“Black Land,” “Sick Land,” and “Lost Land”: Dianchi Xiaocun’s Topography and the Problem of a Resistance Approach

Zhu Xiaoyang, Jean Lin

positions: east asia cultures critique, Volume 22, Number 3, Summer 2014, pp. 691-720 (Article)

Published by Duke University Press

"Black Land," "Sick Land," and "Lost Land": Dianchi Xiaocun's Topography and the Problem of a Resistance Approach

Zhu Xiaoyang

Introduction

This article will describe how, in the past half-century, the villagers of Xiaocun on Dianchi Lake in Yunnan Province have, through a process of mutual dependence and joint effort, transformed or reconstructed the village landscape. I focus my discussion on the topography of this area (that is, its landscape), related discourses, and public representations of local society. I choose to describe the complex process of transformation from a topographical perspective because it is through landscape that we can better understand the lifestyle of the local populace. It is conventional in rural studies to invoke James Scott's inspiring studies of "peasant resistance." Yet, a Scottian narrative of "resistance/domination" is not the only framework through which we can explore this topographical transformation, and in fact it may be quite inadequate to the object. We must also include something "thicker."

positions 22:3 DOI 10.1215/10679847-2685422

Since the 1990s, political anthropology has engaged in a steady critique of the Scottian resistance/dominance dichotomy. For example, Roger Keesing has pointed out that "resistance at one level frequently seems ultimately to reproduce the 'categorical and institutional structures of domination,' and it is often difficult to decide whether to label particular actions by individuals or groups as 'resistance' in the first place."[1] Keesing considers "resistance" to be a rich metaphor rather than a precise concept. Accordingly, anthropological studies of resistance have developed into "thick description" based on ethnographic investigation.[2] Recently, Michael Herzfeld also made a thorough critique of the peasant/state and tradition/modernity dichotomies running through Scott's *Seeing Like a State*.[3] Herzfeld argues that the book lacks a sufficient ethnographic grounding, which I agree is one of the major weaknesses of the book.[4] Other critiques raised by anthropologists include that levied by Steven A. Wernke, whose research on the Andes community and landscape in the seventeenth century proposes to go beyond the resistance/dominance dichotomy.[5]

It is important, when speaking of "resistance/domination," to situate such behavior in particular social-cultural and epistemological contexts. Yet, the way in which much of overseas "China studies" has dealt with questions of Chinese village politics and peasant political behavior, especially with reference to land and property, lacks precisely this contextualization.[6]

In short, cooperation between peasants and the government becomes possible on the basis of a shared developmentalist discourse. When this shared discourse is taken into account, it becomes difficult to argue that villagers maintain resistant Scottian "traditions." Instead, what becomes visible is a "nonstatus quo" or "going with the tide" attitude generated by the intensification of specific political and economic structural conditions. Within the context of their political and economic ecological constraints, villagers need more land, irrigation projects, grain, and living space. Because of these needs, the village has engaged, over its history, in a series of "radical" activities, such as land reform, land appropriation, the destruction of old buildings to make way for new construction, and so forth. In many respects, these activities indicate a more radical orientation by Xiaocun than that taken by the ostensibly revolutionary and modernizing "state." According to Herzfeld, it is "those cunning planners and scientists who have managed

to persuade so many citizens of so many countries to honor them for their 'vision'—a suggestively optical form of praise that reinstates the fallacy of misplaced concreteness at the very heart of a falsely construed dream of pