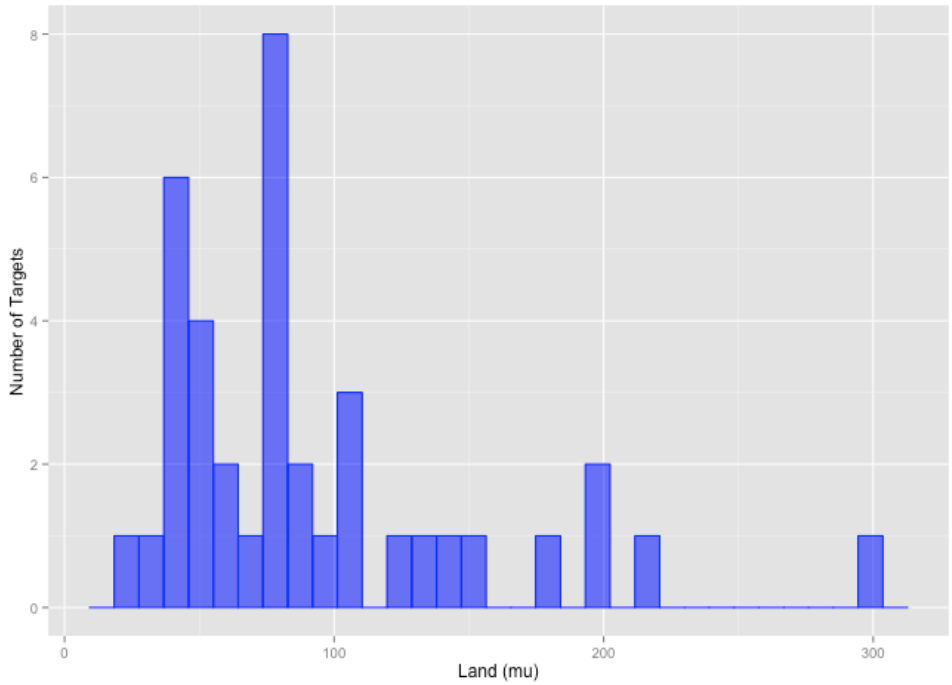
Every target on this list had been accused of a moral or political offense (see Appendix C, Table 4.A). A little over half of the targets had allegedly committed offenses described primarily in moral terms—e.g. being dishonest (不老实), cunning or sly (狡猾), obstinate (态度强硬), engaging in bad behavior (不良行为), abusing one's power, or working with the Japanese or Nationalists to oppress the local community. Over eighty percent of targets were charged with overtly political offenses, such as hiding land, engaging in saboteur behavior, and resisting the government.

[29] Oral history BS11, May 2015.

[30] Holding struggle sessions around the time of the state's requisition of grain in the fall appears to have been a popular strategic move. One could surmise that the timing of these struggle sessions was meant to deter possible resistance to the state's grain collection efforts.

[31] *Baoshan County Gazetteer*, 152.

Figure 4.2 Histogram of Landholdings Among 39 Struggle Targets in Three Districts of Baoshan County[32]



Accounts from struggle sessions illuminate this habit of selecting transgressors of norms of propriety. The case of Xu Bingchuan is particularly revealing. Xu was a formidable landlord in Fengtang Township. Nicknamed Little Bingchuan, the locals feared him and regarded him as an "evil tyrant." According to locals, he was especially notorious for employing villagers without giving them anything to eat in compensation. During land reform, he was tried in a public sentencing, where his own wife took to the stage to decry him, after which he was sentenced to death and shot.[33] From the aforementioned 39-person list, one of the most harshly treated targets was a relatively small landholder (30.5 *mu*) accused of "using his connections to the Nationalists to steal land; swindling and exploiting the people; and hiding [his] land." The report notes that "the masses demanded his punishment" and he was "subjected to speaking bitterness, beaten,

[32] This figure is based on the data presented in Table A in the Appendix.

[33] Oral history BS09, May 2015. Fengtang Township is now Ding Jiaqiao Township of Baoshan District.

cursed, stripped of his clothing, and paraded through the streets."[34] In both of these cases, the target was reviled for his perceived transgression of a norm of propriety: refusing to feed one's workers in the former and cheating people and stealing land in the latter.

This focus on moral transgressions cast a wide net for the selection of struggle targets; it was inevitable for miscellaneous moral transgressors to be swept into the campaign in one form or another. An archived report on house arrests in Panshi Township shows that a curious mixture of individuals were put under house arrest for various moral transgressions and political offenses (see Table 4.5). The report contains a footnote that reads: "these targets include rapists, gamblers, swindlers, and those who attempted to sabotage land reform" (奸、赌、诈骗等及破坏土改的案犯). Before undergoing house arrest, these transgressors had been "educated and released" (教育释放), most likely some sort of admonishment for their misdeeds. Less than half of those put under house arrest had landlord labels. The inclusion of people who resisted land reform is not surprisingly, but the targeting of non-landlords and the inclusion of rapists, swindlers, and gamblers indicates that the moral discourse of class struggle in the land reform campaign affected a significant minority of people for nothing more than their perceived dissolute behavior.

[34] Songjiang Prefecture Party Committee. "Survey Register of Landlords Struggled Against During the Autumn Responsible Burden Movement (Chengqu/Liuxing/Yuepu)," [秋季合理负担运动中被斗争地主调查登记表(城区/刘行/月浦)] 1951, *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-051.

Table 4.5 Breakdown of House Arrestees by Class Label in Panshi Township, Baoshan County, 1950[35]

Class Label	**Number Put under House Arrest**
Landlord	8
Rich Peasant	3
Middle Peasant	5
Poor Peasant	2
Businessman	1
Other	1
Total	20

Baoshan's land reform campaign focused mainly on landlords, with a particular emphasis on those who had violated norms of propriety. A mixture of oral history and archival evidence shows that landlords dominated the ranks of struggle targets in Baoshan County; however, they represented a minority of landlords noteworthy for their perceived moral wrongdoings. When looking at how violence was differentially used against these targets, the relative significance of moral criteria becomes even more apparent.

Differential Punishment in Baoshan

Baoshan County's land reform policy explicitly encouraged the differential punishment of struggle targets based on their perceived transgressions. In a missive sent to all districts in the county, the County Party Committee instructed, "pay close attention to struggle tactics; treat landlords differently according to their different circumstances. [The policy] should be to 'suppress [those who] sabotage and resist, be lenient towards [those who are] run-of-the-mill,

[35] Baoshan County Party Committee, "Statistical Table of House Arrest Cases in Baoshan County Changxing District Panshi Township," [宝山县长兴区潘石乡群众管制案犯统计表] 1950, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-005-030.

and correctly show consideration towards [those who are] enlightened.' Do not standardize [punishments]."[36] Indeed, this differential treatment was reflected in the sequencing of struggle sessions, public sentencings, and executions. During the first stage of land reform work in late October through the end of November of 1950, the 18 townships that spearheaded the campaign targeted unlawful landlords, punished active counterrevolutionaries suspected of engaging in saboteur activities, and arranged large-scale People's Court trials and public sentencings to prosecute and execute several evil tyrants and landlords who had "infuriated the people" (民愤极大).[37] A resident, who earlier noted the different categories used to differentiate between landlords, corroborated this point: landlords were "struggled against with different levels of severity according to differences in their nature" (根据性质的不同，被斗的程度也不同).[38]

These observations are reflected in the county's extant data on the punishment of land reform "criminals" (案犯). Table 7 presents a breakdown of punishments for 161 targets by class label. Evidently, punishment was not evenly distributed across targets of the same class label. To be sure, most landlord "criminals" were sentenced to death or imprisonment. Yet landlords and poor peasants made up roughly equal proportions of all those executed, and the majority of criminals punished were poor peasants, though they were more likely to receive light punishment.

[36] The original text reads as follows: "讲究斗争情况策略，对不同情况的地主，进行不同对待。应该是'镇压破坏反抗，宽大处理一般，正确照顾开明'不能一般化." Baoshan County Party Committee, "Points for Attention Regarding Grasping Land Reform Policy (A Letter Sent to Each District Committee from the County Committee)" [关于掌握土改有关政策上的注意事项（县委给各区委的一封信）] November 14, Year Unknown, *BSDA*, No. 1-2-004-015.

[37] *Baoshan County Gazetteer*, 153.

[38] Oral History BS09, May 2015.

Looking at the distribution of violence according to one's alleged crime reveals that the nature of one's transgression was a stronger predictor of violence than one's class background. According to Table 8, the probability of execution was extremely high for those accused of being counterrevolutionaries, secret agents, bandits, and local tyrants. Those accused of lesser crimes, such as sabotage, drug peddling, theft, or tax resistance, were much more often given nonlethal punishments such as imprisonment or "education and release" (教育释放). Unfortunately the report does not provide disaggregated data on crimes by class background.

It should give us pause that class labels were only weak indicators of one's fate during a movement that nominally claimed to be waging class warfare. The greater significance of perceived transgression in determining the kind of political violence one endured suggests that a logic of moral retributivism guided the distribution of punishment during the land reform campaign. The assessment of one's moral transgressions against the community was not only much more likely to affect his or her probability of becoming a target of violence, but it also determined the severity of the punishment he or she faced.

Table 4.6 Punishment of Criminals During Land Reform by Class Label, Baoshan County (1950)[39]

Class Label	Execution	Imprisonment	Education & Release	Total
Landlord	12	17	1	30
Rich Peasant	2	3	0	5
Middle Peasant	6	5	0	11
Poor Peasant	11	27	25	63
Farmworker	0	0	1	1
Worker	2	7	1	10
Capitalist	3	5	2	10
Mercenary (兵痞)	0	5	0	5
Other	1	9	16	26
Total	37	78	46	161

[39] Baoshan County Party Committee, "Registration Form for Criminals Executed in the Countryside of Baoshan County During Land Reform," [宝山县土改中乡村处以极刑的案犯登记表] 1950, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-011-022.

Table 4.7 Punishment of Criminals During Land Reform by Alleged Crime, Baoshan County (1950)[40]

Alleged Crime	**Execution**	**Imprisonment**	**Education & Release**	**Total**
Counterrevolutionary	2	0	0	2
Local Tyrant	25	13	0	38
Bandit	2	0	0	2
Secret Agent	8	0	0	8
Sabotaged Land Reform	0	10	1	11
Traitor	0	1	0	1
Saboteur	0	0	5	5
Drug User/Seller	0	11	6	17
Robbery	0	22	14	36
Petty Theft	0	0	15	15
Breach of Discipline (违纪)	0	0	1	1
Harmed Others	0	0	2	2
Resisted Taxation	0	0	2	2
Other	0	21	0	21
Total	37	78	46	161

Looking back at the three-district dataset of 39 struggle targets, we can also do a preliminary analysis of why more punitive forms of violence were used against some targets instead of others. I conduct a logit regression analysis of this data using a dichotomous outcome variable for the punitive nature of violence, where I coded 1 for struggle targets who endured unusually harsh or violent punishment. As Table 4.A (Appendix C) shows, these targets may have been stripped naked and paraded through the streets, beaten, insulted, strung up with a rope,

[40] Baoshan County Party Committee, "Registration Form for Criminals Executed in the Countryside of Baoshan County During Land Reform," [宝山县土改中乡村处以极刑的案犯登记表] 1950, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-011-022.

or forced to kneel or kowtow before the crowd. I regressed this indictor of unusually severe punishment on indicators for the struggle target's size of landholdings; whether one formerly held a political position; the number of participants; and whether the offense was described, wholly or in part, in moral language—e.g. being accused of being dishonest, sly, abusive, etc. We might expect more extreme violence at larger rallies and when the target was a former official or a large landholder. The logit regression results, presented in Table 4.8, indicate that the size of landholdings is not a significant predictor of punishment severity and the sign of the coefficient in not in the expected direction, which suggests that, despite the campaign's emphasis on class struggle, size of landholdings was not an important determinant in how targets were punished. Having held a former political position and number of participants also lack significant coefficients and their signs are not in their expected directions. The coefficient on moral offense is significant and in the predicted direction. Holding all other variables constant at their means, the probability of enduring more punitive punishment is thirty-seven percent higher when a target was treated as a moral offender. Of course, the small size of this dataset and the lack of data for other important individual level controls, such as age and gender, prevent us from establishing more generalizable and causal connections between these variables. Nonetheless, these results lend credence to the idea that perceived moral transgressions figured into the differential distribution of violent punishment.

Table 4.8 Logit Regression Coefficients for the Determinants of Severe Punishment of Struggle Targets in Three Districts of Baoshan County[41]

	Dependent variable:	
	Severity of Punishment	
	(1)	(2)
Moral Offense	1.974**	1.979**
	(0.880)	(0.949)
Land		−0.009
		(0.010)
Position		−1.293
		(1.096)
Participants		−0.0009
		(0.0010)
Constant	−2.079***	−1.524
	(0.750)	(1.319)
Observations	37	36
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Transgressing Norms of Virtue in Huaibei: The Case of Fengyang County

Fengyang County, located on the southern bank of the Huai River, exhibited many characteristics of the greater Huaibei region at their most extreme. The county has a long reputation of poverty,[42] which was starkly more severe than elsewhere in the region. Nutritional data from John Lossing Buck's land survey in the early 1930s indicate that adult males in Fengyang consumed only 20 calories a day from animal food products, less than other localities

[41] This logit regression uses the data presented in Table 4.A, Appendix C.

[42] Elizabeth J. Perry, "Implications of Household Contracting in China: The Case of Fengyang County," in *China's Reform Politics: Policies and Their Implications*, ed. Sang-Woo Rhee (Seoul: Sogang University Press, 1986): 195.

in Huaibei like Funing (26 cal/day) and Huaiyin (37 cal/day) and only a fraction of the amount consumed in places in Jiangnan like Wuhu (115 cal/day) and Changshu (76 cal/day).[43] The county's crop yield, a general indicator of agricultural development, was a mere 40 kg of grain per *mu* in 1949, well below the average of about 50 kg per *mu* for the entire Huaibei region covered by northern Anhui and northern Jiangsu (see Table 4.1).[44]

Mainly an agricultural economy with little industry or commerce, Fengyang's economic growth was regularly disrupted by a relentless alternation of floods and droughts. From the 18th to 20th centuries, over a span of 250 years, Fengyang was hit by natural disasters in 75 of these years, or roughly a natural disaster every 3.33 years.[45] After a terrible flood in 1931 ended decades of relatively good economic growth,[46] the county's economic situation was further damaged when a particularly devastating flood hit Northern Anhui in 1949—a flood worse than any in the preceding thirty years, according to the Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee Secretary Zeng Xisheng—affecting over eight million villagers in total.[47] As an indication of the severity of the situation, a few years later the county committee in nearby Quanjiao County was

[43] John Lossing Buck, *Statistics*, vol. 3 of *Land Utilization in China: A Study of 16,786 Farms in 168 Localities, and 38,256 Farm Families in Twenty-two Provinces in China, 1929-1933* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), 74.

[44] Because not all localities possessed a comparative advantage in grain production before 1949, I use a measure of grain productivity—the amount of grain produced per *mu* of land—to capture agricultural development-related factors like soil quality, human capital, technological inputs, weather, etc. For more on the use of agricultural productivity as a measure of rural development, see Debraj Ray, *Development Economics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[45] Fengyang County Gazetteer Compilation Committee, *Fengyang County Gazetteer* [凤阳县志] (Beijing: Fangzhi Chuban She, 1999), 2.

[46] Perry, "Implications of Household Contracting," 197.

[47] Zeng Xisheng, "Northern Anhui Administrative Region Work Situation Report," [皖北行政区工作情况的报告] February 5, 1950, *CCPM*.

still engaged in emergency relief work, which entailed local cadres organizing villagers to forage for food by digging up vegetable roots and collecting edible herbs.[48]

Landholding inequality in Fengyang was relatively mild in the county on the eve of the revolution: the ratio of landlord per capita to average per capita landholdings was 4.48, which was lower than the average for both the Huaibei and Jiangnan regions (see Table 1).[49] The county's relatively equal distribution of land and the general poverty of landlords and tenants alike frustrated the CCP's efforts to determine the "class structure" of local communities and to separate "landlords" from the rest of the community. A 1948 report on a *bao* in Feng District 1, a pre-1949 sub-administrative unit in the county, noted that the area lacked any large landholders (over 100 *mu* of land) and that land was not particularly concentrated, which made it "difficult to determine the difference between middle and rich peasants" (中农，富农之别较难确定).[50] Despite the Party's claims that economic exploitation in the local economy was severe, a county inspection group sent to Changhuai District found that there were few landlords, most of whom were small landholders; consequently, identifying landlords during the class labeling process was quite difficult.[51]

Significantly, the tenancy structure of Fengyang differed greatly from places in Jiangnan like Baoshan because of the prevalence of sharecropping and its overall low rate of tenancy.

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[48] Quanjiao County Party Committee, "February Summary Work Report," [二月份工作综合报告] February 1951, *QJCA*, No. 1-1-26-70.

[49] Author's calculations using data from the *Fengyang County Gazetteer*.

[50] Ji Kedong, "Survey of Classes in Tangtian Bao, Qipan Township in Feng District No. 1," [凤一区棋盘乡汤田保阶级调查] November 12, 1948, *XCSSN*, 56.

[51] Fengyang County Party Committee Inspection Group, "A Comprehensive Inspection Report on the Land Reform Work Situation in Changhuai District, Fengyang County," [检查凤阳县长淮区土改工作情况综合汇报] October 2, 1951, *XCSSN*, 57.

Buck's survey work in Fengyang indicates that about eighty-one percent of tenant farmers were using the sharecropping rent system whereby the tenant and landlord split the harvest by a fixed ratio, usually sixty-forty.[52] This kind of arrangement is to be expected in poorer, ecologically volatile locales, which is also reflected in Buck's findings that most southern localities in Anhui and Jiangsu completely relied on fixed rent systems.[53] In contrast to Jiangnan, localities in Huaibei, like other parts of the North China plain, was comprised mainly of "owner-cultivators" who paid taxes directly to the state and had developed local political organizations in order to deal with this form of direct extraction.[54]

Because of Fengyang's relative equality and low rate of tenancy, norms of virtue were of great concern: there existed significant social antagonism between locals and local officialdom, many of whom were or were perceived to be corrupt. Like elsewhere in Huaibei, villagers in Fengyang did not suffer so much from economic exploitation as the wanton and arbitrary abuse of political power. The overlap between the two categories of "local bullies" or "evil tyrants" and local officials was often significant, though difficult to ascertain, especially by the early twentieth century. Indeed, many of these large landlords and local bullies (豪强) in Huaibei were in fact military-government officials (军政官吏) whose power was far more political than economic.[55] In the decades preceding the Communist takeover, as local power holders' monopoly on administrative power combined with military and economy power, these "evil tyrants" constituted a category apart from the conventional economic understanding of

[52] Buck, *Statistics*, 61.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Huang, *Yangzi Delta*, 149.

[55] Ma Junya, *The Sacrificed Land: A Study of the Changes in the Society and Ecology of Huaibei , 1680-1949*, [被牺牲的"局部"：淮北社会生态变迁研究, 1680-1949] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011), 341-344.

landlordism, and their authority—and the resentment towards them—was rooted primarily in their arbitrary use of political power.[56]

Fengyang's legacy of anti-state rebellion reflects the historical importance of norms of virtue to the region. While the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) historian Sima Qian remarked that the residents of Huaibei were "proud, unruly and fond of making trouble,"[57] Fengyang has a particularly distinguished history of rebellion. The beginning of the *Fengyang County Gazetteer* proudly proclaims that "the people of Fengyang have always had a glorious tradition of resisting foreign aggression and protecting home and country" (凤阳人民素有抵御外侮保家卫国的光荣传统).[58] Most notably, Zhu Yuanzhang, the founder of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and leader of the fourteenth-century Red Turban rebellion that overthrew the Yuan Dynasty, was a Fengyang native. Once he assumed power as the Hongwu Emperor, he gave the county a massive tax break that persisted indefinitely because of the locals' propensity to protest against all subsequent attempts to raise taxes.[59] Though wheat-growing areas in North China paid less in taxes than nearly anywhere else,[60] Fengyang's unique history contributed to an even lower tax burden, one that was, during the Republican Era, the lowest in the entire country. This remarkably light tax burden only exacerbated locals' antagonistic attitude towards officials. Crucially, locals were less interested in mobilizing against landlords than rapacious officials and powerholders. Bianco's study of the 1937 anti-poppy tax revolt in Northern Anhui, where

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[56] Ibid., 361.

[57] Quoted in Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries,* 10.

[58] *Fengyang County Gazetteer*, 7.

[59] Perry, "Implications of Household Contracting," 197-198.

[60] John Lossing Buck, *Land Utilization in China*, vol. 1 of *Land Utilization in China: A Study of 16,786 Farms in 168 Localities, and 38,256 Farm Families in Twenty-two Provinces in China, 1929-1933* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), 326-328.

Fengyang is situated, underscores the primacy of the social tension between the peasantry and "local bullies and evil gentry" (土豪劣绅) and officials, who were the principal targets of the peasantry's demands for punishment during the revolt.[61]

Indeed, the Party recognized the significance of norms of virtue during its earliest days of organizing in the county. In 1927, taking advantage of the Nationalists' weak foothold in Fengyang, the CCP recruited locals, mainly urban students, workers, and street vendors, into the Party through organizing them to participate in violent political struggle. Yet these "struggles" centered on tax resistance and targeted "corrupt officials" (贪官污吏), not landlords.[62] Because the Nationalists forced the Communists out of the region shortly after the outbreak of the civil war, the Party had to postpone further struggle efforts until after 1949; however, in preparing for land reform, local officials quickly recognized that locals' concerns in Fengyang rested less in class antagonisms and more on the profound animosity felt towards abusive local officials. The Changhuai report, which earlier mentioned the paucity of landlords in the district, observed that "puppet" and "obstinate" cadres were, conversely, relatively plentiful (顽伪干较多).[63]

Aside from officials and strongmen, another important social group in Fengyang, like elsewhere in Huaibei, were the so-called "bandits" (土匪). Even after 1949, bandit groups continued to operate in Fengyang, in the vicinity of Huayuan Lake (花园湖) located in the northeastern part of the county, and the county's mountainous areas.[64] The meaning of the term

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[61] Bianco, *Peasants*, 81, 95.

[62] *Fengyang County Gazetteer*, 447.

[63] Fengyang County Party Committee Inspection Group, "A Comprehensive Inspection Report on the Land Reform Work Situation in Changhuai District, Fengyang County," [检查凤阳县长淮区土改工作情况综合汇报] October 2, 1951, *XCSSN*, 57.

[64] Fengyang County Public Security Bureau, "Regarding the Annual Public Security Work Report (1950)," [关于年季度公安工作总结报告 1950 年] 1950, *XCSSN*, p. 20.

bandit and the relationship between locals and these bandit groups in Fengyang—and Huaibei more generally—were complex. In the Republican Era, rampant local abuse and crime caused locals to use the blanket term "bandit" (匪) to describe negligent and abusive officials and powerholders.[65] The term bandit could also refer to criminal gangs of poor peasants or soldiers. In the 1920s, Ma Junya explains, many of the "bandits" in the Huaibei region were actually decommissioned soldiers who had been defeated in battle and later holed up in mountains and other inaccessible spots from which they would launch attacks on wealthy households.[66] Yet Fengyang also had a tradition of bandit-led uprisings in which bandits led the poor to rob the government in times of famine. A Fengyang county gazetteer published in the waning days of the Qing dynasty recorded that, in 1898, bandit leaders Niu Shixiu and Jian Geda, from nearby Guoyang County, rallied 30,000 famine victims (饥民) under their banner to rebel and attack the Suzhou (宿州) region. The revolt was put down and the bandit leaders were executed.[67]

This pattern of bandit-led rebellion and predation persisted into the early 1950s, though it is difficult to say ex ante if local communities supported or opposed these groups. At times, bandit groups allied with locals against the Party. The Fengyang County Party Committee observed that the region's long history as a haven for banditry meant that locals in some areas continued to secretly support some bandit groups, even supplying them with intelligence and economic assistance.[68] Still other bandit groups were simply predatory and raided villages. As

[65] Thornton, *Disciplining*, 104.

[66] Ma, *The Sacrificed Land*, 340.

[67] Yu Wanpei, *Guangxu Fengyang County Gazetteer* [光緒鳳陽縣志] 16 *juan*, (1887): 500-501.

[68] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Record of the Fengyang County Party Committee Meeting," [中共凤阳县委会议纪录] January 1, 1950, *XCSSN*, p. 19.

the Fengyang County Party Committee noted, bandit groups comprised of hundreds of people continued to rob and loot after 1949, which worried locals and contributed to their overall apprehensiveness.[69] Either way, like corrupt officials and abusive powerholders, predatory bandit groups were yet another potential source of targets for the land reform campaign.

Selecting Struggle Targets in Fengyang

The weakness of class-based social boundaries in Fengyang would predict that the CCP's moral boundary work most likely relied transgressions of norms of virtue related to local abuse of power, banditry, and crime. Despite using the campaign's ideological framework of class struggle, therefore, we should expect to see fewer struggle targets who are selected for normative transgressions related to landlord-tenant relations—e.g. demanding unpaid labor or favors, mistreating or abusing tenants, etc.—or merely for their class identity as landlords.

Countywide statistics on struggle targets during land reform seem to confirm that non-landlords bore the brunt of violence during the campaign. Looking at a breakdown of 336 struggle targets by label or accusation (Table 4.9),[70] we see that only a third of those struggled against were formally labeled as landlords. Meanwhile, about half of all targets were evil tyrants or bandits—identities more closely associated with corruption, abuse of power, and criminal activity.[71] The picture that emerges from this data supports the idea that local Party leaders,

[69] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Report on the Situation of the Suppression of the Counterrevolutionaries," [关于镇压反革命情况的报告] July 31, 1951, *XCSSN*, p. 19.

[70] Note that according to these same statistics, there were 463 struggle targets during Fengyang's land reform campaign; however, further information only exists for 336 of these targets. See Fengyang County Party Committee, "Table of Various Statistics on Land Reform in Fengyang County, Anhui Province," [关于安徽省凤阳县土地改革各种统计表格] 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW13.

[71] Unlike Baoshan, localities in Fengyang did not use the category "ordinary landlords" (一般地主).

cadres, activists, and villagers struggled against a mixture of moral transgressors—evil tyrants and bandits—and political threats—secret agents, counterrevolutionaries, and so-called "unlawful landlords." Because the report does not provide a breakdown of targets by class label, it is unclear that those labeled as evil tyrants, bandits, etc. were not also given landlord labels and struggled against for transgressions of norms of propriety in landlord-tenant relations. To ascertain this, I turn to more micro-level data on struggle targets.

Table 4.9 Breakdown of Land Reform Struggle Targets by Identity, Fengyang County (1951)[72]

Identity	**Number Struggled Against**
Unlawful Landlord	111
Evil Tyrant	93
Bandits	72
Secret Agents (特务)	29
Counterrevolutionary	18
Secret Society Members	9
Unspecified	4
Total	336

Township-level data on struggle targets reveals that local communities focused their attention on struggling against "evil tyrants" (恶霸) of various stripes and criminals irrespective of their class background. A county inspection team report on land reform in Guangou Township of Lushan District reported a list of struggle targets, all of whom were given the prefix "tyrant" (霸) or "evil tyrant" (恶霸). These targets included: one "bandit-tyrant" landlord (匪霸); seven

[72] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Table of Various Statistics on Land Reform in Fengyang County, Anhui Province," [关于安徽省凤阳县土地改革各种统计表格] 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW13.

evil-tyrant rich peasants who were former officials; fifteen evil-tyrant middle peasants who were former military personnel; one poor peasant who served as a company commander for the puppet government under the Japanese; and over twenty petty thieves.[73] In a village of Liufu Town, two of the principal struggle targets were a corrupt official—the former Peasant Association head, in fact—who was accused of embezzling over 1000 kg of grain and a minor criminal. According to the report, the masses were pleased because they succeeded in getting the corrupt official to "lower his head and admit his errors" to the crowd and write a repentance.[74] In an older liberated area of Fengyang, local communities actually differentiated locals according to both their transgressive behavior and class background. Out of the 106 people identified as evil tyrants, only 46 were labeled landlords, 32 rich peasants, and 28 middle peasants. Intriguingly, these 106 evil tyrants were further categorized according to the gradation of their evil (恶绩)—average or extreme—a practice that contains echoes of the Qing-era ledgers of merit and demerit (see Chapter 2). The report includes an abridged list of these offenders, whose offenses included: rape, murder, beating people up, extortion, stealing land, and stealing other people's wives.[75]

Records of struggle sessions in Fenglin District reveal that most struggle targets were chosen and attacked for their past abuse of power and corrupt behavior as well as political offenses—namely, resisting the land reform campaign. The district, which was comprised of 6 townships and thirty-eight villages, chose sixty struggle targets, wherein 1,477 people "spoke

[73] Fengyang Party County Committee Inspection Team, "Summary Report of the Land Reform Investigation in Guangou Township, Lushan District, Fengyang County," [凤阳县芦山区官沟乡土改调查总结报告] 1950, *XCSSN*, 22.

[74] "Liufu Town's Work Report," [刘府镇工作汇报］November 1, 1950, *CCDC*, no. 1949XW08_1-7. Author unspecified but most likely the Fengyang County Party Committee.

[75] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Statistical Table on Local Evil Tyrants, Landlords, and Former Officials in Lao Feng Fourth District" [老凤四区地方恶霸，地主顽干概况统计表] June 26, 1949, *CCDC*, no. 1949ZL04_17-20.

bitterness" against them across a total of thirty-eight struggle sessions. The report lists the main crimes (主要罪恶) of those targeted in the following order: "Taking advantage of one's power to bully the people in the past (过去仗势欺压人民), scattering grain, destroying agricultural implements, spreading rumors, threatening others, or dispersing land." The two "classic" (典型) examples of "speaking bitterness" provided in the report resonate with this theme of abuse of power and corruption. In the first example, someone spoke against the landlord Li Guisan, saying:

> Li Guisan was a traitor when the Japanese devils were here; he was the head of the Maintenance Association [an organization established by the Japanese Army to control village affairs during the Japanese occupation] and he brought the [Japanese] devils into the countryside to beat and kill people, rape women, steal pigs, chickens, and commit all other sorts of crimes…[three villagers whom he names] were all beaten to death by the [Japanese] devils on his orders.[76]

The second example describes how a peasant in Chengbei Township spoke against his landlord, who was also a former *baojia* head, who forced him to pay exorbitant taxes and fees (苛捐杂税) in 1948; in order to pay this debt that was forced upon him he had to hand over his entire family of eight's earnings and sell off his cart and cow.[77] This pattern of targeting was not exclusive to Fenglin District. Elsewhere, in Changhuai District, one of the major targets, who was brought before a People's Court for a two-day trial attended by 120,000 people, was the evil tyrant and landlord Sun Qinfang, who was accused of tying up 11 cadres and villagers in burlap sacks and tossing them into the Huai River.[78]

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[76] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Summary Report on the Situation of Village Associations Approving Class Labels and Linking with Key-point Struggles in Fenglin District," [凤临区(六个乡)村民会通过阶级成份结合重点斗争情况综合汇报] September 7, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW11_82-85.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Fengyang County Party Committee Inspection Group, "Summary Report on the Inspection of the Land Reform Work Situation in Changhuai District, Fengyang County," [检查凤阳县长淮区土改工作情况综合汇报] October 2, 1951, *XCSSN*, 45.

Another report on struggle sessions in Fenglin District during this time reveals that while struggle targets were mainly guilty of transgressions of norms of virtue, some targets, who were landlords in the traditional economic sense, were struggled against for their transgressions of norms of propriety. In Chengbei Township, one tenant spoke against his landlord's cruelty and pettiness saying, "She not only collaborated with the [Japanese] devils to come down to the countryside with guns to collect rent, she also demanded that we pay her a visit every New Year and stand in front of her courtyard and vow not to steal grain." During a struggle session in Chengdong Township, a peasant said of his landlord that she had falsely accused him of theft and had him imprisoned:

> Someone stole some potatoes from her house and she insisted that I stole them. She dragged me to the public security office where I was locked up for several days. My mother was worried to death but didn't have the money or power to save her son and died from grief…My body still bears the scars from my beatings [while imprisoned].[79]

Other struggle targets fit squarely in the category of those who transgressed norms of virtue. When struggling against a local tyrant and former township head of Chengxi Township, one woman tearfully recounted:

> In the past, [the accused] was the township head and conscripted my son. At that time my husband, who was was ill, went on his knees to beg him [not to conscript his son]; instead, [the accused] beat him, a sickly man, so badly that he couldn't move, after which he drew his last breath. Even my son was beaten, tied up, and forced into the army. It's been a few years since I've received any information about him, and I don't know if he's dead or alive."[80]

A landlord surnamed Lei of Toupu Township was struggled against because he had been accused of robbing and killing a peasant who was on his way back to the village from selling his cow, after which he raped his granddaughter; the locals alleged that he had raped up to seven

[79] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Summary Report on the Situation of Carrying Out Struggle Work in Six Townships of Fenglin District, Fengyang County, Anhui Province Between August 1 and September 10," [关于安徽省凤阳县凤临区六个乡八月一日至九月十日展开斗争工作情况综合回报] September 11, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW11_93-96.

[80] Ibid.

women.[81]

Some struggle targets made for convenient public displays of the corrupt ways of the former elite and the moral virtue of the state. There was a landlord in Chengxi Township who tried to avoid political struggle by giving the local village head a bribe of two hens and some wood. The village head, however, refused the bribe and reported it to the authorities. The peasant association then held a struggle session against this landlord and exposed the details of his bribery attempt—i.e. how the landlord attempted to "play tricks" (耍花样) and "rope in" (拉拢) cadres and how the village head "stood firm" (站稳) and refused to be bought. The report notes that this struggle, using a real example of crafty landlord behavior, "educated the vast masses and strengthened their hatred of the landlord class."[82]

Differential Punishment in Fengyang

As in Baoshan County in Jiangnan, the severity of violence used against struggle targets in Fengyang mapped onto the perceived severity of the moral transgressions of struggle targets. Party members, cadres, and peasants—mainly poor peasants and farmworkers—discussed the treatment of struggle targets in Peasant Association small groups. Aside from establishing the order of struggle targets—the "big" ones were to be struggled against first—they also discussed the necessity of having a differential treatment policy for the punishment of targets, which targets to kill and how they would be killed, what punishments to set for other targets, and how

[81] Ibid.

[82] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Report on the First Phase of Land Reform Work in Six Townships of Fenglin District, Fengyang County, Anhui Province," [关于安徽省凤阳县凤临区六个乡土地改革第一阶段工作报告] August 30, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW11_50-57.

to handle and monitor (surviving) targets after struggle sessions.[83] In Yaowan Township, struggle sessions were organized at different levels—district, township, or village—according to the gravity of the targets' crimes and the "scope of their influence" (影响范围).[84] Not only did communities design the lineup of struggle targets to begin with landlords guilty of the most sensational crimes, they even adjusted the scale of their struggle sessions to accord with the size of the community they were deemed to have wronged, the idea being that the audience at the struggle session reflected the offender's relevant victimized community.

Of course, there was not unanimous agreement among the locals about whom should be targeted and how they should be handled, as locals' assessments of their behavior varied. After the end of struggle sessions in Fenglin District, one peasant from Chengbei Township remarked, "The landlord class is the worst: on the surface they are honest, but deep down they are really bad. In the future, we will have to monitor them closely." Meanwhile in Chengxi Township, several women from the Zhu family disagreed with the treatment of the landlords: "[they] were struggled against too fiercely. There wasn't great enmity between us and the landlords; why is there a need [to struggle against them]?"[85]

Yet despite local disagreement over how targets should be treated, countywide statistics on the execution of struggle targets during land reform support the contention that violence was used differentially against targets according to a logic of moral retributivism. Despite

[83] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Notice on a Few Major Problems in the Present Land Reform Campaign," [对当前土改中几个主要问题的通知] August 28, 1951, *XCSSN*, p. 44.

[84] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Yaowan Township Land Reform Work Summary," [姚湾乡土改工作总结] October 1950, *XCSSN*, p. 44.

[85] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Summary Report on the Situation of Village Associations Approving Class Labels and Linking with Key-point Struggles in Fenglin District"[凤临区(六个乡)村民会通过阶级成份结合重点斗争情况综合汇报] September 7, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW11_82-85.

constituting the majority of struggle targets, unlawful landlords—landlords accused primarily of political offenses—were not the main category slated for execution. Rather, bandits, followed by local tyrants, were the most likely groups to face execution (see Table 4.10). Referring back to Table 4.8, bandits and evil tyrants were disproportionately executed, as they represented a smaller proportion of those struggled against during land reform. Together, bandits and evil tyrants comprised 49.12 percent of all struggle targets and 62.22 percent of those executed. Unlawful landlords, though representing 33.04 percent of all struggle targets, only made up 15.56 percent of all executed.[86] Struggle targets who were defined mainly by their moral transgressions against the local community—evil tyrants and bandits who abused and terrorized the masses—were more likely to face execution than those targets accused only of impeding the land reform campaign and breaking policy.

Table 4.10 Execution of Land Reform Struggle Targets by Identity, Fengyang County (1951)[87]

Identity	**Number Executed**
Bandit	16
Evil Tyrant	12
Unlawful Landlord	7
Secret Agent	6
Unspecified	3
Counterrevolutionary	1
Total	45

[86] This pattern of differential punishment resembles that of Northern Anhui and Northern Jiangsu, as presented in Chapter 3, Tables 3.4 and 3.5.

[87] Fengyang County Party Committee. "Table of Various Statistics on Land Reform in Fengyang County, Anhui Province," [关于安徽省凤阳县土地改革各种统计表格] 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW13.

The behavior of targets during and after struggle sessions also affected their treatment. Targets who were recalcitrant during the course of political struggle were treated worse than others. During the aforementioned Sun Qinfang's public trial, the violence against him intensified as he resisted his punishment:

> The criminal showed no awareness of his crimes in the face of death and talked back to the presiding official, refusing to bow his head to the masses. At this point the presiding official had no choice but to ask the masses what should be done. They replied, "Tighten the rope!" Because of this, the criminal had his rope tightened three or four times, to the point where he cried out terribly.[88]

In Changhuai District, the community struggled against a landlord surnamed Ni Kaixian, for trying to undermine land reform by spreading rumors, but because he talked back to cadres and threatened "to kill a person for each mouthful of [his] confiscated grain they eat," he was struggled against another time.[89]

Summary

Fengyang County selected and punished its targets according to perceived transgressions of norms of virtue. Importantly, the kinds of targets selected in Fengyang reflected the locality's pre-1949 social boundaries rooted in the unequal distribution of political and military power: the majority of those struggled against were evil tyrants, bandits, and corrupt officials. The pre-existing tension between these groups and the local community was insufficient in galvanizing the people into action; it was not until the Party reframed these boundaries using a narrative of moral transgression that local communities saw themselves as the exploited "masses" versus the unjust and oppressive "class" of evil tyrants, bandits, and corrupt officials. The differential

[88] Fengyang County Party Committee Inspection Group, "Summary Report on the Inspection of the Land Reform Work Situation in Changhuai District, Fengyang County," [检查凤阳县长淮区土改工作情况综合汇报] October 2, 1951, *XCSSN*, 45.

[89] "Fengyang County Land Reform Meeting Minutes: The Situation in Key-point Township Zongpu Township, Lutang District," [凤阳县土改大会纪录：鹿塘区重点乡总铺乡的情况] December 7, 1951, *XCSSN*, 44.

punishment of targets according to the perceived severity of their transgressions was also rooted in these moral considerations. Struggle targets endured various degrees of punishment—lethal and non-lethal—depending on whether they had committed serious moral offenses against the community or merely undermined state policy.

Discussion: The Moral Contours of "Class" Struggle

A careful inspection of the identities of and accusations against victims of violence reveals that local communities targeted and punished people—many of them from the landed elite—not because of their class status but because of their perceived immoral behavior and associations. Looking across the regions of Huaibei and Jiangnan and the counties of Fengyang and Baoshan, the identities of targets and the accusations against them varied according to the predominant moral norms associated with the social boundaries that separated elites from the rest of the community. Norms of propriety regarding the appropriate way in which landlords should treat tenants factored heavily into the accusations made against struggle targets in Baoshan, most of whom were traditional economic landlords. In Fengyang, locals mobilized against transgressors of norms of virtue: former officials, powerholders, bandits, and even petty criminals accused of harming and predating on the community. There is little evidence that class labels alone guided the selection of struggle targets. Neither Fengyang nor Baoshan selected targets based on the size of their landholdings, and class identity was rarely invoked as a reason for political struggle. Despite operating under the same ideological banner of class struggle, the kinds of people chosen as struggle targets in Fengyang and Baoshan reflected each locality's respective social landscape. Moreover, moral evaluations—not class affiliation—influenced the severity of the punishment that targets of violence endured.

One could argue that the predominance of landlords among struggle targets in Baoshan is unsurprising because, as an unequal and wealthy county, it simply had more and larger landlords to choose from than Fengyang; the preponderance of landlords among struggle targets in Baoshan, therefore, simply reflects differences in the underlying distribution of land. This argument does not hold up when looking at the distribution of class labels: Fengyang and other localities in Huaibei in fact labeled higher percentages of households as landlords than localities in Jiangnan (see Figure 4.3).[90] As mentioned in Chapter 3, the class labeling process was separate from the process of target selection. Class labeling, though certainly influenced by non-economic factors, was a function of economic concerns: cadres needed to ensure that they could confiscate enough land to raise the average landholding size of the landless and land-poor peasants close to that of the middle peasantry. This problem of redistribution was particularly acute in poor and relatively equal localities where landlords were small. In these areas, the Party had to resort to over-labeling households as landlords and even confiscating rich peasant land to ensure there was enough for redistribution. An editorial note to an unpublished compilation of archival materials from Fengyang County stated this to be the case:

> The materials presented here indicate that the state of land concentration [in Fengyang] was not at all clear. Although there were pervasive instances of "raising class labels" (拔高成份), only expropriating landlord land was not enough for redistribution, which made it necessary to expropriate rich peasant land in order to make up the deficit.[91]

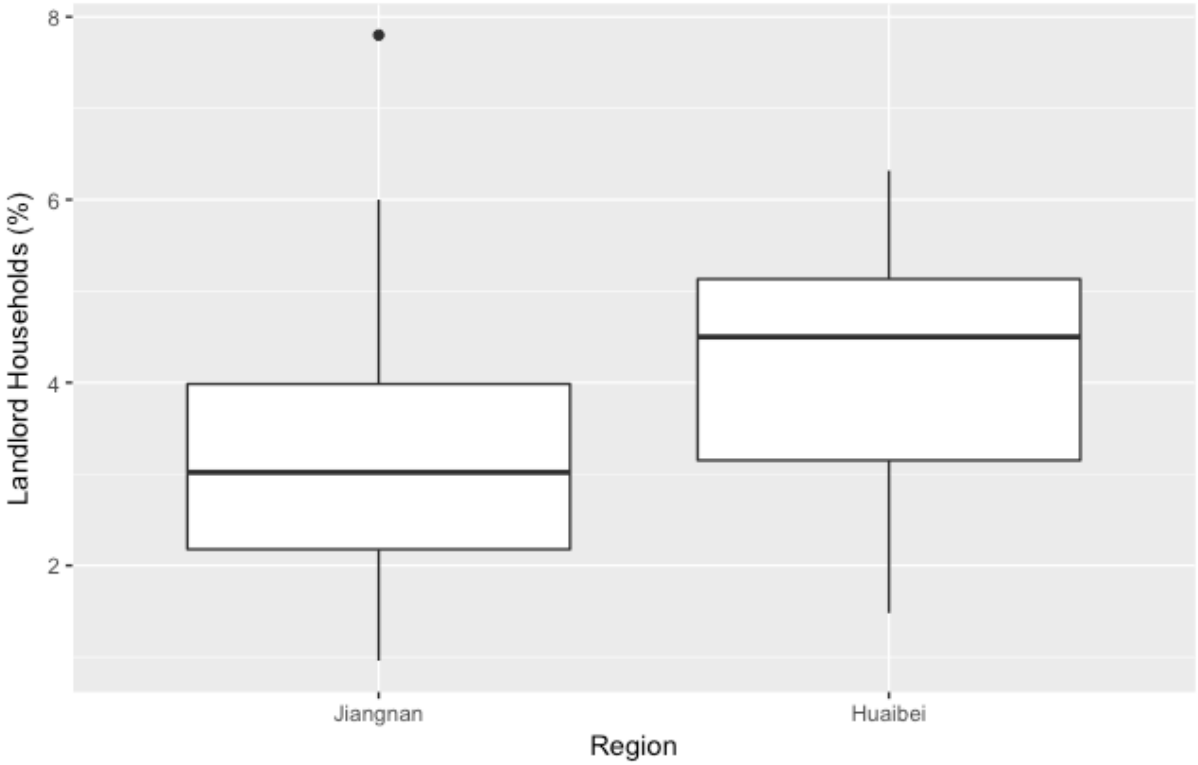
Cadres in Fengyang in fact had a larger pool of people labeled as landlords to draw from and nonetheless selected a smaller proportion of landlords as struggle targets than their counterparts in Baoshan.

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[90] Fengyang labeled 3.26 percent of households as landlords, while Baoshan labeled 1.85 percent as landlords.

[91] Zhongguo Nongcun Fazhan Wenti Yanjiuzu, ed. "A Faithful Record of the Social and Economic Development of the Fengyang Countryside (1949-1981) (Vol. 1)," [凤阳农村社会经济发展实录 (1949－1981)(上一)] August 1983, *CCDC*, No. 1983XC52-78.

Figure 4.3 Percentage of Households Labeled Landlords by Region



What about revenge? One could argue that this violence was simply revenge cloaked in the moralistic rhetoric of class struggle and retributive justice. There was undoubtedly some degree of revenge-based violence, as one would expect in any political conflict, but I find little evidence for revenge-based killing as a dominant form of violence during land reform. There were extensive official prohibitions on Party work team cadres allowing themselves to become mired in local factional and interpersonal conflict, as it would weaken the Party's control over the mobilization effort. For example, the Fengyang County Party Committee lamented that some struggle sessions had devolved into chaos, in some cases because "impure village cadres" had turned the struggle sessions into clan-based factional conflicts (宗派斗争).[92] Importantly, the

[92] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Notice on a Few Major Problems in the Present Land Reform Campaign," [对当前土改中几个主要问题的通知] August 28, 1951, *XCSSN*, 43.

Party sought participants whose "bitterness" represented a transgression that applied to the entire community—"the masses" (群众)—as opposed to petty interpersonal conflict. Official policy discouraged tapping into purely interpersonal or factional conflict precisely because these revenge-based accusations would not be inclusive enough to mobilize the community as a whole against the struggle target. As the Baoshan County Party Committee reminded its cadres, it was the cadre's duty to be "impartial and not factional…and not to serve [merely] as the mouthpiece of the masses."[93]

Aside from this variation in the types of people targeted in Fengyang and Baoshan, both localities punished targets according to a logic of moral retributivism. Notably, local communities in both counties used differential punishment when meting out violence against struggle targets; these punishments were distributed according to assessments of the gravity of the offense(s) committed. Notorious offenders, guilty of the worst crimes, often endured torture or faced execution before crowds of thousands. In both Fengyang and Baoshan, communities executed disproportionate numbers of evil tyrants and former officials. The assessment of targets' behavior did not rely solely on their past actions; those who had the audacity to defy the people's judgment during political struggle risked even more violent punishment.

The process of target selection and punishment does not explain why localities and regions varied in the intensity of their violence—i.e. the proportion of the population that was struggled against. The conditions that facilitated or impeded moral mobilization are the subject of the following chapter.

[93] Baoshan County Party Committee, "The Specific Process of the Struggle Against Hidden Land," [反黑地斗争具体过程] December 17, 1949, *BSDA*, No. 1-1-001-001.

Chapter 5 – Unleashing and Restraining the Masses

"The hearts of the masses are easily moved. Someone raises an arm or calls out and the crowd jumps up with him. As long as the speaker's words sound reasonable, they'll be accepted. As for whether the speaker has other motives, this is not something that can be carefully discerned in the midst of the chaos. Once the people act, it is easy for them to overdo it; one could go so far as to say that they often overdo it."

—Huang Yanpei, "Report Inquiring into Southern Jiangsu's Land Reform"[1]

"Just as leniency has bounds, so does suppression; boundless [suppression] is incorrect. Places where problems have been resolved and the masses are satisfied should not kill any more people."

—Mao Zedong, "A Letter from Mao Zedong to Huang Yanpei" [2]

Violence, once mobilized, is difficult to control. As the exchange between Huang Yanpei and Mao above illustrates, the Party leadership recognized both the ease with which the moral mobilization of violence could spiral out of control and the necessity of containing the violence it mobilized. The peasants "often reacted more strongly than the party desired," and controlling peasant participation in mass political violence once the process was set in motion was extremely challenging. If left unchecked, leaders feared that this unbridled violence could generate anti-CCP resistance.[3] The Party, nevertheless, wanted to mobilize the masses to participate in violence, though within certain bounds. Indeed, the moral mobilization of violence during land reform, as a strategy of selective violence, entailed precisely this kind of delicate balancing act between unleashing and restraining the righteous indignation of the masses. Despite its use of moral outrage as a tool of violent mass mobilization, the Party nevertheless aimed to mobilize

[1] Huang Yanpei, "Report Inquiring into Southern Jiangsu's Land Reform (Excerpt)," [访察苏南土地改革报告（节录）] February 13, 1951, *JSTGYD*, 151-52.

[2] Mao Zedong, "A Letter from Mao Zedong to Huang Yanpei," [毛泽东给黄炎培的信] February 17, 1951, *CCPM*.

[3] David Mark Paulson, "War and Revolution in North China: The Shandong Base Area, 1937-1945" (PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 1982), 47. Quoted in Lucien Bianco, *Peasants Without the Party: Grass-root Movements in Twentieth Century China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001): 235.

control the scope of the violence it mobilized. During the land reform campaign, however, many localities struggled to mobilize violence or, in the heat of emotionally-charged mass struggle sessions, to contain the righteous indignation of the masses. In yet another subset of localities, local officials deftly organized and contained violence. Why, then, did the Party's strategy of moral mobilization during the land reform campaign result in more violence in some localities than others?

I argue that local variation in political violence turned on the local government's *mobilization capacity*—i.e. the dual capacity of the local government to mobilize violence and contain it once mobilized. The Party could mobilize more participation in violence where it had secure territorial control for the duration of the campaign, but it was better equipped to control the scope of violence where it had a greater organizational presence.

In the initial stage of the land reform campaign, the local government required secure territorial control to mobilize violence. Territorial control facilitated the mobilization of violence by providing a stable environment in which officials could openly mobilize locals and assuage their fears of retaliatory violence. Yet the government then needed adequate Party personnel to lead, organize, and train cadres to contain violence once the process of mobilization was underway; in the absence of strong Party leadership, local villagers, activists, and overzealous could easily hijack the campaign and use it to settle vendettas or for their own personal gain. Violence, therefore, was the lowest where the local government lacked the capacity to mobilize violence and highest where the government had the capacity to mobilize violence yet lacked the capacity to contain it. I investigate the local variation in the intensity of violence through a quantitative analysis of 124 counties in Anhui and Jiangsu during the post-Liberation land reform campaign and the concurrent campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries.

I begin by explaining the chapter's research design. Next, I use qualitative evidence drawn from archives, internal Party publications, and county gazetteers to demonstrate the logic behind the theory of contained violence. I then turn to the quantitative test of the theory, the way in which I select and measure the relevant variables, and the results of the analysis. I then check the robustness of these findings with an analysis of violence during the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries, which had many characteristics in common with the land reform campaign. The final section discusses the implications of the results and concludes.

Research Design

In analyzing the factors that facilitated and restrained land reform violence, this chapter draws primarily on an original dataset of 124 counties from Anhui and Jiangsu provinces. To elaborate on the discussion in Chapter 1, there are several advantages to analyzing localities in Anhui and Jiangsu. First, because the two provinces straddle the Huai River, which roughly represents China's north-south divide, it is possible to use this region to analyze potential geographic variation in violence newly liberated areas. This is more significant than it first appears: in most of China the timing of land reform is nearly perfectly collinear with geographic location. Because the Communists had a more stable base in North China, most of this region underwent land reform in the Civil War period, which operated according to the more radical "May Fourth Directive" (五四指示) that tolerated a wider scope of land confiscation and political struggle. The North China macroregion extends south to the Huai River valley in northern Anhui and northern Jiangsu, which comprise a majority of the so-called Huaibei region. Huaibei was one of the only subregions of North China that did not implement land reform during the Civil War; in fact, many of these localities attempted and quickly abandoned land

reform after the Nationalists pushed the People's Liberation Army north of the Huai shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War. As a result, much of northern Anhui and Jiangsu implemented land reform after 1949 along with their southern counterparts. Analyzing Anhui and Jiangsu therefore provides an opportunity to compare north-south geographic variation within the post-revolutionary land reform campaign. Second, Anhui and Jiangsu were both part of the East China Bureau in the early 1950s. Led by Rao Shushi, the East China Bureau sent similar policy directives regarding land reform to localities under its jurisdiction. Controlling for top-level policy control eliminates concerns about differences in top leadership and the possible effects of early versus late land reform implementation, as the East China Bureau called for the implementation of the campaign in all of these localities around the same time.

Given existing data constraints, the county level is the best unit of analysis for analyzing the land reform campaign. County governments organized, trained, and dispatched work teams (工作队) to townships (乡) and villages in the surrounding countryside, and County Party Committees were the lowest-level political entity that received and modified policy decisions from the East China Bureau and Regional Party Committees. Nevertheless, in most of Anhui and Jiangsu the land reform campaign was carried out at the township level, with villages in the same township often participating in political struggle together.[4]

[4] Huang notes that Southern Jiangsu's post-Liberation land reform campaign tended to use the township as the level of policy implementation, often pooling together struggle targets from multiple villages within the same township and struggling against them at township-wide struggle sessions. In my own archival research in Northern Anhui and Southern Jiangsu I also observe that most land reform reports report statistics at the township level with only passing reference to individual villages under the township's jurisdiction. This suggests that in the post-1949 era, villages in the same township carried out political struggle together most likely, as Huang suggests, to deal with the difficulty of identifying struggle targets in every village. See Philip Huang, "Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution," *Modern China* 21, no. 1 (Jan. 1995): 116-117.

Most of the data for the dataset comes from county gazetteers (县志); however, I also used separately published issue-specific county gazetteers—e.g. land gazetteers (土地管理志), agricultural gazetteers (农业志), etc.—as well as archival and internally published sources to supplement missing data.[5] Because of the low number of overall counties in this region, I collected data for all counties in existence during the land reform campaign (1950-1952) that had a published gazetteer. Since the State Council in 1980 called for all provinces and counties to publish gazetteers, there were only a few counties in this region that, for unknown reasons, did not publish a gazetteer.[6]

The county gazetteers have a few limitations worth mentioning here. Although standardized in their overall format and the kind of information presented, they fail to report statistics consistently on key variables. Nevertheless, this pattern of missingness is unclear and appears somewhat random: a rather long and elaborate gazetteer may strangely lack data on Party membership; a gazetteer that details violence during the land reform campaign might fail to provide statistics on violence during the concurrent campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries, and vice-versa. I surmise that this pattern of missingness was probably related to county-specific decisions on political sensitivity as well as when the gazetteer was published. The 1985 "Preliminary Rules for the Compilation of the New Difangzhi" did not set

[5] Most notably, I gathered struggle target data for all of southern Jiangsu from Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Statistical Table of Mass Struggles in the Land Reform Period in the Southern Jiangsu Region," [苏南区土地改革时期群众斗争情况统计表] August 28, 1952, *SNTGWX*, 801. Also available at Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Summary of Southern Jiangsu Land Reform Work," [苏南土地改革工作的总结（附表）] August 28, 1952, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-001-066. I cross-checked these data with gazetteer data for all counties in Southern Jiangsu; the discrepancies were nonexistent or extremely small. In cases with discrepancies, I used the number reported in the gazetteers, as they are presumably written on the basis of local documentation. In most cases, the numbers reported in the gazetteers were slightly higher than those from the Southern Jiangsu regional report.

[6] For more on the historical genealogy of the county gazetteers, see Eduard B. Vermeer, "New County Histories: A Research Note on Their Compilation and Value," *Modern China* 18, no. 4 (Oct. 1992): 438-467.

clear guidelines for dealing with politically sensitive topics; therefore, the decision to decide what should be considered a state secret devolved to the county.[7] Date of publication most likely mattered as well: the earliest gazetteers, published in the early- to mid-1980s, seem to have elicited more political scrutiny,[8] and it is reasonable to assume that gazetteers published before 1989 may have enjoyed more political leeway because of the unusually liberal political atmosphere. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the gazetteers did allow for the discussion of politically sensitive issues in a "rough, not detailed" manner and as long as they confined critiques to local governments and not the Party. As Vermeer writes, the 1983 *Summary of Fangzhi-ology* (方志学概论), "stressed the need for a correct ideology and positive evaluation of the CCP…They cautioned care in expressing criticism of the authorities. Shortcomings, if any, should not be attributed to policies of the Party per se but to individuals or local implementation."[9] While Vermeer finds that county gazetteers, in seeking to present a façade of political "conformity," downplayed or omitted local variations in policy implementation, I find that many county gazetteers mentioned obstacles to the land reform campaign and issues of rightism or leftism.[10]

These issues of inconsistent reporting and censorship presented significant challenges that I address in two ways. First, it was an official policy to "split up" (分) information on "political mistakes" by spreading this information across various parts of these gazetteers.[11] To

[7] Ibid., 446-447.

[8] Ibid., 451.

[9] Ibid., 443-444.

[10] Vermeer's assertion here was based on his analysis of a small number of gazetteers from Sichuan Province in the early 1980s, which may explain the divergence in our observations.

[11] Vermeer, "New County Histories," 456.

deal with this, I scoured the various sections of the gazetteers, most of which were over 800 pages, to identify the sections in which political violence was most likely to appear. By doing this, I was able to come up with a list of areas to check in each gazetteer, which allowed me to locate a great deal of data that would otherwise have been mistakenly labeled as missing. Second, I used multiple data sources, where possible, to crosscheck and validate data on more sensitive statistics related to political violence. In most cases, this method of data triangulation confirmed the accuracy of the collected data; discrepancies, where they did occur, were rather small.

One may still be concerned with the validity of government-recorded data from the early 1950s. Here I assert that the source material from the early 1950s was less subject to exaggeration and falsification than materials published after the mid-1950s, when political self-reflection was far less appreciated. As Shue notes, the Party was remarkably self-reflective in the early 1950s and adhered to a strategy of trial-by-error.[12] Through my experience reading countless archived reports, I find that these reports nearly all contain sections enumerating both political successes and failures. While this by no means excludes the possibility of misreporting, it does suggest that the incentives for forging data were not particularly strong.

The Dynamics of Controlled Violence in East China's Land Reform Campaign

Before turning to the quantitative analysis, this section uses archival and documentary evidence to illuminate the policy environment during the land reform campaign and how the Party's strategy of controlled violence played out on the ground.

[12] See Vivienne Shue, *Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development Toward Socialism, 1949-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

By late 1950 there was little doubt that the Party desired to foment violent class struggle as part of the post-Liberation land reform campaign.[13] As many scholars have noted, while the Party often condemned "leftist excesses"—i.e. the extreme use of violence—it resolutely opposed "peaceful land reform" (和平土改).[14] Liu Ruilong, Deputy Chair of the East China Bureau's Land Reform Committee, succinctly articulated the Party's consensus on the issue: "Experience has shown: land reform can only succeed by relying on the unified awareness and resolute struggle of the millions of peasant masses and [only] after demolishing the landlord class's resistance and sabotage. 'Peaceful land reform' will get us nowhere."[15]

Despite emphasizing the indispensability of violent struggle to the land reform campaign, the Party nevertheless set strict parameters on the use of violence.[16] As Perry remarked:

> Active mass involvement was a hallmark of Mao's revolution, but as Mao and his lieutenants understood, it was easy for large, emotionally charged convocations to get out of hand. Thus an important item in cadre training concerned the prevention of 'leftist excesses.' Although mass violence was accepted, and sometimes even celebrated as an integral part of the revolutionary process, physical force was to be used strategically rather than indiscriminately.[17]

The East China Bureau called for such a strategic approach to land reform violence. It stated that localities should follow official guidelines for handling "evil tyrants" in order to "differentiate

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[13] See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the shift towards violent land reform after 1949.

[14] Shue, *Peasant China*; Yang Kuisong, "On the Attempt and Possibility of the CCP's Peaceful Land Reform After the War," [关于战后中共和平土改的尝试与可能问题] *Nanjing Daxue Xuebao (Zheshe Ban)* 5 (2007): 334-351.

[15] Liu Ruilong, "Liu Ruilong's Report on Land Reform Work in East China," [刘瑞龙关于华东土地改革工作的报告] March 19, 1951, *CCPM*.

[16] The pragmatism of the Party's strategy of selective violence echoes much of the political science literature that has demonstrated the superiority of selective violence to indiscriminate violence in maintaining popular support for and avoiding alienating potential supporters of political actors who perpetrate the violence. See Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); T.D. Mason and Dale A. Krane, "The Political Economy of Death Squads: Toward a Theory of the Impact of State-sanctioned Terror." *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (1989): 175-198.

[17] Elizabeth J. Perry, "Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution," *Mobilization: An International Journal* 7, no. 2 (2002): 114.

between, isolate, and crush the enemy, one by one, and to avoid expanding the definitional scope of 'evil tyrant' to include their henchmen or ordinary landlords, which would excessively broaden the scope of attack (以致打击面过广)."[18] Rao Shushi, the head of the East China Bureau, explained that one of the "important links" (重要环节) in the Bureau's implementation of the land reform campaign was the unification of the masses in "building the broadest united front against feudalism in the countryside" (建立农村中最广泛的反封建的统一战线); such a strategy necessitated the careful management of the campaign's "scope of attack" (打击面).[19] "Because the attack targets are mainly landlords and evil tyrants," a Northern Jiangsu Party Committee report read, "[the extent of attack] should not be stretched too far to avoid disrupting class ranks, generating unified resistance, and isolating ourselves."[20]

This strategy of controlled violence involved conflicting imperatives to mobilize the masses to identify and label class enemies while also preventing over-labeling or indiscriminate labeling, and to mobilize the masses to participate in violence and restrain violence once mobilized. The Southern Jiangsu Regional Committee suggested that Party training should emphasize overcoming the fear of making mistakes and feeling restrained in mobilizing struggle as well as avoiding a laissez-faire (放任自流) approach. The directive used the following example to illustrate this approach:

> When some peasants in the course of struggle are agitated by righteous indignation and spontaneously attack landlords, we do not pour cold water [on them] (当场泼冷水) right then and there, which would hurt

[18] East China Bureau, "CCP Center Forwarded from the East China Bureau: Regarding Problems with the Definition of 'Local Tyrant,'" [中共中央转发华东局关于恶霸定义问题的电报] November 14, 1949, *CCPM*.

[19] Rao Shushi, "Summary of the Experience of Classic Land Reform Experimental Sites in East China," [华东土地改革典型试验经验总结] December 20, 1950, *People's Daily*.

[20] Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee's Directive on Carrying Out Work in New and Recovered Areas in the Countryside" [苏北区党委关于开展新恢复区与新区农村工作的指示] May 24, 1949, *JSPA*, no. 7001-001-0004.

> the masses' mood, but before and after [the struggle session] we should start from the personal interests of the peasants to patiently educate them.[21]

A Southern Jiangsu land reform report detailed this evolving, dynamic process of violent mobilization:

> Once mobilization is underway, one must promptly discover and rectify deviations; once the high tide is unleashed, one must pay attention to and grasp the scope of attack (注意掌握打击面); the high tide should not drag on for too long, or else it will easily result in searching for [new] struggle targets and going beyond the boundaries of attack, expanding to struggle against all false *baojia* heads (伪保甲长) and henchmen (狗腿子), which will create chaos.[22]

In Chuxian Prefectural Party Committee in Northern Anhui, Party officials called for strict discipline in the implementation of land reform and urged cadres to communicate this need for control to the peasants: "Through various meetings convey the anti-local tyrant stance of land reform and announce that there will not be random seizures, beatings, and pursuit of movable property nor will there be complete confiscation (宣布不乱捉，乱打，乱追浮财不扫地出门); instead talk things over and reason (评理讲法) [and] hold disciplined struggles (有纪律的斗争).[23]

Of course, these competing imperatives of mobilizing and restraining violence posed a significant strategic dilemma for Party members and cadres in charge of implementing the land reform campaign. A 1951 report from Southern Jiangsu emphasized the difficult tradeoff that local cadres had to manage: "[Cadres'] lives are very hard…They have a hard time preventing random beatings and killings, yet the responsibility falls on their shoulders; if they are too lenient

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[21] Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Directive on Going All Out to Mobilize the Masses and Organizing the High Tide of the Land Reform Movement," [中共苏南区委关于放手发动群众组织土地改革运动高潮的指示] December 27, 1950, *JSTGYD*, 125-126.

[22] Zhang Yan, "Zhang Yan's Report on Land Reform Work Given to the Regional Party Committee" [张彦关于土改工作向区党委的汇报], December 31, 1950, *JSPA*, no. 3006-0081.

[23] Chuxian Prefectural Party Committee, "Emergency Notice from the Prefectural Committee on Protecting Land and Assets and Preventing the Flight of Landlords and Rich Peasants during Land Reform," [地委关于保护土产防止地富逃避土改的紧急通知] September 29, 1950, *CCDC*, no. 1950XW03_32.

to the landlords, they fear the peasants will be resentful, while if they are too harsh, their superiors will criticize them."[24] Indeed, superiors often had to encourage grassroots leaders to overcome any reservations they had about using struggle-based land reform. A land reform report from the Shanghai suburbs noted: "In the beginning, because our leadership did not know enough, there existed among the cadres many reservations and a fear of getting in trouble and [they] would not dare to use a 'mentality of struggle' (斗争主义思想). After their superiors pointed this out and [the cadres] received practical work education, this problem was quickly resolved."[25]

This emphasis on both mobilizing and containing violence was reflected in the East China Bureau's peculiar policy directive of "going all in to mobilize the masses with leadership" (有领导的放手发动群众). This seemingly paradoxical strategy exhorted cadres to shift from their ongoing preparatory work to the vigorous mobilization of violent political struggle in the winter of 1950. As the slogan itself indicates, the Party was to maintain leadership while simultaneously unleashing the fury of the masses. In Southern Jiangsu, according to Li Liangyu, most of the violence during the land reform campaign occurred during this temporary shift from a "policy control model" (政策控制型) to a "violent implementation model" (暴力进行型) in December 1950.[26] Thus, shortly after the victory of the Chinese Communist revolution, cadres

[24] Huang Yanpei. "Report Inquiring into Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu (Excerpt)," [访察苏南土地改革报告 *(*节录)] February 13, 1951, *JSTGYD*, 152-153.

[25] Shanghai Suburban Party Work Committee, "Summary of Land Reform in the Suburbs," [关于郊区土改总结] November 25, 1952, *SHMA*, no. A71-1-71.

[26] Li Liangyu, "The Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu and the Problem of Modernizing Tradition" [苏南土改与现代化传统问题] *Jiangsu Daxue Xuebao*: *Shexue Kexue Ban* 8.3 (2006): 1-12.

across the East China Bureau were faced with the task of implementing the land reform campaign and mobilizing the masses to participate in violent political struggle.[27]

Local governments, however, were unequally prepared to manage both the mobilization and containment of violence, as evidenced by the great deal of variation in the amount of violence mobilized in different parts of the East China Bureau. Unlike the Chinese Civil War period—where the CCP strategically proscribed violent political struggle in contested military zones with weak Party support during the Chinese Civil War, knowing that these areas would probably fail to implement struggle-based land reform properly—localities in the post-Liberation period did not have the luxury of avoiding violent political struggle. Instead, the intensity of political violence experienced in a locality hinged on local governments' existing capacities to mobilize and contain violence. This capacity to mobilize violence was rooted in the government's ability to mobilize citizens without interference from remnant armed groups opposed to the regime who could attack or intimidate local officials and civilians, while the capacity to contain violence relied on the density of sufficient Party personnel to communicate with higher levels of the Party hierarchy, train cadres, and restrain local residents and activists from recklessly expanding the scope of violence.

[27] While nearly all localities finished land reform by 1952, those hit by natural disasters or that were liberated particularly late were allowed to delay the campaign. In East China, the region under study, Northern Anhui was allowed to delay land reform because of the massive flood that devastated the region in 1950, affecting nearly ten million residents or about half of the region's population. Nevertheless, many localities still pressed on with land reform despite the pressing need for continuing disaster relief. In Fengyang County, which was hit again by a flood in 1951, the County Party Committee argued that because land reform and disaster relief were fundamentally campaigns concerned with improving agricultural production, cadres should not suspend land reform work but rather conduct land reform and anti-disaster relief work simultaneously. See Fengyang County, "Directive on Current Work," [对当前工作的指示] July 27, 1951, *XCSSN*. For an overview of the impact of the 1950 flood in Northern Anhui, see Zeng Xisheng, "August 1, 1950 Telegram to the East China Bureau and Forwarded to the Center," [1950 年 8 月 1 日致华东局并转中央的电报] *The Collected Works of Zeng Xisheng* [曾希圣文选], 78-79.

Before turning to the quantitative test of these hypotheses, the following two sections marshal qualitative evidence to illustrate the way in which these variables mediated the mobilization of violence.

Mobilization and Territorial Control

Territorial control was fundamental to the successful promotion of the moral mobilization of violence for several reasons. First, moral mobilization was a public and participatory form of political violence; those who wished to "speak bitterness" (诉苦) on stage against struggle targets were putting themselves at tremendous risk. What if the struggle target survived the struggle session and sought revenge later? Even if the struggle target were indeed executed, what if the relatives, friends, or hired thugs of the target desired to avenge his or her death? Community surveillance by local militias and civilians helped maintain order and ensured that struggle targets did not run away or attempt to retaliate against their targets; however, this defense work was ineffective or downright impossible in areas where armed opposition was rampant. As Kalyvas argues, civilians will only denounce others where they "perceive the political actor as able to protect them from retaliation."[28] Fear of retaliation also deterred locals from redistributing land. Mao himself was keenly aware of the importance of territorial control for the successful implementation of land reform. In a letter to Huang Yanpei, Mao wrote:

> If you do not kill bandits and their leaders, you will not exterminate them completely and more suppression will engender more opposition. If you do not kill the evil tyrants, the peasant associations will not form and the peasants will not dare to redistribute the land. If you do not kill key secret agents, then sabotage and assassinations will appear one after another. Thus, the people will be able to emancipate themselves and consolidate their political power only if we adopt a policy of resolute suppression towards bandit leaders, evil tyrants, and secret agents (key ones).[29]

[28] Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*.

[29] Mao Zedong, "A Letter from Mao Zedong to Huang Yanpei," [毛泽东给黄炎培的信] February 17, 1951, *CCPM*.

Indeed, the East China Bureau's *Land Reform Handbook* underscored the primacy of establishing territorial control and consolidating political authority at the grassroots in preparing for land reform work.[30]

Second, the preparatory work for moral mobilization, as described in Chapter 3, required a secure and stable political environment. Because of the extensive process of boundary work needed to set the stage for the mobilization of mass participation in violence, cadres needed to be able to work openly with little interference or opposition from remnant hostile forces—i.e. bandits, decommissioned soldiers, Nationalist spies and saboteurs, etc. In areas with insecure territorial control, the local government faced a situation similar to that of irregular war—i.e. a confrontation involving a weak group of insurgents who must rely on guerrilla-style tactics to challenge a militarily superior state.[31] Armed opposition groups sabotaged infrastructure, kidnapped or killed officials, and burnt down government buildings. In Tongling County in Southern Anhui, guerrilla groups comprised of former Nationalist officials, vagrants, and bandits kidnapped and beat up village cadres; during the county's land reform campaign, these and other opposition groups worked with "unlawful landlords" to sabotage cadre work, slaughter livestock, "manipulate" (蛊惑) the masses, and bribe cadres.[32] Elsewhere, in Fengxian County in Southern Jiangsu, a resistance group calling itself the "Central Assassination Party" (中央暗杀党), allegedly organized by Nationalist agents, mobilized over 1,800 people to storm the township's

[30] Xinhua Shudian Huadong Zong Fendian, ed., *Land Reform Handbook* [土地改革手册] (Shanghai: Xinhua Shudian Huadong Zong Fendian, August 1950), 117.

[31] For more on guerrilla or "irregular" war, see James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75-90; Stathis N. Kalyvas and Laia Balcells, "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 3 (2010): 415-429.

[32] Tongling County Gazetteer Compilation Committee, *Tongling County Gazetteer* [铜陵县志] (Hefei: Huangshan Shushe, 1993) 430-31; 98.

Peasant Association and destroy the land reform work team's office.[33] Even the mere perception of political weakness frightened locals and complicated the Party's mobilization efforts. In Baoshan County, which was struggling to establish territorial control until 1952, the County Party Committee noted that locals were highly suspicious of Party policies. Efforts by Nationalist spies and landlords to "spread rumors" about the land reform campaign and to suggest a possible Nationalist return caused many locals to fear a "change in heaven" (变天).[34]

Fengyang County, one of the case studies from the previous chapter, exemplifies how the lack of territorial control could stall mobilization. Fengyang experienced a relatively low amount of violence during its land reform campaign. The county struggled against 463 people over the course of the campaign (approximately 1.39 per 1000 residents, well below the sample mean of 2.75); of these 463 targets, only 45 were executed.[35] Despite its relatively high density of Party members who could carefully manage the land reform campaign, its lack of territorial control severely hindered its ability to mobilize violence. An alarming report from the Fengyang County Public Security Office stated that in 1950 the secret society Yi Guandao had joined forces with landlords, local tyrants, and "backbone" elements of counter-revolutionary parties to organize underground armed outfits, such as the "Ninth Route Army" (九路军) and the Southeastern People's Anti-CCP National Salvation Army (东南人民反共救国军), to carry out violent raids on county government offices and kill cadres. Aside from these underground groups, the report noted that there were 51 bandit groups strewn across the county's mountainous regions and along

[33] Fengxian County Gazetteer Compilation Committee, *Fengxian County Gazetteer* [奉贤县志] (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1987).

[34] Baoshan County Party Committee, "Preliminary Summary of Autumn Requisition Work in Baoshan County" [宝山县秋征工作初步总结] March 8, 1950, *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-063.

[35] Fengyang County Party Committee. "Table of Various Statistics on Land Reform in Fengyang County, Anhui Province," (关于安徽省凤阳县土地改革各种统计表格) 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW13.

its railways, many of which were sabotaging the county's transportation infrastructure.[36] Chuxian Prefecture reported that bandits and spies in Fengyang, and its neighbor Jiashan, were mobilizing armed uprisings and even leading commoners to rob state granaries.[37]

The political chaos in Fengyang greatly disrupted the Party's mobilization of violence in the early 1950s. The Fengyang Party Committee openly worried about the high possibility of retaliatory violence by bandits and other targeted groups against cadres and civilian participants alike: "[the bandits] have blocked the launching of mass movements. This will be a bloody struggle, not only for our cadres but also for our victims' families and activists."[38] And indeed it was. Groups opposed to the CCP terrorized locals precisely at times when struggle sessions were scheduled to convene. A regional Party committee reported observed the effects of these acts of premeditated terror on the local population's behavior at struggle sessions: "Struggle sessions in many places exhibit a tendency to be tense at times and relaxed at other times (时紧时松); when the bandits run rampant they [the villagers] become noticeably flustered and nervous (显得仓皇焦急), but then act as if everything is fine (万事大吉) once the bandits go into hiding."[39]

In the absence of sufficient mobilization, violence was not severe even where struggle sessions were organized. A 1951 report from Fengyang County's Fenglin District reviews the

[36] Fengyang County Public Security Office, "Fengyang County Public Security Office Summary Work Report on the Campaign to Suppress the Counter-revolutionaries," [凤阳县公安局镇反工作总结报告] 1954, *XCSSN*, 20.

[37] Chuxian Prefectural Party Committee, "Emergency Notification on Strengthening Work on Bandit-Spy Extermination and the Protection of Granaries and Grain," [关于加强清匪特护仓护粮工作的紧急通知] March 18, 1950, *CCDC*, No. 1950XW04_12-13.

[38] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Record of the Fengyang County Party Committee Meeting," [中共凤阳县委会议纪录] January 1, 1950, *XCSSN*, 19.

[39] Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee, "Regarding the Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee's Directive on Carrying Out the Severe Suppression of the Counterrevolutionaries," [关于中共皖北区党委关于执行严厉镇压反革命分子的指示] January 4, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW05_18-22.

outcome of 38 struggle sessions against 60 struggle targets, mainly landlords and unlawful landlords accused of spreading rumors, bullying the people in the past, destroying agricultural implements, dispersing their food, and otherwise sabotaging land reform. Their struggle sessions, however, did not go according to plan. During one struggle session, when the aggrieved parties were on stage "speaking bitterness" against the landlords, the crowds below began to laugh (下面的群众却大笑起来). The report lamented that "hatred towards the landlords was not sufficiently strong" (对地主的仇恨性不够强). In another struggle session in Chengdong Township, the landlords themselves did not take the struggle session seriously and went to lie down and bask in the sun before returning to the stage to be struggled against.[40] While the lack of mobilization is in and of itself notable, what is more striking is the open defiance of struggle targets against what they clearly perceived to be a weak and ineffectual regime that could not deliver on its promise to foment violence in the name of the people.

Territorial control provided the local government with the necessary opportunity to mobilize violence. This logic contradicts Kalyvas's assertion that there is a curvilinear relationship between territorial control and the intensity of (homicidal) violence, in which political actors are most likely to use selective violence to eliminate targets in areas with firm though not complete military control.[41] While this logic certainly makes sense in a civil war context, where the point of selective violence is to eliminate political threats and deter defection, a new revolutionary state uses violence to consolidate its political power and legitimacy

[40] Fengyang County Party Committee, "Summary Report on the Situation of Village Associations Approving Class Labels and Linking with Key-point Struggles in Fenglin District," [凤临区(六个乡)村民会通过阶级成份结合重点斗争情况综合汇报] September 7, 1951, *CCDC*, No. 1951XW11_82-85.

[41] See Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*, Chapter 7. Also see Stathis N. Kalyvas and Matthew A. Kocher, "The Dynamics of Violence in Vietnam: An Analysis of the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES)," *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 3 (2009): 335–355.

throughout its territory, regardless of the extent of its territorial control. Along with the nearly unanimous moral conviction in the correctness of violent land reform—only Liu Shaoqi and a minority of other leaders believed in nonviolent economic land reform—the Party implemented selective violence wherever it had the opportunity to do so. And violent political struggle through moral mobilization, as it turned out, was only possible where the local government enjoyed secure territorial control.

Containment and Party Density

The Party was also concerned about controlling the scope of violence once mobilized: uncontrolled violence was politically counterproductive for the Party because failing to selectively punish perceived enemies of the community undermined efforts to build solidarity between the Party and the local community. As has been repeatedly emphasized in the literature on political violence, indiscriminate state violence tends to diminish support for the state because it fails to shield supporters from the arbitrary use of violence.[42]

Many accounts of state-mobilized violence argue that mass violence is most likely where the state is absent. Timothy Snyder, in his exploration of mass violence on the German-Soviet borderlands during World War II, concludes that the greatest amount of violence occurred not in areas with direct state mobilization but rather in "zones of statelessness," where locals could embark on murderous rampages against their Jewish populations.[43] Similarly, Su Yang asserts that locals in relatively remote areas killed far more people during the Cultural Revolution.[44]

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[42] Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*; Mason and Krane, "Death Squads."

[43] Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2015).

[44] Su Yang, *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Once political elites initiate a campaign of violence, the political periphery becomes the frontline of slaughter.

Indeed, there was considerable tension between the goal of central Party leaders to implement violence selectively and local leaders' need to appease both the Center and the many demands of local communities. While the Party was critical in mobilizing violence, it was equally significant in preventing it from spiraling out of control. Despite the immense pressure placed on grassroots cadres to carry out "fierce" class struggle, the Party resolutely proscribed "reckless beating and killing" (乱打乱杀) and instructed cadres to take precautions to maintain order during struggle sessions. "Place those who are likely to be beaten near cadres in order to prevent [reckless beating and killing]," a Fengyang report cautioned. "It is better than pulling them away once the beating begins" (比打起来再拉好).[45] Violence, though necessary to the cause, was not to be meted out recklessly.

Controlling violence required strong Party leadership. The Party faced threats from both vengeful locals and non-Party or poorly trained cadres. Kalyvas has noted that revenge-based violence tends to be pervasive during episodes of political violence.[46] The Party was keenly aware of the danger of the masses "overheating" (过火) and often took precautions to prevent struggle sessions from breaking out into wanton violence. Yet the Party also needed to deal with

[45] Fengyang County Committee. "November Summary Work Report for the Urban Districts of Fengyang County, Anhui Province," [关于安徽省凤阳县城区十一月工作总结报告] December 2, 1949, *CCDC*, no. 1949XW08_42-61.

[46] Indeed, Kalyvas questions the extent to which researchers can label political violence as "political" when such a large proportion of it is private, or at least a mixture of political and private. Since the Chinese Party-state mobilized most of the violence in this analysis—and it is truly difficult to imagine this violence occurring in the absence of state mobilization—I think it is fitting to describe violence during land reform as "political," even if it sometimes had private motives. See Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*; Stathis N. Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003): 475-494; Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War," *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 8 (August 2008): 1043-1068.

the danger of untrained or reckless cadres, especially those who were not Party members.[47] Localities with few Party members had no choice but to rely more heavily on local activists (积极分子) and non-Party cadres to carry out the campaign. It is plausible that these activists and non-Party member cadres, many of whom aspired to join the Party, were susceptible to using violence to display the depth of their political conviction, a phenomenon Yang Dali has termed "the politics of loyalty compensation."[48] More important, though, was that untrained or poorly trained cadres, regardless of their Party membership, could easily conflate the use of violence with proper mobilization. A notice from the Baoshan Party Committee complained, "In some places, cadres think that killing for the sake of killing (为杀而杀) and struggling for the sake of struggling (为斗而斗) are good things; these deviations must be corrected and stopped." This appears to have had less to do with issues of displaying loyalty through "leftism" and more with vague and conflicting policy directives that required a great deal of training and experience to understand. In this sense, adequate Party leadership was indispensable for properly training cadres, ensuring cadre discipline, and conveying Party directives to the grassroots.

Without good Party leadership, cadres struggled to contain revenge-based violence or resorted to engaging in violence themselves. For example, Taicang County enjoyed secure territorial control to mobilize violence during the land reform campaign, but it lacked adequate and well-trained Party personnel to control the violence it had mobilized. Throughout the county, there were only 238 CCP members in 1949 for a population of about 300,000 people, or 0.78

[47] It is true that superior levels of government supplied additional Party members through dispatching work teams comprised of urban intellectuals to some "key point" (重点) townships and villages, but these work teams could not substitute for the lack of local Party members who understood local conditions.

[48] Dali Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change Since the Great Leap Famine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

CCP members per 1000 residents.[49] Yet a Southern Jiangsu Party Committee report noted that the campaign in Taicang County lacked clear direction and carried out reckless and extreme violence against seemingly random targets. In Fubei Township, locals dragged Cao Nianchun, a 17-year-old student and son of a landlord, to a struggle session where they ripped off his clothes and forced him to kneel on rocks, yelling, "Down with the landlord Cao Nianchun!" Seeing this, some locals commented, "[We're] even struggling against students." The Regional Party Committee noted that some of the townships in Taicang refused to struggle against local powerholders, opting instead to attack less threatening targets. In Xiaoqiao Township some of the large [landlords] hadn't been struggled against they struggled against the landlord Yin Yongqing, who hadn't committed any major offenses. The locals there commented, "The big fish haven't been struggled against, but the little fish have."[50] Not far away in Southern Jiangsu, Qingpu County had established military control over its territory by the end of 1949, with the anti-bandit campaign ending the following year. Like Taicang County, however, it also had a relatively low number of CCP members (369 members, or 1.52 per 1000 residents), and without adequate Party personnel and training, violence here broke down into chaos. In a high-profile incident, 17 people were beaten to death within a matter of days. While observers attributed this outbreak of violence to the justified outrage of the masses, they also criticized local cadres for losing control of the campaign: "Local cadres, who were unable to grasp the details of the

[49] Figure from author's gazetteer database.

[50] Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Telegram on Strengthening Land Reform Work and Inspection," [关于加强土改工作检查的代电] November 15, 1951, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-001-052.

situation beforehand…were unable to prepare in advance to prevent the occurrence of these deviations."[51]

Du Runsheng, commenting on the frequency of beatings and floggings in the Central South Bureau's land reform campaign, enumerated the many ways in which poor or nonexistent leadership resulted in reckless violence:

> Some [beatings and floggings] were the revenge of the masses; [that is], in the past these people were persecuted by the evil tyrants and after speaking bitterness they became extremely furious and flogged them. Some were because of a minority of rash cadres who couldn't put up with the landlords' sly denials and were not good at collectively strategizing and executing policy to bring the landlords to heel; therefore, [they] adopted this incorrect method. Some were because the locality lacked leadership and the people freely interpreted [policy] and acted on their own. Some were because of dissidents who seized the opportunity to cause trouble and sabotage policy. Some were secretly encouraged by cadres, and some have been secret floggings and beatings backed by cadre support. The situations are different, but the dangers are the same: [this behavior] harms the full mobilization of the masses and strays from the majority.[52]

The Party believed that the solution to this problem was policy education and training of both the masses and cadres. "In some places that in the past experienced reckless beatings and killings," a Changjiang Daily editorial argued, "it was precisely because [the leadership] had not gone all out to transmit policy to the masses."[53]

Variable Measurement

To reiterate, I argue that the extent of territorial control and Party density respectively facilitated and constrained the scope of political violence in the early 1950s; these two variables combined comprised the mobilization capacity of a locality to mobilize and control land reform

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[51] Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, *The Land Reform I Witnessed in Southern Jiangsu* [我见到的苏南土地改革] (Shanghai: Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, 1951), 94-95.

[52] Du Runsheng, "The Experience of the Entire Central South Region's Land Reform Last Winter and This Spring, Its Main Lessons, and the Plan for the Future" [中南全区去冬今春土地改革的经过与主要经验及今后计划] April 9, 1951, *CCPM*.

[53] Changjiang Daily Editorial, "Readdressing Going All Out to Mobilize the Masses" [再论放手发动群众] December 14, 1950, *Changjiang Daily*, *CCPM*.

violence.[54] In the absence of territorial control, localities struggled to mobilize violence because of interference and intimidation by local armed opposition groups. Where they did have secure territorial control, the Party had to rely on its members to prevent residents and activists from dictating the direction of the campaign. In areas that lacked Party personnel, non-Party member cadres, activists, and ordinary citizens had more power in deciding who would be targeted, how many people would be attacked, and how violence would be used against them. In these areas, violence could, and often did, spiral out of control. It was only where local governments had secure territorial control and sufficient Party personnel to train and mobilize popular participation in violence that the Party was able both to mobilize and constrain violence. The following sections explain how I measure the intensity of violence, territorial control, Party density, and other controls.

Measuring the Dependent Variable: Intensity of Violence

I operationalize the *intensity of violence* using two measures: the absolute number of struggle targets (斗争对象) struggled against in a county and the number of people struggled against in a county.[55] In government documents and county gazetteers reporting on the land reform campaign, the number of struggle targets is the most widely cited figure of violence. As a measure of violence, the number of struggle targets is preferable to the number of executions

[54] I treat territorial control and Party density as independent forces of mobilization and containment, respectively. I do this because territorial control and Party density were in fact not collinear: some regions had high densities of Party members yet were mired in ongoing warfare with local bandits, remnant Nationalist groups, and newly-formed resistance groups, and vice versa.

[55] Because the focus of this study is on state-sanctioned violence, I define violence as the infliction of harm towards civilians with the intention to cause suffering by state actors or social actors who engage in such behavior with the encouragement of the state. This definition of violence includes both lethal and non-lethal forms of violence, which differs from much of the civil war and genocide literature that focuses exclusively on lethal violence. While this focus on lethal violence makes sense for the study of genocide, there is little theoretical justification for looking exclusively at lethal violence when considering state-sanctioned violence.

because the latter tends to be less systematically and less accurately reported. Official execution data do not necessarily include "reckless killings" (乱杀)—i.e. killings that occurred in the heat of a struggle session or public sentencing at the hands of the outraged masses. Struggle targets, however, almost always endured some degree of violence, as most were bound, beaten, and humiliated on stage and received some amount of corporeal punishment; many were killed as well, with or without official approval. If anything, the number of struggle targets is a conservative measure of violence because the prospect of political struggle and the traumatic experience of being struggled against caused countless people to commit suicide. Suicide deaths were rarely, if ever, reported in summaries of land reform violence. Considering these data constraints and biases I believe the number of struggle targets and arrestees is by far the best existing measure of political violence during land reform. For the subsequent analysis of the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries, I use the number of arrestees per county as the main measure of violence.

Measuring the Principal Explanatory Variables: Territorial Control and Party Density

Territorial control refers to whether a locality was threatened by ongoing armed resistance *during the land reform campaign*. While the security of territorial control tends to come out clearly in archival data, it is difficult to quantify local territorial control in the absence of extensive archival data for all localities. Local bandit opposition severely dampened the local government's efforts at mobilizing popular participation in land reform; therefore, I measure territorial control using two indicators that appear consistently across the county gazetteers. My primary indicator is the timing of the anti-bandit campaign (剿匪运动) relative to the land reform campaign. All localities began anti-bandit operations shortly after Liberation—1949 for

most of the localities in this dataset—however, some localities finished eliminating local banditry as early as late 1949 while others continued fighting bandits until as late as the mid-1950s. Where the exact date of the end of the anti-bandit campaign is missing, I looked at the gazetteer's chronology (大事记) for evidence of armed opposition to land reform. If the anti-bandit campaign was ongoing or if armed resistance occurred after the initiation of the land reform campaign, I coded the locality as lacking secure territorial control. I coded localities as having secure territorial control where the anti-bandit campaign ended before the initiation of the land reform campaign and where there was no evidence of armed opposition during the campaign.

I measure the Party's organizational capacity in a county using a measure of Party membership, or the number of Party members, in 1949. Because Party members were recruited heavily during the mass campaigns of the early 1950s, using Party data beyond 1949 or 1950 is not an accurate measure of the existing capacity of the Party during the land reform campaign.

Greed, Grievance, Revenge, and Other Controls

I account for a variety of alternative arguments from the literature on political violence. Although much of this literature analyzes violence during civil wars, many of these propositions, with some modifications, can be adapted to state violence.

The existing literature on civil war violence interprets the effects of economic development on violence in a variety of ways. "Greed" theory argues that economic incentives promote participation in violence, as those living in poor regions may lack better economic

opportunities than looting.[56] We could imagine, then, that cadres may have had an easier time mobilizing violence where the absolute level of economic development was low and the allure of redistribution was stronger. Because GDP measures did not exist for early 1950s China, I use grain yields—amount of grain produced per *mu*[57] of land—as an overall measure of agricultural development. This measure captures soil quality, agricultural inputs, and labor skill; even though many localities before 1949 produced cash crops for sideline industries and traded for grain, this measure captures the overall productivity of the land in a region.[58] Fearon and Laitin, in their study of the onset of civil wars, argue for the importance of economic development as a measure of state capacity: poor states are weak states that cannot prevent the rise of insurgencies.[59] In the context of state violence, however, this would imply that poorer localities lack the resources to implement violence and crush remaining local opposition. Thus, in contrast to greed theory, a state capacity theory would argue that there would be more state violence in wealthier localities, as the local government would be better positioned to implement policies of violence.

Next I include two measures of "grievance." "Grievance" theory argues that violence is more likely where people are dissatisfied due to feelings of "relative deprivation" or due to

[56] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563-95; Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner, "Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 61, no. 1 (Jan. 2009): 1-27.

[57] 1 *mu* = 1/15 ha.

[58] A cursory comparison of grain yields across the four regional jurisdictions in Anhui and Jiangsu reflects well-known regional differences in terms of agricultural development and commercialization. Southern Jiangsu, the wealthiest region in this part of East China had an average of 144.40 kg/mu, followed by Southern Anhui (105.60 kg/mu), also located in the fertile Lower Yangzi Region. Northern Anhui and Northern Jiangsu had significantly lower grain yields, at 75.03 kg/mu and 62.64 kg/mu, respectively. Calculations made using author's county gazetteer dataset.

[59] Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War."

strong identity-related conflict.[60] In the case of Chinese land reform, the most obvious measure of relative deprivation would be landholding inequality. In the absence of sufficient information to calculate Gini coefficients for county landholding patterns, I use three measures of landholding inequality: the percentage of county land owned by those labeled as landlords; the ratio of landlord per capita landholdings and poor peasant per capita landholdings; and the ratio of landlord per capita landholdings and overall average per capita landholdings. I also use historical levels of taxation as an alternative measure of grievance. As taxation rates continued to swell after the fall of the Qing, the onerous tax burden became one of the most important sources of grievance and collective resistance in the countryside.[61] To capture tax burden under the imperial state, I matched prefectural-level data from 1820 to counties in the early 1950s.[62]

In considering theories of revenge, I look at patterns of past violence during World War II. Chalmers Johnson famously argued that the CCP succeeded in mobilizing the peasantry before Liberation by tapping into the anti-Japanese nationalist sentiment provoked by the violence of the Japanese occupation.[63] This view, however, does not account for the diversity of experiences under Japanese occupation or the fact that not all areas were even occupied by the Japanese. The advantage of analyzing the East China Bureau is that most of the region, particularly the case study area of Anhui and Jiangsu, was mainly under Nationalist control

[60] For more on "relative deprivation," see Ted R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

[61] R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 246.

[62] These historical taxation data were generously provided to the author by Yuhua Wang and originally tabulated from Liang Fangzhong, "Chinese Historical Population, Land, and Land Tax Statistics," [中国历代户口、田地、田赋统计] in *The Collected Writings of Liang Fangzhong* [梁方仲文集] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2008).

[63] Chalmers A. Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).

before 1949 and suffered from the Japanese mopping up campaigns during the Second Anti-Japanese War. Holding these two variables constant eliminates major potential confounding variables concerning patterns of past violence. To account for the possibility that the CCP could mobilize more violence where the Japanese occupation was more brutal I coded localities according to their experience under Japanese occupation. I distinguished between counties that experienced indiscriminate violence under the "mopping-up" campaigns or other forms of wartime atrocities and those that have no record of Japanese occupation or wartime violence and atrocities.[64] If this revenge hypothesis is correct, we would expect to see areas that experienced more violence during the Japanese occupation engaged in more intense post-Liberation political violence because locals would want to use the land reform campaign to punish former Japanese collaborators.

I also include a set of demographic and geographic controls, such as population, percentage of landlords, and physiographic macroregion. Percentage of landlords—the percentage of households labeled as landlords in a county during land reform—controls for the possibility that there was more violence in areas that simply had more landlords; that is, more potential targets would probably result in more violence. Physiographic macroregion controls for possible geographic variation in violence between northern and southern China due to differences in local social structure.[65] I coded this variable using G. William Skinner's map of physiographic macroregions, which I then matched to county-level maps of the regional

[64] Most counties in Anhui and Jiangsu provinces were occupied by the Japanese and hit by their mopping-up campaigns; only around ten percent of counties did not experience Japanese occupation.

[65] I have extensively discussed the regional differences between the northern region of Huaibei and the southern region of Jiangnan in previous chapters, but to reiterate: Huaibei, or the North China macroregion, is a wheat-growing region with smaller lineages, a preponderance of small landholders, and a poorer, more volatile ecological environment; in contrast, the Lower Yangzi Region, which includes all of Southern Jiangsu and a large portion of Southern Anhui, grows a mixture of rice and wheat, as well as cotton, and features large lineages, high rates of tenancy, and more commercialization.

governments of Jiangsu and Anhui from 1949 to 1951.[66] As discussed in Chapter 4, different moral norms governed the predominant social boundaries in each region. One might expect that in Huaibei, where norms of virtue predominated, may have experienced less violence because the moral norms that the Party used as the basis of its moral boundary work were not closely related to landlord-tenant conflict; by contrast, in Jiangnan the Party was able to focus on moral norms regarding landlord-tenant ties, which may have made moral mobilization simply easier to conduct.

Lastly, I include a dummy variable for pre-1949 land reform. Because the Party mobilized land reform in parts of Huaibei during the Civil War, these areas may have experienced less violence than other localities for two reasons. The problem of reckless violence during Civil War-era land reform may have made cadres working in these localities more sensitive to controlling violence. Regional authorities reminded local cadres of the problem of "leftist deviations" during the Civil War-era campaign and cautioned them to avoid repeating these mistakes. A 1950 directive from the Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, whose jurisdiction had conducted a considerable amount of land reform work before 1949, instructed: "Do not repeat some of the 'experiences' of pre-1949 LR in Northern Jiangsu, such as "payback any injustice or animosity you have" (有冤报冤，有仇报仇) etc., [for] that will create an environment where every landlord has a blood debt and everyone needs to be punished and have their accounts settled."[67] Aside from these warnings, deaths due to this reckless violence may

[66] G.W. Skinner's maps are available online at China Historical GIS, Center for Geographic Analysis, Harvard University (http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~chgis/). For more on physiographic macroregions, see G.W. Skinner, "Regional Urbanization in Nineteenth-Century China," in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed., G. William Skinner (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1995), 211-249.

[67] Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Directive Given to Each Prefectural Committee Regarding Land Reform Propaganda Work," [关于土地改革宣传工作给各地委的指示] October 1950, *SBTGWX*, 69.

have reduced the number of potential struggle targets for post-1949 land reform. County gazetteers indicate whether a county carried out land reform before 1949. I code counties that completed land reform across its entire territory or a significant portion of its territory before 1949 as early land reform implementers. I do not include counties where the Nationalist invasion of Huaibei forced cadres to abort land reform or prevented land reform from being carried out in a substantial amount of its territory.

Table 5.A (see the appendix at the end of this chapter) presents descriptive statistics for all variables used in the regression analysis.

Model Estimation and Results

I estimate the effects of territorial control and Party density on levels of political violence using ordinary least squares regression. Although I collected data on all variables for all 124 counties in the dataset, the inconsistency of data reporting across gazetteers meant that about fifteen percent of the dataset was missing and over half of all observations contained some missing data (see Appendix, Figure 5.A for a missingness map of the dataset). Because of the significant issues of inefficiency and bias with listwise deletion where data are not missing completely at random (MCAR), I present all results with missing data multiply imputed using Honaker et al.'s program, *Amelia II*, in R.[68] Using all the variables included in the regression analysis, I conducted a total of fifty imputations to account for the rather large amount of observations with missing data.[69] The size, direction, and statistical significance of the

[68] James Honaker, Gary King, and Matthew Blackwell, "Amelia II: A Program for Missing Data," *Journal of Statistical Software* 45, no. 7 (2011): 1-47.

[69] There is much debate about the proper *m*, or number of imputed values per cell of missing data, to use in multiple imputation. Because additional computational stress is not an issue with a dataset of this size, I use an *m* equal the

coefficients for the main explanatory variables in the multiply imputed models are roughly equivalent to those of the listwise-deleted models (see Appendix, Table 5.B). Geographic region and pre-1949 land reform, however, are only statistically significant in the multiply imputed models.[70] For the rest of this chapter I will only discuss the results from the multiply imputed models.

The results of Models 1 and 2 presented in Table 5.B support the proposition that territorial control facilitates and Party density restrains the mobilization of violence. In both the partial and full model, Party density and territorial control are significant at the $p < 0.01$ level, and their coefficient signs are in their expected directions. Figure 5.1 presents a coefficient plot based on the full specification of the model (Model 2). Population, as expected, is significant and positive; naturally there were more targets in more populous counties. Physiographic macroregion is barely significant at the $p < 0.05$ level and its coefficient is negative as anticipated: localities in Huaibei, where economic landlord-tenant ties were less relevant to social life and where the Party drew on mainly political social boundaries to mobilize violence, did not mobilize as much violence. The greater importance of moral norms concerning political corruption and abuse may have complicated the Party's efforts to situate these transgressions into

percent of observations with missing data (~50%), as suggested in Paul T. von Hippel, "How to Impute Squares, Interactions, and Other Transformed Variables," *Sociological Methodology* 39, no. 1 (2009): 265–91. For an extensive discussion on choosing an appropriate *m* for multiple imputation, see Ranjit Lall, "How Multiple Imputation Makes a Difference," *Political Analysis* 24, no. 4 (2016): 414-433.

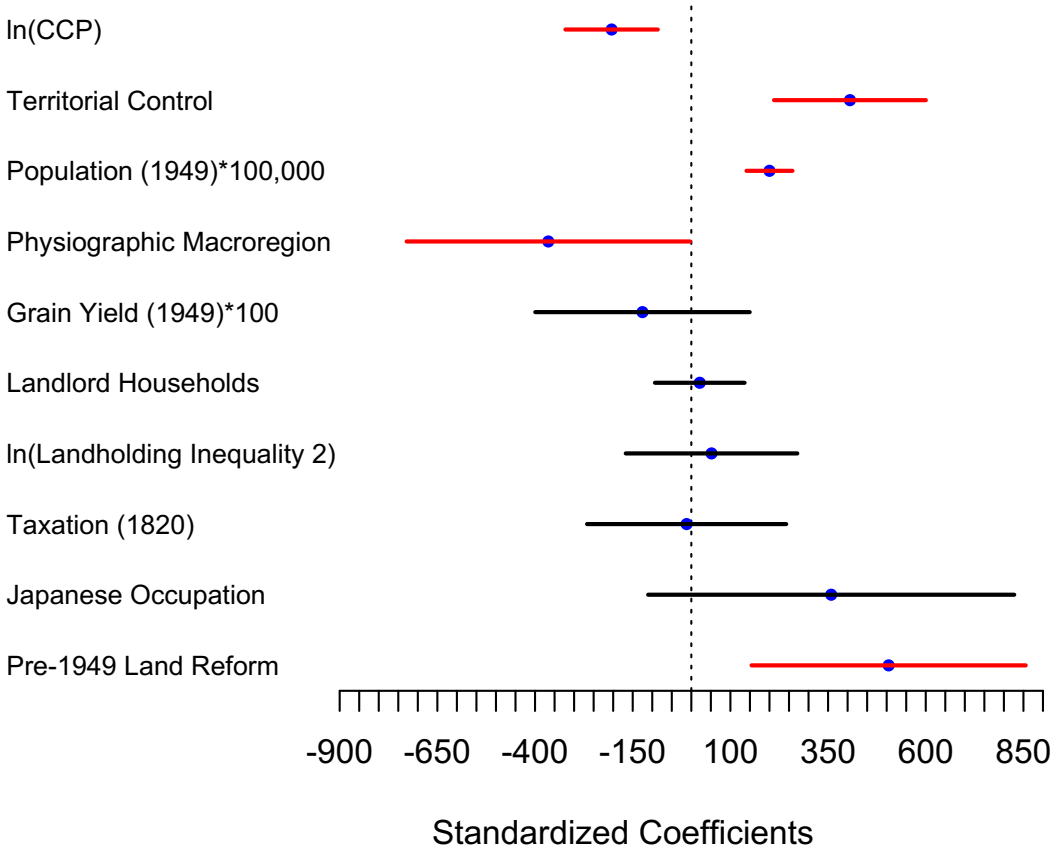
[70] For multiple imputation, data does not have to be missing completely at random (MCAR), but it should be at least missing at random (MAR) There is a decent case to be made that the data presented here are MAR. See Honaker et al., "Amelia II" for more on missingness requirements for multiple imputation. As discussed earlier, missing data in the gazetteers appears to be correlated with county-specific decisions on how to define the scope of state secrets as well as the gazetteer's date of publication. It also appears that gazetteers from relatively poor localities, which had fewer resources to compile gazetteers, produced shorter gazetteers with less complete data (though this, again, is not completely clear). There is little evidence, however, that missingness is dependent on the missing data itself—i.e. more violent places failed to report statistics on political violence. Moreover, I mitigated the issue of intentional data omission in the gazetteers by supplementing and cross-checking data from a variety of non-gazetteer sources, including internal documents and archives. Yet without the ability to gather such data from every county in the dataset, it was impossible to completely solve the problem of missingness of political violence data.

its class struggle narrative to mobilize locals, though, as Chapter 4 demonstrated, the Party was able to mobilize violence against non-landlords in Huaibei.

I find no support for greed and grievance arguments: socioeconomic variables were not significantly correlated with levels of violence. Grain yield has a negative coefficient, which contradicts the conventional "greed" hypothesis that predicts more violence in wealthier areas with more lucrative economic rewards and opportunities for participants who engage in violence. The percentage of landlord households has an expected positive, though small and insignificant, coefficient. This finding is not surprising in light of the qualitative evidence presented in Chapters 3 and 4. As discussed briefly in Chapter 4, the class labeling process and the target selection process were separate: cadres needed to distribute labels in a way that ensured there would be enough land to sufficiently flatten the distribution of land. During the selection of struggle targets, although communities certainly selected many targets labeled as landlords, plenty of targets had non-landlord class labels. The coefficients on the three grievance and revenge variables are also insignificant, though they are not all in their expected directions. Landholding inequality has a positive coefficient, in line with the prediction of the relative deprivation hypothesis; nevertheless, the correlation is insignificant in all models. Historical taxation has a negative and insignificant coefficient, which contradicts the expectation that tax-related grievances may have influenced locals' propensity to participate in violence. Lastly, the coefficient on Japanese occupation is large and positive, and barely insignificant at the $p < 0.05$ level, which lends little support to the idea that areas that suffered more under the Japanese occupation had stronger unresolved vendettas that could play out in the form of political violence during land reform.

Contrary to expectations, pre-1949 land reform shows a large and significant positive coefficient. Areas that had completed land reform before 1949 conducted re-inspections (复查) after 1949 to rectify possible errors in the earlier iteration of the campaign. While we would have expected there to be little additional violence during these re-inspections, as the population had already redistributed most of its land and mobilized violence, it may have been the case that cadres could easily mobilize locals to participate in a second round of the campaign. Though further research in areas that carried out land reform re-inspection work will have to confirm this conjecture, previous violence may have crystallized the symbolic boundaries of victimhood and oppression that the Party constructed in its initial round of moral mobilization during the Civil War. The concretization of these symbolic boundaries into new social boundaries that affected the distribution of resources and power—based now on class label and imbued with moral meaning—may have facilitated repeated mobilization against class enemies, who had by now been thoroughly discredited and painted as morally bankrupt.

Figure 5.1. Standardized OLS Coefficients (95% CI) for Determinants of the Number of Targets during Land Reform



I calculate first differences holding all covariates at their means, using Model 2 from Table 5.B. Moving from a locality with insecure territorial control to one with secure territorial control is associated with a 407 increase in the number of struggle targets. Conversely, moving from the bottom to the top quintile of Party members reduces the number of targets by 460.[71] From these calculations, it is evident that the counties that mobilized the greatest amount of violence during the land reform campaign were those that had the capacity to mobilize violence but poor capacity to control it once the campaign was underway. These areas enjoyed a secure

[71] These quantities of interest were generated using Zelig. Kosuke Imai, Gary King, and Olivia Lau, "Zelig: Everyone's Statistical Software," 2016, available at http://gking.harvard.edu/zelig.

political environment in which to mobilize the population, yet the Party struggled to rein in the violence it mobilized. Unsurprisingly, the least violent areas were those that had weak capacity to mobilize violence due to interference from local bandits and resistance groups. Intriguingly, county governments that had both high capacities for mobilizing and containing violence—that is, counties with secure military control and high Party density—did not maximize the amount of violence they mobilized; rather, they mobilized relatively moderate levels of violence, higher than places that had weak territorial control but lower than places that lacked containment capacity. These areas typify the Party's strategy of unleashing then restraining the masses and its emphasis on selective violence.

The Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries

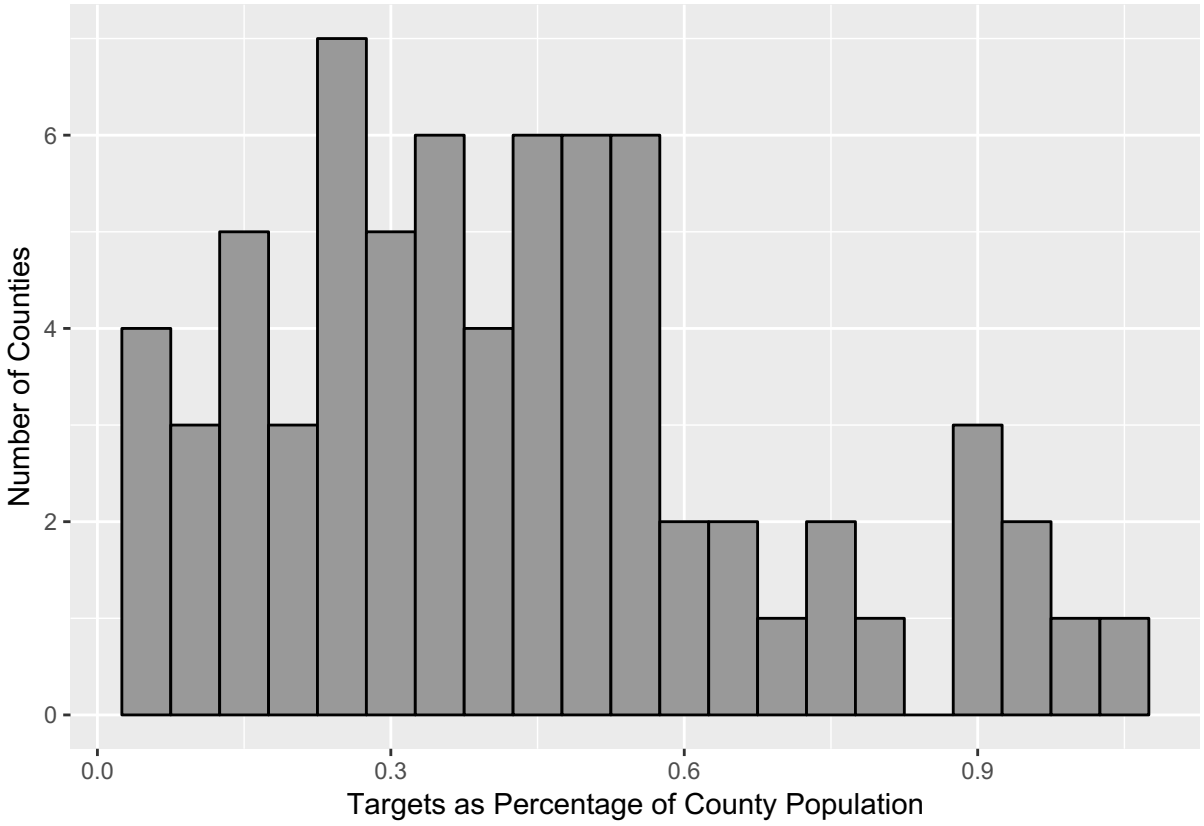
To test the robustness of these results, I conduct the same tests on violence data from the same 124 counties during the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries (1950-1953). Mao himself set quotas for arrests and executions for this campaign, which in most of the East China Bureau overlapped with land reform and sometimes was even carried out in tandem with it. In a Central Committee meeting, Mao declared that localities should take "0.1 per cent of the population as a standard and execute half of this figure first, and then wait and see how the situation develops."[72] As the campaign escalated in March 1951, local officials scrambled to make sure they hit this target; however, they also lacked the personnel to review and prosecute all of these cases so quickly, resulting in many "reckless arrests and reckless executions."[73] County gazetteer data reveals that arrests averaged around 0.4 percent of the population, far

[72] Yang Kuisong, "Reconsidering the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries," *The China Quarterly* 193 (2008): 108.

[73] Ibid., 113.

beyond the 0.1 percent quota (see Figure 5.2). Because execution data is limited and of questionable reliability, it is unclear what percentage of arrestees were executed.

Figure 5.2 Histogram of Percent of Total County Population Arrested during the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries in Anhui and Jiangsu



Seeing this rapid escalation in violence, Mao called for officials to rein in the violence and to constrain its scope to those who had attracted the public's hatred. In early May of 1951, Mao instructed Luo Ruiqing to hold a national public security conference to order the de-escalation of the campaign and called on certain regional leaders to pay attention to reckless arrests and killings.[74] After the high tide of 1951 and subsequent smaller peaks before 1953, the

[74] Ibid., 117.

government reported that 2.62 million people had been arrested, of which 1.29 million were imprisoned, 1.2 put under house arrest and surveillance, and 712,000 executed.[75]

There are several similarities between the land reform campaign and the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries, aside from their timing, that make them amenable to comparison. First, the Party leadership sent out conflicting directives to both mobilize and contain violence during the campaign. Even though Mao himself approved of the campaign and set quotas for its implementation, he was still not convinced of the need to crack down on so-called "counterrevolutionaries," as he was still concerned about recovering the economy. He was particularly concerned about widening the scope of attack; he warned against "striking out in all directions" and "making too many enemies."[76] As Yang Kuisong concludes, the implementation details of the campaign were extremely ambiguous, which left cadres confused about how far to go to mobilize the population without going too far.[77] Second, the campaign, like the land reform campaign, relied on popular participation to identify targets and carry out violence against them. The main tool of mass mobilization was the so-called "accusation session" (控诉会), which bore many resemblances to the struggle sessions and public sentencings of the land reform campaign. To be sure, unlike the land reform campaign, the Public Security Bureau (公安局) aided in implementing the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries, though its participation supplemented, not supplanted, mass participation. Third, like the land reform campaign, violence during the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries was temporally concentrated near the beginning of the campaign. Though the campaign did not officially end until 1953, the "high

[75] The total number, as Yang points out, is probably much larger, as many localities began to lie about execution figures once Mao criticized reckless executions in April 1951. See Yang, "Reconsidering," 120.

[76] Yang Kuisong, "Reconsidering," 104, fn. 8.

[77] Ibid., 106.

tide" of violence appears to have occurred in its first two years, particularly in 1951. Data from Anhui province shows that between the beginning of the campaign in October 1950 to its end in December 1953, officials in Anhui executed 32,876 individuals branded as counter-revolutionaries, nearly a third of the total number of people arrested during the campaign.[78] An overwhelming majority of executions and arrests—98.7 percent and 93.06 percent, respectively—occurred before the end of 1952, with the remainder occurring in 1953. Using 1949 population figures, this means 0.12 percent of the population was executed and 0.40 percent was arrested.[79] Though there is less data available for Jiangsu Province, Southern Jiangsu reported that it had executed approximately 0.09 percent of its population in the first year of the campaign, which was nearly at the execution quota of 0.1 percent that Mao had set for the entire campaign.[80] Finally and most importantly, like land reform, controlling the violence of the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries proved difficult, especially in localities that were not equipped to restrain the violence they had already mobilized, and the mobilization and containment of violence hinged on local government's organizational capacities. In sum, these similarities between the land reform campaign and the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries make the latter a useful case to test of the dynamics of violence during the early 1950s.

[78] Anhui Sheng Difang Zhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, *Anhui Province Public Security Gazetteer* [安徽省志公安志] (Hefei, Anhui Renmin Chubanshe: 1993), 183.

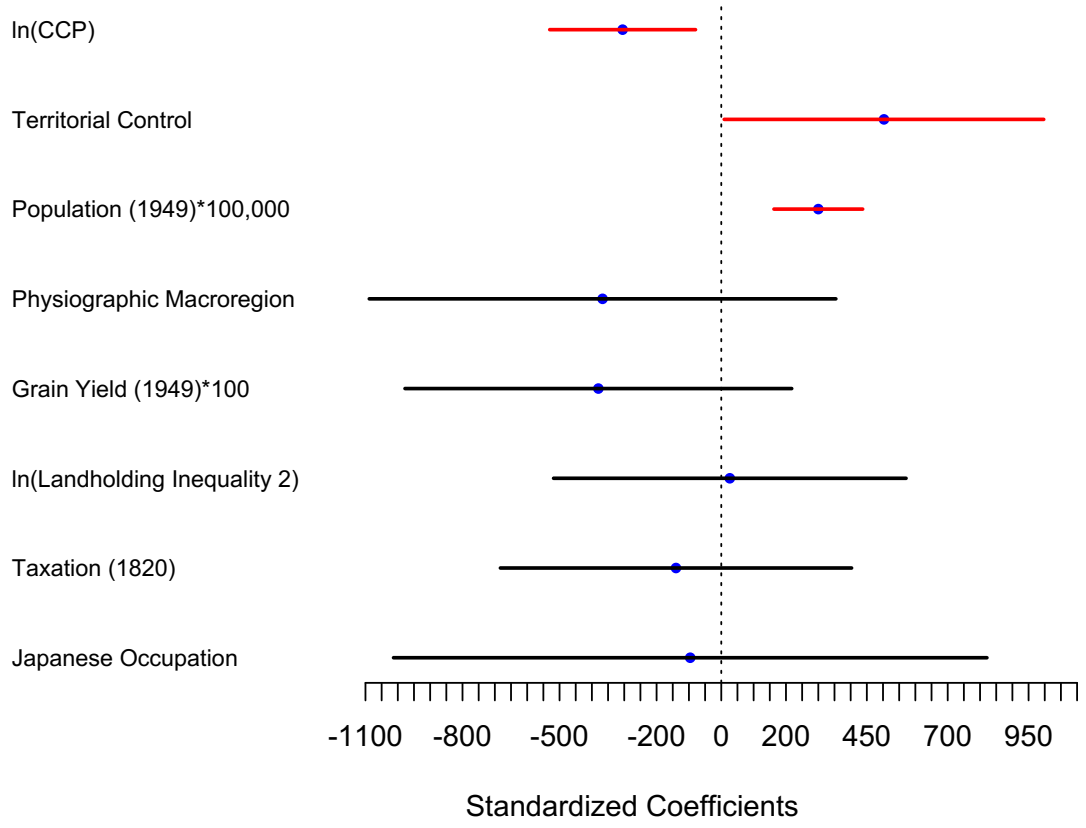
[79] Using 1953 population figures, these figures would be 0.11 and 0.36 percent, respectively.

[80] This figure was calculated using Southern Jiangsu's 1949 population figure. Execution data comes from Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Statistical Form on the Handling of Counterrevolutionary Criminals in the Southern Jiangsu Region between 11/1/1950 and 10/31/1951," [苏南专区自 1950 年 11 月 1 日至 1951 年 10 月 31 日处理反革命案犯统计表] 1951, *JSPA*, no. 3006—0050.

I use the same explanatory and control variables, with a couple of exceptions, to test the hypotheses regarding the significance of localities' capacities to mobilize and contain violence in determining the intensity of violence experienced in a locality.[81] The results of Models 1 and 2 in Table 5.C corroborate the findings from the earlier analysis of the land reform campaign: localities mobilized varying amounts of violence due to their capacities to mobilize and contain violence. As Figure 5.3 illustrates, Party membership has a negative association, significant at the $p < 0.01$ level, with number of arrests; while territorial control is positively correlated with arrests, significant at the $p < 0.05$. In all models, the only significant control variable was population.

[81] I do not include pre-1949 land reform and the percent of households labeled as landlords as controls because they are irrelevant to the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries.

Figure 5.3 Standardized OLS Coefficients (95% CI) for Determinants of the Number of Arrests during the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries



Calculating first differences provides a sense of the magnitude of these effects. Using the results from Model 2 and holding all covariates at their means, a switch from insecure to secure territorial control increases the number of arrestees by 510, while moving from the bottom to the top quintile of Party membership translates into a 750 decrease in the number of arrestees.

Discussion and Conclusions

In campaigns of state repression, where the aim is to govern, not eliminate, the targeted population, states do not seek to maximize the amount of violence they mobilize; rather, the need to preserve the selectivity of selective violence forces states to implement countermeasures to

contain the violence they mobilize. The initial mobilization of violence requires the state to possess a local monopoly on territorial control. Once mobilized, the local population will try to expand the scope of attack to include additional targets; therefore, the state also needs sufficient well-trained personnel to restrain the very violence it mobilizes. Thus, we find that in both the land reform campaign and the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries, subnational variation in the capacity to mobilize and contain violence greatly shaped the intensity of violence at the grassroots. This process of state-mobilized violence does not appear to be a function of local socioeconomic variables, such as economic development and inequality, or even political variables, like past patterns of violence, that figure heavily in scholarly accounts of civil war violence and genocide.

Yet despite the lack of strong quantitative support for these various "greed," "grievance," and revenge variables, it is important to remember that moral mobilization in many localities, as explained in Chapters 3 and 4, relied on a broad range of social boundaries and norms in the actual process of selecting—and punishing—targets of political violence.[82] Put together, these results suggest that the intensity of violence hinged on a locality's mobilization capacity more so than on its prevalence of grievances and motivations for revenge. Nevertheless, the structure of local society affected the kinds of social boundaries that were used to mobilize and direct violence. If the local government's mobilization capacity determined the *intensity* of violence at the grassroots, the locality's predominant social boundaries determined its *content*, as argued in Chapter 4. The mobilization of violence is a complex multi-faceted process; these variables of mobilization capacity and social boundaries do not negate one another's importance but rather influence different aspects of the mobilization process.

[82] As I have tried to emphasize in Chapter 4, moral mobilization did not lack adequate material to exploit and reframe to mobilize violence.

Chapter 6 – Comparative Perspectives and Conclusion

In 2015, sixty-five years after the inauguration of the land reform campaign, a curious post appeared on the official Sina microblog (微博) account of the traffic police brigade in Zizhou County, Shaanxi Province. It read as follows:

> On this day 65 years ago, June 30, 1950, the Agrarian Reform Law (土地改革法) was announced and put into effect. It announced the national 'abolition of the landlord class's landholding system of feudal exploitation, and the implementation of the peasantry's landholding system.' Hereafter, land reform—a period of killing and robbing, murdering others for property, and manufacturing hate, which destroyed the Chinese people's fine traditional morality—swept across China. Land reform was the beginning of the collapse of China's traditional morality![1]

Within hours state censors deleted the original post, though apparently not fast enough: by the time the post was taken down netizens had reposted it countless times on Weibo and WeChat, the country's two major social networking apps, causing a public stir. Shortly thereafter, media outlets circulated an official statement on the incident entitled "Shaanxi Traffic Police Microblog Claims Land Reform Manufactured Hatred, Administrative Personnel Turned Over to the Court." The article denounced the author's "inappropriate opinion" (不当言论) and for making claims about the land reform campaign that "went against common knowledge" (违背常识)—i.e. that the land reform campaign involved "killing and robbing, murdering others for property, and manufacturing hatred" (谋财害命、杀人越货、制造仇恨). While authorities failed to identify the original post's author, they singled out the microblog's administrator for not properly

[1] Though the original microblog post has been deleted, I was fortunate enough to receive a photo of the original post from a friend. Some news stories covering the incident have also reposted a picture of the original post—e.g. "Shaanxi Zizhou County Committee: Traffic Police Microblog's Opinion Was Inappropriate, [Relevant Individuals] Sent to Judicial System" [陕西子洲县委：交警微博言论不当，已移交司法机关], *Sohu News*, July 2, 2015, http://news.sohu.com/20150702/n416035133.shtml.

vetting the statement before posting it.[2] A year later the administrator was sentenced to one year in prison for neglect of duty.[3]

This was not the first time in recent years that the violent legacy of the land reform campaign generated an internet controversy in China. In late May 2014, Ying Kefu, an outspoken liberal scholar and former researcher at the Jiangsu Provincial Academy of Social Science, published a blog post containing several essays commemorating the late Nantong University professor Ding Hong. In one of the final essays in his long blog post—"Clearing the Landlords' Name" (为地主正名)—Ying presented Ding Hong's thoughts on the violent persecution of landlords during the land reform campaign, which he had written in his unpublished manuscript, *The Question of China's Landlord Economy* (中国地主经济问题). In the manuscript, which Ding gave Ying shortly before his death, Ding proclaimed that China's landlords were "the first martyrs of Communist idealism in Chinese society" (为共产主义理想付诸于中国社会的第一批殉难者). Ding argued that while some landlords were certainly exploitative, landlord-tenant relations were not generally acrimonious. Rather, "landlords were made into scapegoats [with the idea that] by taking down the landlords [we] were taking down the feudal system. This was confusing one thing for another (张冠李戴)." He concluded by

[2] "Shaanxi Traffic Police Microblog Claims Land Reform Manufactured Hatred, Administrative Personnel Turned Over to the Courts" [陕西交警微博称土改为造仇恨 管理员被移送司法], *Sina News*, July 2, 2015, http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2015-07-02/113332059254.shtml.

[3] "Opinion 'Criticizing Land Reform' Reposted by Shaanxi Zizhou Traffic Police Blog, Administrator Sentenced to Prison for Neglect of Duty" [陕西子洲交警官微转"批土改"言论，管理员被判玩忽职守获刑], *Caijing*, December 6, 2016, http://money.163.com/16/1206/18/C7KGOMOT002580S6.html.

condemning the violence of the land reform campaign as a period of "moral decay and regression" (道德沦丧和道德回归).[4]

After Ying's post began to circulate through Chinese social media, government-affiliated leftist political commentary websites assailed Ding Hong's claims about the land reform campaign. *Red Culture Net* (红色文化网), the mouthpiece for a state-sponsored Marxist-Leninist-Maoist think tank, asked in its headline: "What is the Internet Essay 'Clearing the Landlords' Name' Hiding?" The article dismissed Ding Hong's research as a "senseless heap of trash" (垃圾文字的无聊堆积) and accused his work of having a sinister ulterior motive: "[This essay] is aimed not only at reversing the verdict on the feudal landlord class; its target is also the ruling position of the Chinese Communist Party…"[5] Maoist political commentary site *Utopia* (乌有之乡) similarly excoriated Ying's collection of essays on Ding Hong's works:

> This article, from beginning to end, opposes…the October Revolution, the establishment of our Chinese Communist Party, the land revolution, and the defeat of the landlord class…This kind of article would not have been able to appear in Mao Zedong's time. Even if the author wrote it, he would not have dared to show it. Nowadays these kinds of articles are written, published on the internet, reposted by some people, and spread widely…Opinions that challenge our Party and our country's bottom-line (底线) must be criticized, condemned by authoritative [government] agencies, and then wiped clean from the internet.[6]

Most of the reposts of Ying's essay collection have been taken down, though some have continued to circulate. Ding Hong's unpublished manuscript, however, remains unavailable online, and its politically sensitive nature has made it nearly impossible to obtain in paper form.

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[4] "The Significance of Ding Hong—A Commentary on a Communist Forefather" [丁弘的意义—评说共产主义的先驱者], *China in Perspective*, May 14, 2014, http://www.chinainperspective.com/ArtShow.aspx?AID=25724.

[5] Tie Suohan, "What is the Internet Essay 'Clearing the Landlords' Name' Hiding?" [网文 "为地主正名" 隐藏着什么?], *Red Culture Net*, February 15, 2016, http://www.hswh.org.cn/wzzx/llyd/zz/2016-02-14/36346.html.

[6] "We Must Enforce the Dictatorship of the Proletariat Against Opinions That Challenge Our Party's Bottom-line" [对于挑战我们党底线的言论必须实行无产阶级专政], *Utopia*, April 12, 2016, http://www.wyzxwk.com/Article/yulun/2016/04/361164.html.

Interestingly, the 2015 microblog incident revived interest in Ying Kefu's article from the year prior, which reappeared briefly on WeChat.

I was in China doing fieldwork when the Shaanxi microblog controversy broke out, and I was struck by how the censored post's statement and state's defensive and acerbic reply—as well as Ding Hong and his detractors' earlier debate—touched upon many of the questions that had puzzled and fascinated me about the campaign: How exactly did the Chinese Communist Party mobilize villagers to participate in violent class struggle? Did the Party tap into the peasantry's seething resentment of the exploitative feudal economic system, or did the Party indeed "manufacture hatred"? What role did traditional social structures and moral norms play in the mobilization process?

Class Struggle Morally Understood

I have argued here that Chinese Communist Party's use of moral discourse to delineate moral boundaries that designated victims and oppressors and the sensationalization of the perceived moral transgressions of those defined in the latter category was the major impetus behind the mass mobilization of violence during the land reform campaign. As for the question of "manufacturing hatred," I have stressed that the provocation—or "incitement" (激发), to use the Party's own term—of moral outrage against the landed elites constituted the cornerstone of the Party's mobilization work. The mobilization of outrage followed an intricate process of moral boundary work that forged new conceptual distinctions—or social boundaries—between the oppressed "masses" (群众) and the oppressive "landlord class" (地主阶级).

These social boundaries were simultaneously new and old. They were new categorical divisions that distinguished between various classes within rural society, imported from the Soviet Union's own class stratification system. These class boundaries were then subsumed into a larger social boundary that juxtaposed the "good classes" who comprised the masses against a category of class enemies—landlords, evil tyrants, counterrevolutionaries, etc. It was onto this newly-imposed boundary between the masses and the landlord class and their associates that the Party grafted a new socio-behavioral boundary that not only reified this ingroup-outgroup distinction but also provided new "scripts of action," to use Wimmer's language, regarding how this outgroup should be viewed and treated.[7] This new moral boundary contained a script of action that justified the mistreatment, abuse, and even elimination of members of this category of class enemies because of their perceived moral turpitude.

Yet the content of these boundaries, the material that moral boundary work drew upon to create these new boundaries, were old. The creation of a morally retrograde category of people, defined in part by their wealth, drew on transgressions of traditional norms of propriety and virtue—expectations regarding how landlords should treat tenants and how officials and those in power should behave—that long preceded the Communists. The damning appellation of "evil tyrant" (恶霸) used during the land reform campaign to describe people who had allegedly transgressed against the community is a modern term that did not exist in the writings of antiquity; yet one can find its linguistic predecessors at least as far back as the Western Han period (206 BCE – 9 CE).[8] As I have argued in Chapter 2, the "landed despots and evil gentry"

[7] Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9.

[8] For example, the terms 豪强 and 豪猾, which refer to local despots or bullies from powerful families, appear in Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian* (史记) and later in the Book of Han (汉书), written in the Eastern Han

(土豪劣绅) that Mao describes in his 1927 Hunan Report were the same kinds of villains who populated folk stories and operas, and against whom peasants mobilized during times of economic crisis.

The Communist innovation was to conflate the newly-created boundary between the masses and the landlord class with these wicked figures through the identification and sensationalization of the supposed transgressions of long-standing norms of appropriate and good behavior. These techniques were not wholly new: speaking bitterness and struggle sessions had the precedents in the late-Qing state's rituals of moral governance and drew upon the imperial state's moralization of corruption. Rural folk opera and traditions of peasant rebellion provided styles of storytelling, theater, and norms of moral retributivism that the Party adapted to the style of speaking bitterness, the staging of struggle sessions, and the selection of struggle targets.

Looking at the regions of Jiangnan and Huaibei within Anhui and Jiangsu provinces, which conducted land reform after the 1949 revolution, I find in Chapter 3 that the Party mobilized violence via moral mobilization in the absence of salient class conflict and in wildly different local socioeconomic contexts. Its ability to do so lay not in its arbitrary and rigid implementation of economic class struggle but rather the application of class struggle morally understood. In wealthy and unequal Jiangnan and poor and less-stratified Huaibei, Party work teams and villagers focused on alleged moral transgressors from the landed elite, the group that the Party was most interested in targeting, but also from a substantial number of individuals from other socioeconomic strata who were viewed as the moral equivalents of the evil landlord class.

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period. See Guo Yingde and Guo Changbao, *Ancient China's Evil Tyrants* [中国古代的恶霸] (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan Guoji Youxian Gongsi, 1995), 2-5.

Thus, the association of non-landlord evil tyrants, thieves, bandits, and corrupt functionaries with the landed elite was not so much a deviation from mobilization policies as it was an intentional strategy of concretizing the moral division between the masses and the landlord class.

Understanding the land reform campaign through the lens of moral mobilization exposes the incongruity between "representational and objective reality" of which Philip Huang wrote over twenty years ago.[9] The Party's ability to embed the narrative of class struggle within a narrative of moral transgression helps explain how the campaign's rhetoric of class struggle simultaneously functioned as the "organizing principle" of the conflict even while its class rhetoric strayed wildly from the underlying economic reality. Similar to what Lee Ann Fujii observes in Rwanda, class became a "script" by which communities chose and attacked others—some of them landlords, some of them not—not for being wealthier or owning more land but for the harm, cheating, and pain they were perceived to have caused.[10] It was in this sense that the Party was able to transform violent class struggle during land reform into what Huang termed a "dramatic struggle of good against evil."[11]

Still, as I have stressed, this disjuncture between representation and reality was not complete: the reframing of suffering in terms of transgressions of existing moral norms maintained a loose connection between the objective conditions that stratified traditional Chinese society according to unequal access to land, political power, and military might. Where possible, the Party strove to find the overlap between the landed elite and transgressors. Thus, the moral

[9] Philip C. Huang, "Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution," *Modern China* 21, no. 1 (1995): 111.

[10] Lee Ann Fujii uses this term in reference to her observation that in Rwanda, "people did not kill over ethnicity, they killed with scripted ethnic claims." Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 180-185.

[11] Ibid., 125.

transgressions that the Party focused on, that were taken from private speaking bitterness sessions and brought onto the public stage, related mostly though not exclusively to relations between those in authority and local communities.

While the process of moral mobilization describes the principal techniques that the Party used to mobilize land reform violence, there were also significant local variations in the kinds of people targeted and the intensity of the violence mobilized. The Party's emphasis on moral transgression in mobilization can explain why we observe different kinds of people being targeted during class struggle in different socioeconomic contexts. In Chapter 4, I argue that the differences in the nature of the local elite and the predominant moral norms that governed the relationship between them and the rest of the community shaped the kinds of people who were targeted. In wealthy, unequal areas where ties between traditional economic landlords and tenants were prevalent, landlords bore the brunt of land reform violence for their alleged transgressions of norms of fairness and cheating in the landlord-tenant relationship (norms of propriety). Poor localities with low tenancy rates and inequality, dominated by strongmen and political officials, turned on those perceived to have transgressed norms of virtue and benevolent governance, for having brought harm to the community directly or indirectly by colluding with outside foreign, bandit, or government forces. Thus in Baoshan, communities rallied to denounce landlords not for their wealth but for their alleged mistreatment of tenants; in Fengyang, villagers condemned targets for their corruption and criminality or for working in collaboration with corrupt and criminal regimes or groups. Although the Party tried to direct this mobilization against perceived transgressors among the landed elite exclusively, that proved impossible in practice. In both Baoshan and Fengyang, the Party's mobilization efforts drew in a considerable

number of people from non-landlord backgrounds who had been accused of cheating or otherwise harming the community.

The intensity of violence the Party mobilized in a locality hinged largely on organizational factors relating to the mobilization capacity of the local government. I have argued in Chapter 5 that the local government faced two conflicting incentives: the need to mobilize violence and the need to control its scope. I find that the Party could mobilize more violence where it had secure territorial control for the duration of the campaign, because territorial control provided cadres a safe and stable environment for its extensive mobilization work and assured locals that they could participate in the campaign without suffering retaliatory violence from those they persecuted. Because of the Party's concern with controlling the scope of attack as to ensure the selectivity of violence, the Party required sufficient personnel and training to control the course of mobilization. Where the Party had a stronger presence, it was better positioned to remain at the helm throughout the mobilization process and prevent it from devolving into indiscriminate beatings and killings. Significantly, I do not find any support for the role of socioeconomic variables in predicting levels of violence, which accords with the notion that the Party did not rely on feelings of relative deprivation, or existing class conflict per se, as the primary basis for mobilization.

The rest of this conclusion discusses the scope conditions of the study, a demonstration of moral mobilization outside of China through brief case studies of the Spanish Inquisition and Stalin's Great Terror, and concludes with a discussion of this study's limitations and future areas of research.

Scope Conditions and Comparative Perspectives

Under what conditions would political actors adopt moral mobilization? I believe that we see this process at work in other cases of social mobilization where two conditions hold. First, *the social cleavages related to the main axis of conflict must be weak and non-salient*. Political actors use moral mobilization to overcome a major obstacle to mobilization: the absence of salient social boundaries directly relevant to the political actors' agenda that can be used for social mobilization. If there are salient social boundaries that they can use for social mobilization, there is little need to expend significant resources to conduct moral mobilization. Second, *the use of selective material incentives must be unavailable due to either limited resources or ideological opposition*. Selective material incentives are an obvious solution to the collective action problem, but political actors may have strong ideological reasons to oppose their use or they may be limited by their available resources. In the context of political violence, moral mobilization resembles what Jeremy Weinstein calls an "activist strategy" of recruitment and violence. Activist insurgency groups, in Weinstein's view, cannot rely on deep economic endowments to recruit and mobilize the population; rather, they must use non-economic, normative appeals to win support.[12] As we have seen in the Chinese case, the way in which the Party used selective material incentives reflected not just practical but also ideological concerns. The Party supported distributing political positions to a minority of fervent and talented participants with the intent that potential recruits would commit to the Party for the long-term, not just over the course of the campaign. For everyone else, cadres were expected to mobilize them without selective political or economic enticements, through what Weinstein calls "normative appeals."

[12] Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

In light of these scope conditions, moral mobilization can potentially apply to various kinds of mobilization, not all of which aim to mobilize participation in violence. Staying with the theme of social mobilization and violence, a clear example of the applicability of moral mobilization would be war mobilization. Where warring groups lack salient ethnic or religious divisions, moral boundary work can facilitate the construction of categorical distinctions between an oppressive and dissolute enemy and a virtuous and oppressed in-group. In this way moral boundary work creates comradery within army ranks based on shared feelings of oppression or victimization; simultaneously, it separates out the enemy as dissolute, rapacious, and deserving of punishment. As Chapter 2 described at length, during the Chinese Civil War the Party simultaneously deployed moral boundary work techniques to mobilize soldiers to fight the Nationalists and to mobilize villagers to attack class enemies during land reform. In mobilizing against the Nationalists, the Communists faced the daunting task of shifting the focus away from the Japanese and towards Han Chinese co-ethnics. In addition to using dramatic troupe performances that portrayed landlords as essentially evil villains, the Party carried out moral boundary work within army ranks by having soldiers share their stories of suffering and oppression to build internal cohesion. Through orchestrated discussions, Party cadres reframed this suffering as the product of class exploitation that was then tied to the corrupt and oppressive Nationalist regime. Because of the Nationalists' reliance on local elites, many of them landlords, to handle local political affairs, this mental association was not particularly difficult to make. To concretize these new moral boundaries, the Party had locals tell soldiers dramatic stories of misfortune due, allegedly, to the machinations of the corrupt Nationalist regime, and usually the landlords as well. The outrage these moral shocks provoked rallied the soldiers' spirits and enthusiasm for killing their Nationalist enemies.

Outside of the context of violent mobilization, a possible application for moral mobilization is populism. Laclau views populism as the product of boundary work—the division of society into the empty signifiers of "the people" and their "enemy"[13]—and much research on populist mobilization has argued that populist discourse is rooted specifically in a moral dichotomy that juxtaposes the virtuous people against the corrupt elite.[14] As in moral boundary work, populist mobilization attempts to collapse the mobilized group and the targeted group against which they are being mobilized into unitary blocs defined mainly by their moral characteristics. As Jansen asserts:

> [P]opulist rhetoric ultimately aims at forging vertically oppositional solidarities at a national level. Such a Manichean discourse, emphasizing the immorality of the elite, is instrumental to the rhetorical project of elevating the moral worth of—and collapsing competing distinctions within the category of—'the people.'[15]

Indeed, Gidron and Bonikowski describe the constitution of "the people" versus "the elites" using the term "moral boundary"; they argue that "populist politics play a constitutive role in political realignments, in which moral boundaries between groups are redrawn and categories of 'us' and 'them' emerge."[16] Indeed, so much is populist mobilization identified with morality that some scholars of populism have argued that the moral dichotomy at its heart is its core defining feature.[17]

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[13] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

[14] Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," (Working Paper, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University: Working Paper Series, No. 13-0004, 2013), 1-38; Robert S. Jansen, "Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism," *Sociological Theory* 29, no. 2 (2011): 75-96; and Luke March, "From Vanguard of the Proletariat to Vox Populi: Left-Populism as a 'Shadow' of Contemporary Socialism," *SAIS Review* 27, no. 1 (2007): 63-77.

[15] Jansen, "Populist Mobilization," 84.

[16] Gidron and Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism," 2.

[17] Luke March avers, "[Populism] implies an identifiable form of organization—fluid structures and direct mobilization behind a personalized, charismatic leader. But while this style and organization clearly facilitate the ability of the populist leader to mobilize the volonté genérale, charismatic authority, anti-institutional mobilization,

Comparing populist and moral mobilization suggests that populist mobilization may be a particular instantiation of moral mobilization; while I do not argue with scholars' definition of populism as a moral construct, it appears to share much with other forms of moral mobilization, violent and nonviolent. As an area for future research, scholars can investigate whether populist leaders use techniques of moral boundary work and moral shocks to construct and exploit these categories of the corrupt elite and virtuous people. Going beyond analyses of discourse, how do populist elites use the language of moral transgression to draw upon individuals' lived experiences to create new conceptual distinctions of a victimized "people" and an "oppressive" elite? Are there specific techniques or rituals in which they use concrete examples of elite moral transgression and popular suffering to draw these moral boundaries? Do populist leaders mobilize supporters by provoking their moral outrage through dramatized accounts of elite corruption?

Comparative Cases

Social mobilization requires political elites to mobilize people according to social boundaries that accord with elites' overarching strategic and ideological goals and the lived experiences of potential participants.[18] Where pre-existing social boundaries that meet these criteria are lacking, political actors can turn to moral mobilization to forge new categorical distinctions that differentiate the population being mobilized from the target of mobilization. This process of moral boundary works creates for the mobilized population a new sense of

simplistic language, and a reliance on slogans are features shared by many non-populist actors. The ideological focus on the 'corrupt elite' versus 'moral people' dichotomy is not." March, "Vox Populi," 65.

[18] Roger V. Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 18.

themselves as victims of an oppressive, morally bankrupt other. Selectively identifying alleged moral transgressions committed by members of this outgroup ignites outrage against the group as a whole, crystallizes these newly-imposed moral boundaries, and galvanizes mobilization against them.

To show the portability of moral mobilization, I demonstrate the use of moral mobilization to mobilize violence in two cases: The Spanish Inquisition and Stalin's Great Terror. Both cases meet moral mobilization's two principal scope conditions: elites attempted to mass mobilize violence where existing relevant social cleavages were weak—i.e. there was little to no pre-existing animosity towards the targeted group—and where they could not or chose not to resort to selective material incentives.

The Spanish Inquisition (1483-1834)

The rise of Christian humanism and Protestantism pushed the Church in Spain to identify and punish threats to its authority, mainly in the form of heretics, or those who spoke out against Church doctrine or otherwise threatened ecclesiastical authority. For centuries the Church had worried about the nebulous threat of heresy, but, paradoxically, it appears that there was no "general popular antipathy towards heresy as such."[19] As R. I. Moore asserts:

> That observation made, the over-familiar assertion that 'medieval man' feared and resented any deviation from his simple Catholic faith is remarkably difficult to justify. On the contrary, the reason why preachers of heresy were denounced, pursued and extinguished by whatever means availed was precisely the fear that they would undermine the faith of the *simplices*, and with it the social order.[20]

In Spain, despite assertions of the fervent religiosity of Spaniards, villagers were generally uninterested in the issue of heresy, which the Spanish authorities considered a significant threat

[19] Robert I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 109.

[20] Ibid., 107.

to their power. Organizing and implementing a violent inquisition against these perceived enemies, however, was impossible without mass cooperation; the inquisitors needed to convey the urgency of heresy to the Spanish public and enlist their help in the inquisition. Underfunded and understaffed, the Inquisition relied heavily on testimonies it collected from locals, though "[h]ostility to the tribunal at a popular level was commonplace."[21] Because of this public ambivalence, and, at times hostility, a major task of the Inquisition involved mobilizing public cooperation. Indeed, Henry Kamen has argued that "the essential component of an Inquisition was and is the compliance and cooperation of ordinary people."[22]

How did the Spanish Inquisitors mobilize a population that seemed rather apathetic about heresy to join them in the search for heretics? I suggest that the Inquisition used moral mobilization to overcome the public's apathy towards heresy by identifying, emphasizing, and sensationalizing the supposed transgressions of alleged heretics to draw a new moral boundary between the virtuous Catholic public and heretical sinners. Associating speaking out against the Church with sin provided the public a means for understanding and relating to the danger of heresy. Moreover, the idea of using sin as justification for mobilization was, as one may expect, rather common in Europe of the Middle Ages. Among European communities there were powerful, entrenched beliefs about how sinful behavior—mainly on the part of Jews and Muslims—could bring plagues or other calamities to the villages. Nirenberg argues that the perception of sin was enough to galvanize communities and authorities against a suspected group or even an individual sinner. He cites an example of a man accused of "enormous crimes" whose

[21] Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 347.

[22] Ibid., 393.

immoral behavior caused people to "wonder[] if some great plague would not follow in the land, because of the injustice and impunity of this sin and others."[23]

Central to the mobilization efforts of the Inquisition was the invention of the "heretic." The definition of heresy changed over time and across countries, though the Church generally defined it as whatever set of behaviors seemed to threaten its interests. The Inquisition's moral boundary work sought to socially construct and justify the persecution of so-called heretics by exploiting the idea of sin and by subsuming under the label of heresy a broad "general class of moral offenses."[24] Because inquisitors were few in number and poorly funded, the tribunal itself did not carry out moral boundary work; it delegated that task to the local clergy. Before a tribunal arrived, local clergy, on the orders of the tribunal, would deliver sermons against heresy and detail criteria for identifying heretics within the congregation. Once the tribunal had arrived, local clergy would then proclaim an "Edict of Grace" that opened up a period of several weeks or months "when people might voluntarily confess or identify suspects to the inquisitors;" the "Edict of Faith," which eventually replaced the Edict of Grace, went so far as to promise excommunication to those who failed to confess their sins or unmask heretics living among them.[25] Aside from asserting "a moral obligation to denounce both oneself and others," the reading of the Edict was part of an elaborate ceremony in which the inquisitors, shortly after arriving in a locality, would hold a mass for the local community where they would "hold a crucifix in front of the congregation and ask everybody to raise his right hand, cross himself and repeat after the inquisitor a solemn oath to support the Inquisition and its ministers." The fear of

[23] David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 239.

[24] Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 87.

[25] Ibid., 90-91.

being associated with sin, being expelled from the Church, or being denounced by someone else unleashed waves of denunciations against those who were perceived to have committed one of the litany of moral offenses described in sermons or otherwise had a "bad reputation" in the local community.[26]

As with any campaign of mass mobilized violence, the ever-present desire for revenge in local communities threatened to disperse the energies and resources of the Inquisition.[27] Extensive investigative could not prevent false reporting by locals trying to exploit the Inquisition to settle old scores. Nevertheless, "there is also substantial evidence that inquisitors became relatively more skillful than others in identifying evidence or accusations given for other than pious reasons."[28] Moreover, the Holy Office was sincerely concerned with dealing with potential threats to its authority, much more so than meting out violence per se. In fact, in the majority of cases, the inquisitors recommended "reconciliation with the Church," lesser sentences in accordance with the nature of their crime—e.g. wearing the *sanbenito* on certain holidays, forced pilgrimage, property confiscation, exile, imprisonment, etc.[29]

The Inquisition hoped that the public display of moral transgressions—moral shocks—would mobilize the faithful, despite their persistent apathy, in support of the Church. The Inquisition used these moral transgressions as spectacles, not merely for punishment, and only the most dramatic transgressions were worthy of publicity. Indeed, cases of minor transgressions were not even given a public audience: their sentences were relayed to the transgressors in

[26] Kamen, 227-233.

[27] Kalyvas has extensively documented the pervasiveness of revenge motives in civil war violence. See Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

[28] Peters, *Inquisition*, 92.

[29] Ibid. 94.

private at an *auto particular*. More serious cases of moral transgression were punished at spectacular *autos-de-fé*, where the Church could use elaborate pageantry and symbolism to showcase the egregiousness of convicts' sins and mete out appropriate punishments. Moral transgressors became part of the Holy Office's "numerous morality plays, at which large numbers of outsiders, dressed in penitential costumes, underwent public humiliation, acknowledging their guilt while prostrate before the green cross of the Inquisition."[30] These public spectacles "served as a means of reinforcing the faith of those who observed them as much as a means of celebrating the penitence of those who participated in them."[31] Through these "rituals of social cohesion, where evildoers were separated from the Christian community,"[32] the Inquisition deepened the moral boundaries it established and repeatedly emphasized the distance between true Christians and heretics.

This abbreviated account of the Spanish Inquisition reveals that the tribunals were able to use moral mobilization to overcome significant public apathy toward the enterprise of hunting real or perceived challenges to the Church. Introducing the notion of the "heretic," which was then equated with sin and encompassed a vast category of moral offenses—e.g. spreading Judaism or Islam, homosexuality, witchcraft, etc.—provided a tangible basis for mobilizing locals to denounce others to the tribunals. The spectacular display of those accused of moral transgression aimed at solidifying this new boundary between heretic and the virtuous Catholic community.

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[30] William E. Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy the Spanish Inquisition from the Basque Lands to Sicily* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 322.

[31] Peters, *Inquisition*, 93-94.

[32] Monter, *Frontiers*, 322.

The Great Terror under Stalin (1936-1938)

When Sergei Kirov, one of Stalin's staunchest supporters, was assassinated in Leningrad in 1934, Stalin blamed the incident on the machinations of "Trotskyists" concealed within the Party ranks, and he used the assassination to justify the launching of "a vast campaign against alleged anti-Soviet conspirators."[33] A massive wave of violence ensued in July 1937, when Stalin claimed that "a large number of former kulaks and criminals…are the chief instigators of all sorts of crimes"[34] and demanded local leaders apprehend these "hostile elements" and send them to the troikas, three-person tribunals led by regional Party secretaries that hastily distributed sentences to alleged anti-Stalinists.[35] The Party had also decided to shift its focus away from purges of the Party elite; Stalin sought to shake up the leadership personnel in the factories—namely, factory shop managers and Party officials—in his hunt for Trotskyists.

Few, if any, factory workers knew what a Trotskyist was, and district officials "as late as fall 1936…were still unsure how to identify a 'Trotskyist-Zinovievite.'"[36] The Soviets were clearly not drawing upon pre-existing social cleavages between factory workers and so-called Trotskyists, so when they attempted to mobilize workers to participate in the campaign to "unmask" internal enemies within the factory, they received a tepid response. How did the Soviets successfully mobilize workers to participate in the Great Terror under these conditions? Looking at the Great Terror from the perspective of moral mobilization, the Soviets mobilized

[33] Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 62.

[34] J. Arch Getty, "'Excesses Are Not Permitted': Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s," *The Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 117.

[35] Pipes, *Communism*, 64.

[36] Wendy Z. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 88.

mass participation by associating the label Trotskyist with the image of the industrial "wrecker," which facilitated the creation of a new moral boundary between victimized workers and negligent and malicious factory management.

The Soviets engaged in moral boundary work to guide workers to understand and identify anti-Soviet or Trotskyist elements by drawing on normative transgressions regarding the proper treatment of workers—i.e. "wrecking." The rapid industrialization of the Soviet economy in the 1930s had generated a tremendous number of industrial accidents that became a popular source of discontent for factory workers. Although the root cause of these industrial accidents was the state's strategy of rapid industrialization, officials redirected the blame for these accidents to a nebulously-defined group of "wreckers"—i.e. people who intentionally or out of negligence caused industrial accidents. This shift in focus, Wendy Goldman argues, was extraordinarily effective: "The new emphasis on wrecking as an explanation for production problems transformed conflicts among shops heads and engineers into political warfare."[37]

To mobilize workers against "Trotskyists" and other ill-defined enemies, local authorities engaged in face-to-face boundary work to clarify the division between the mass of factory workers and suspected wreckers. Similar to the Chinese Communists' "informal chats" and "small group" meetings, authorities "held [meetings] in all the shops during special 'politdni' or 'political days' to teach people 'how to recognize the aims, methods, practical wrecking, and diversionist work of foreign espionage organs and their right-Trotskyist agents.' And the papers encouraged employees to 'unmask' (razoblachit') or 'tear off the masks' of hidden enemies and expose their 'true faces'"[38] This process of moral boundary work had its precedents in Czarist

[37] Wendy Z. Goldman, "Small Motors of Terror: The Role of Factory Newspapers," in *The Anatomy of Terror: Political Violence under Stalin*, ed. James R. Harris (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 246.

[38] Ibid., 247.

Russia. Hoffman notes that the imperial regime developed techniques of "social cataloguing" and "social excision" by which it isolated or exiled threats to the social body and demarcated "deviant groups."[39]

Simply conflating the idea of wrecking and industrial accidents with Trotskyism was only the first step in mobilizing factory workers; authorities used sensationalized accounts of wrecking—moral shocks—to galvanize the moral outrage of factory workers and motivate their participation in the unmasking effort. Near the beginning of the campaign to mass mobilize factory workers in late 1936, the Soviets exploited the Kemerovo mines explosion to underscore the danger of wreckers. The show trial portrayed workers as "victims" of reckless and malicious managers.[40] Local industrial accidents became opportunities for sensationalized examples of factory management misconduct and disregard for the workers. A Party official and manager of a mill was accused of "poisoning the workers" after some workers fell ill after a chemical accident exposed them to noxious fumes. When he apparently reprimanded a worker for causing an accident, another worker criticized him, saying: "A person should think about how to talk to a Soviet citizen. Is this how a Soviet engineer should speak to a worker? A worker who takes every breakdown deeply to heart?"[41] By the end of the campaign, the massive attack on the moral integrity of factory management and unions was so thorough—one newspaper decried them as "an entire army of free loaders and good-for-nothings"—that the state had to intervene to rehabilitate their image, as factory discipline had severely declined.[42]

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[39] David L. Hoffman, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 248.

[40] Goldman, *Terror*, 102.

[41] Goldman, "Motors," 249-252.

[42] Goldman, *Terror*, 257.

The CPSU was evidently self-aware of the moral nature of its mobilization work. At the end of the Great Terror in 1939, Andrei Andreev announced that "our Party home has become cleaner and fresher…[and] elements of moral degeneration have largely disappeared." He continued:

> The entire Party has come to the Eighteenth Congress with a feeling of *deep moral satisfaction* [emphasis added] with its work. How, comrades, could we not be satisfied when the Party with the support and participation of the entire people succeeded in crushing and annihilating the Trotskyist-Bukharinist cadres and all other conspirators, wreckers, murderers, and spies.[43]

Evidently, by the end of the Great Terror the term Trotskyist had transformed into a catch-all category for moral deviants who became the lightning rod for the Soviets' mass mobilization efforts.

In the mass mobilization of factory workers during the Great Terror, officials delineated a moral distinction between the victimized and honest working class and malicious and negligent "wreckers" in factory management positions. The theatrical use of national and local industrial accidents to generate moral outrage against factory officials further entrenched these boundaries and motivated workers to denounce their supervisors on the shop floor. While I argue that moral mobilization was at the core of the mass mobilization of factory workers during the Great Terror, Richard Pipes contends that fear motivated this participation. "[F]ailure to report 'subversive' talk," he argues, "was tantamount to subversion."[44] As with the Spanish Inquisition and Chinese land reform, fear most likely played a significant role in driving participation in public denunciations, but only after the campaign was well underway. Fear cannot explain how the Soviets succeeded in initially mobilizing this participation, which required Party elites to

[43] David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 87.

[44] Pipes, *Communism*, 65.

overcome substantial inertia and apathy among factory workers. Once in motion, fear certainly maintained, if not accelerated, the momentum of the campaign.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study merely provides an entry point for the study of the links between social mobilization, morality, and conflict. This section details some of the limitations of the current study and potential areas of future research.

The greatest limitation of this study stems from the current state of highly restricted archival access—for Chinese and Western researchers alike—in China. While this study has portrayed the process of moral mobilization and the ways in which it varied across local socioeconomic and political context, it cannot make strong causal claims regarding the conditions under which moral mobilization succeeds in mobilizing local communities and the size of such effects. This is because data limitations prevent tightly controlled comparisons at the local level that can isolate potential causal effects. Future research could explore the conditions under which moral mobilization is more or less effective through controlled comparisons between townships within the same county and across different macro-regions. Because the process of mobilization unfolded at the township and village levels, the county can only provide insight into the general form mobilization assumed, what county work teams attempted to do, and the kinds of local policies they were issuing. Collecting archival material on different townships in a single county is a formidable endeavor: until the archives are open it will be nearly impossible to collect materials on townships of one's choosing, not just because of issues of access but also issues of availability, as some of these reports may not exist or may have been

destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.[45] Nevertheless, controlled comparisons between townships within a single county could illuminate how factors like local social structures and Party leadership and training influenced mobilization.

Future research should investigate the kinds of local social structures that are more or less amenable to moral mobilization. An important theory that this study lacked the data to test is Varshney's theory of intercommunal engagement. Varshney argues that local civil society groups that bridge across potentially conflictual social cleavages can resist the machinations of elites who attempt to mobilize violence in their community.[46] The current study suggests that the lack of salient social cleavages did not stop officials from successfully mobilizing violence. While Varshney observes that quotidian cross-ethnic ties in the Indian countryside kept peace between Muslims and Hindus, China's land reform provides an example where face-to-face ties were in fact a powerful basis for moral mobilization—i.e. there is little reason to think that social harmony arises from familiarity. Nevertheless, it is plausible that community-wide social organizations could potentially resist elite attempts at moral mobilization. Testing these hypotheses, however, requires fine-grained, village-level data that was unavailable for the purposes of this study.

Another area of inquiry would investigate individual-level receptiveness to moral mobilization. How do age, class, gender, race, and education affect how convincing individuals find moral appeals that attempt to convince them of their victimhood and the misdeeds of others? It is conceivable that social status may affect receptiveness to moral appeals: these appeals may

[45] The Baoshan County archive, for example, was sacked during the Cultural Revolution.

[46] Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

find more resonance among those who belong to a historical disadvantaged group or are unemployed or in an occupation with poor economic security. Do moral shocks solicit outrage more easily in some individuals than others? And does outrage always lead to increased mobilization? These individual-level inquiries could be fruitfully explored with social psychological priming experiments that consider the effect of perceived moral wrongdoing on the propensity to take political action on an issue or to use violence to achieve a political goal.

Moral boundary work not only influences how individuals make sense of the world but also the very way in which they see themselves as they participate in a cause; however, it is unclear for how long these socially constructed identities persist. How long do moral boundaries last, what undergirds their persistence and reproduction, and what enduring effects do they have for subsequent periods of mobilization? When looking at Maoist China, this is a particularly puzzling question. The Party continued to use the class boundaries it established during land reform as the basis for further mobilization work throughout the Maoist period; the moral expectations attached to these class labels shaped the fault lines that structured the violence of the Cultural Revolution.[47] Astonishingly, only a few years after Mao's death and the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Party suddenly eliminated the class label system: the moral boundaries that governed the life chances of every Chinese citizen had vanished as swiftly as they emerged. Did these boundaries, which were so central to the operation of Chinese society under Mao,

[47] In contrast, Andrew Walder has argued against the importance of class labels in factional violence during the Cultural Revolution, emphasizing instead the salience of the cleavages that developed between the Red Guards during their skirmishes. But Walder's analysis, which focuses on Beijing, does not preclude the possibility that class labels constituted the fault lines of conflict in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. In rural areas, the distribution of class labels intertwined with mass violence during the land reform campaign, which was not implemented in the cities; therefore, one would expect that the legacy of land reform violence increased the salience of class labels in subsequent periods of political violence. Cf. Andrew G. Walder, *Fractured Rebellion: The Beijing Red Guard Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

simply dissolve and leave no lasting legacy? How do these erstwhile boundaries relate to the moral boundaries that underpin social mobilization in China today?

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Appendix A. Abbreviations for Major Archival and Documentary Sources

AHSTDGGZL	《安徽省土地改革资料》 *
BSDA	Baoshan District Archives
CCDC	Fengyang County Archives, Contemporary China Documents Center
CCPM	Database on the History of Contemporary Chinese Political Movements, CUHK
JSPA	Jiangsu Provincial Archives
JSNMYD	《江苏农民运动档案史料选编》 *
JSTGYD	《江苏省土地改革运动》
QJCA	Quanjiao County Archives
SBTGWX	《苏北土地改革文献》 *
SNTGWX	《苏南土地改革文献》*
SHMA	Shanghai Municipal Archives
XCSSN	《乡村三十年：凤阳农村社会经济发展实录（1949-1983)》*
ZGTDGGSLXB	《中国土地改革史料选编》*

* = Internal publication (内部资料 / 内部印行)

Appendix B. Notes on Methodology

Much of the archival and documentary material I use here reflects the standpoint of Party officials at various levels of the political hierarchy. Where available, I have incorporated material from memoirs and oral histories to supplement the analysis; however, I have not found substantial discrepancies between Party and non-Party accounts. Despite the heavy reliance on Party materials, much of the material I use was internal (内部) and not meant for public consumption, which mitigates some issues of bias. A major advantage of using Party materials from the 1940s and 1950s is that they do not suffer from issues of memory recall and retrospective rationalization, as oral histories do.[1]

One considerable concern is that local cadres were deliberately misinforming their superiors to hide their flaws; however, this concern is not nearly as severe as one would think. The Party's political culture in the 1940s and early 1950s invited a great deal of self-reflection and self-criticism without severe punishment. As Vivienne Shue observed in her analysis of provincial Party newspapers during this period, nearly every report provided a candid account of both positive and negative outcomes.[2] Even by the early 1950s land reform policy was being debated openly—and amicably—by central Party leaders: Deng Zihui publicly challenged Liu Shaoqi's "economic" land reform approach. The Center also tolerated if not encouraged variation in the implementation of land reform policy—according to local conditions,

[1] This is why I use oral history evidence so sparingly throughout this study. Most participants in land reform are no longer living or, at the time of this study, in their eighties, at least. I encountered glaring issues in memory recall, self-censorship, retrospective rationalization, etc. This, of course, is a major pitfall of interviewing past participants who are still living under the very regime that sanctioned the campaign of political violence.

[2] Vivienne Shue, *Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development Toward Socialism, 1949-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

particularly military control and bandit resistance.[3] In such a political atmosphere, while we should remain cautious when interpreting reports by local cadres and work teams, we should not discount the genuine desire of Party leaders, both local and central, to learn from policy mistakes and find new ways of adapting to challenging circumstances.

A final concern is that the Party's organizational culture—then and now—emphasized hierarchy and enumerated procedures. It is difficult, therefore, to read Party documents—both published and unpublished, internal and public—and ascertain whether the steps and procedures outlined in their summary and work reports faithfully reflect what actually happened on the ground. We must ask, then, to what extent are these reports fitting a messy reality into a more acceptable organizational form? To deal with this problem, I emphasize material that provides concrete details and examples of the implementation of procedures and problems encountered in the process.

A significant shortcoming of the data collection process is the underrepresentation of "popular materials" (民间材料)—i.e. data not generated by the Party. Because of low literacy rates in the early years of the PRC, there is little written record of what everyday people thought and felt *written by the participants themselves*. Party materials do include many testimonies and interviews done with locals about their thoughts on the campaign, some of which are revealing and appear quite candid. Even memoirs, though a valuable historical source, tend to be written invariably by former land reform cadres, many of whom were urban intellectuals.

[3] See Frederick C. Teiwes, "The Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime, 1949-1957," in *The Politics of China: Sixty Years of the People's Republic of China*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6-86.

Appendix C. Chapter 4 Appendix

Table 4.A Register of Landlords Struggled Against in Three Districts of Baoshan County[4]

Surname	Land Size (mu)	Political Background	Reason for Struggle	Punishment	Number of Attendees
1. Lei	30.5		Colluded with the Nationalists to steal land in the past; swindled and exploited the people; hid land; masses demanded [his punishment].	Subjected to speaking bitterness; beaten, insulted, had his clothing stripped off, and paraded through the streets.	1,200
2. Chen	48		Failed to report all of her land.	Masses demanded that she kneel; made to promise to turn over grain.	Over 600
3. Shen	~74	Township head under GMD; worked for the land survey bureau (测量局) when he was 20.	Masses believed he had hidden land.	Forced to turn over land.	Over 600
4. Wang	Over 45		Tried to spread his landholdings across three households (himself, his son, and his wife).	Forced to turn over his land that he tried to separate and turn over summer tax grain in compensation.	Over 600
5. Zhou	74	Informant for former township head	Didn't report all of his land.	Admitted that he hid 27 mu of land; forced to turn over all of his grain.	
6. Gu	58	Former township head	As former township head, fleeced the people of their wealth; aided the bandits and local tyrants, so the masses said they wanted to struggle against him. The masses said "[we] will never forget his crimes."	Subjected to struggle through reasoning (说理斗争).	Over 98% of the entire township across 11 villages

[4] Songjiang Prefecture Party Committee. "Survey Register of Landlords Struggled Against During the Autumn Responsible Burden Movement (Chengqu/Liuxing/Yuepu)," [秋季合理负担运动中被斗争地主调查登记表(城区/刘行/月浦)] 1951, *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-051.

7. Zhu	200		Hid land; split his family's landholdings.	Struggle through reasoning.	Over 100
8. Zhou	103		Hid land.	Forced to apologize to the masses.	Over 400
9. Wang	45		Failed to submit tax grain; frightened livestock; the masses said that the "old devil" (老鬼) needed to be struggled against and were very unhappy that he never submitted a single grain of tax grain.	Made to kowtow twice, but he refused to kneel.	300
10. Chen	110		Collected rents and spread rumors	No physical abuse used during struggle.	Over 400
11. Su	46		Sabotaged the autumn grain requisition; led the masses to attack the government.	Strung up with a rope.	Over 100
12. Zhang	45	Former bureaucrat	Constantly engaged in "bad behavior" (不良行为); was a notorious evil tyrant in the locality; the masses demanded he be struggled against.		Over 500
13. Zhang	97		Hid land, spread rumors, sabotaged autumn grain requisition	Mainly forced to reveal hidden land and turn over autumn tax grain, along with summer tax grain for extra compensation.	Over 400
14. Xu	40		Failed to report all of his land.	Struggle through reasoning; forced to reveal hidden land.	520
15. Huang	41	Former *baojia* head; became a bandit after his son died.	Failed to report all of his land; collected rent early; took land by force.	Struggle through reasoning; forced to reveal hidden land.	600

16. Gu	47		Failed to report all of his land; starved livestock; resisted grain requisition.	Struggle through reasoning; forced to reveal hidden land.	350
17. Wang	200		Failed to report all of his land.	Forced to turn over his grain and land.	850
18. Jin	300		Failed to report all of his land.	Forced to turn over his grain and land.	600
19. Lu	80		Scattered his land to avoid his [rent] burden.	Forced to turn over rent in an amount commensurate with the amount of unreported land.	40
20. Fei		Township head during Japanese occupation	Guilty of eight major crimes [罪状].	Turned over to the government.	2000
21. Shen	73		Stood up for those who did not report their land and showed sympathy to those who do not turn over their grain on time.	Forced to turn over his land and grain.	120
22. Hu	212		Failed to fully report her land.	Forced to turn over her land.	Over 400
23. Shen	138		Failed to fully report his land.	Forced to turn over his land.	Over 1000
24. Zhang	90		Failed to fully report his land.	Forced to turn over his grain.	800
25. Zhu	150		Failed to fully report his land.	Forced to turn over his grain.	1500
26. Yan	Over 80	Former administrator	Used his power as an administrator within the "reactionary" government to hide his land; the masses thought he should be struggled against because he knew of land hidden by others in other townships.	The masses demanded to beat him up.	Over 1000
27. Chen	Over 80		He is very sly (狡猾) and hides his land.		300
28. Su	Over 80		He is neither progressive nor	Insulted and scolded by the	300

			honest (不开明不老实); failed to report his grain.	masses during a struggle session.	
29. Pan	Over 40	His son was a representative (参议员) under the puppet regime;	Underreported land; dishonest.	Forced to kneel.	300
30. Li	102		Exploited others severely in the past and the masses demanded his punishment.	Masses wanted him to reveal his hidden land.	500-600
31. Li	Over 80		Exploited others severely in the past and the masses demanded his punishment; he was the younger brother of the aforementioned Li (see target number 30); the people hated them equally.	Masses wanted him to reveal his hidden land.	Over 300
32. Li	Over 90		Exploited others severely in the past and the masses demanded his punishment.	Masses wanted him to reveal his hidden land.	Over 300
33. Xu	180		Threatened the masses; and did not report all land.	Forced to bend at the waist 90 degrees.	Over 300
34. Wu	47		Had an obstinate attitude; denied having hidden land.	Threatened by the struggle session chair until he replied to questioning; the people threatened him because he refused to confess.	Over 1,500
35. Chen	123		He is very dishonest; failed to fully report his land.	Because he was so sly (狡猾), he was forced to kneel.	1500
36. Wang	131		He is very dishonest; failed to fully report his land.	Because he was so sly (狡猾), he was forced to kneel.	Over 300
37. Xu	76		Did not report all of his land; exploited peasants.	Struggle through reasoning	Over 800

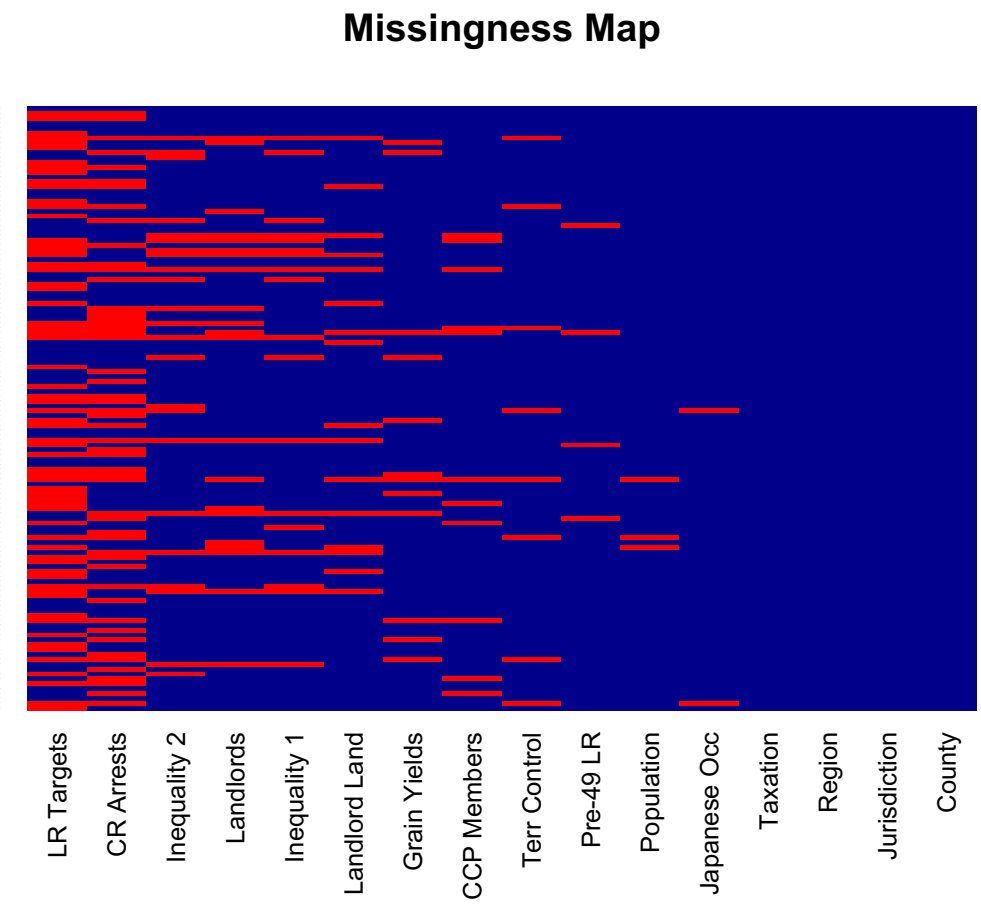
38. Zhou	64	Former *baojia* head	Did not report all of his land; exploited peasants.	Struggle through reasoning	Over 800
39. Zhao	24	Former township head	Masses demanded his punishment.	Struggle through reasoning	Over 200

Appendix D. Chapter 5 Appendix

Table 5.A Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Description	Mean	Min	Max	N
LR Targets	Number of people struggled against or arrested during the post-1949 land reform campaign.	928.3	96	2,329	59
LR Targets per 1000	Number of people struggled against or arrested during the post-1949 land reform campaign per 1000 residents.	2.72	0.21	6.67	59
CR Arrests	Number of people arrested during the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries.	1,592	224	6,239	72
CR Arrests per 1000	Number of people arrested during the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries per 1000 residents.	4.27	0.41	10.64	70
CCP	Number of Chinese Communist Party members in 1949.	2,255	75	19,275	114
Territorial Control	County had eliminated armed resistance before the land reform campaign and did not encounter armed resistance during the campaign (1 = Yes; 0 = No).	0.54	0	1	116
Population	Total county population in 1949.	419,877	37,155	1,077,908	121
Physiographic Macroregion	Macroregion in which the county is located (0 = Lower Yangzi Region/Jiangnan; 1 = North China/Huaibei).	0.36	0	1	124
Landholding Inequality (1)	Ratio of per capita landlord landholdings to per capita poor peasant landholdings.	30.98	2.77	295.56	106
Landholding Inequality (2)	Ratio of per capita landlord landholdings to average per capita landholdings.	8.20	1.87	26.00	101
Landlord Land	Percentage of land owned by landlords before 1949.	30.01	4.20	66.20	108
Grain Yield	Grain output (kg) per *mu* of land in 1949.	92.53	29.14	240.34	112
Landlord Households	Percentage of households labeled as landlords (地主).	3.44	0.96	7.80	103
Historical Taxation	Land tax in 1820 (silver taels/hectare, measured at prefectural level).	0.93	0.02	1.97	124
Japanese Occupation	Experienced mopping-up campaigns or other wartime atrocities during the War of Resistance against the Japanese (1 = Yes; 0 = No).	0.91	0	1	122
Pre-1949 Land Reform	Implemented land reform in the county or a significant portion of the county before 1949 (1 = Yes; 0 = No).	0.18	0	1	120

Figure 5.A Missingness Map for All Variables in the County Gazetteer Dataset



Note: Red indicates missing data.

Table 5.B OLS Regression Coefficients for Determinants of Violence during the Land Reform Campaign in 124 Counties in Anhui and Jiangsu Provinces (Multiply Imputed & List-Wise Deleted)

	Dependent variable: Land Reform Targets			
	Multiple Imputation		List-Wise Deletion	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ln(CCP)	−127.0***	−204.0***	−125.1***	−156.8**
	(43.0)	(60.3)	(44.4)	(72.2)
Territorial Control	451.0***	406.0***	353.9***	338.7**
	(113.0)	(99.1)	(105.5)	(126.2)
Population (1949)	0.002***	0.002***	0.002***	0.002***
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0004)
Physiographic Macroregion	−234.0	−366.0**	−170.2	−280.3
	(150.0)	(185.0)	(135.0)	(223.3)
Grain Yield (1949)		−1.25		−0.89
		(1.40)		(1.48)
Landlord Households (%)		21.6		13.24
		(58.5)		(71.2)
ln(Landholding Inequality 2)		51.7		3.7
		(112.0)		(132.4)
Taxation (1820)		−12.0		4.36
		(130.0)		(16.39)
Japanese Occupation		358.0		350.9
		(239.0)		(269.7)
Pre-1949 Land Reform		505.0***		375.1
		(179.0)		(316.1)
Constant	934.0***	1080.0	942.6***	859.6
	(270.0)	(691.0)	(274.4)	(767.7)
Observations	124	124	56	41
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 5.C OLS Regression Coefficients for Determinants of Violence during the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries in 124 Counties in Anhui and Jiangsu Provinces (Multiply Imputed & List-wise Deleted)

	Dependent variable: CTSTC Arrests			
	Multiple Imputation		Listwise Deletion	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ln(CCP)	−259.0**	−305.0***	−229.8**	−199.1
	(105.0)	(115.0)	(100.8)	(121.1)
Territorial Control	513.0**	503.0**	551.7**	542.8**
	(250.0)	(252.0)	(257.4)	(267.3)
Population (1949)	0.003***	0.003***	0.003***	0.003***
	(0.0006)	(0.0007)	(0.0006)	(0.0006)
Physiographic Macroregion	−141.0	−367.0	−56.99	52.83
	(293.0)	(368.0)	(284.0)	(393.3)
Grain Yield (1949)		−3.80		−1.13
		(3.05)		(3.28)
ln(Inequality 2)		26.4		139.0
		(278.0)		(284.5)
Taxation (1820)		−140.0		239.6
		(277.0)		(351.2)
Japanese Occupation		−96.0		−425.4
		(468.0)		(418.1)
Constant	1770.0***	2700.0**	1467.0**	1123.0
	(648.0)	(1310.0)	(650.1)	(1175.0)
Observations	124	124	67	56
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01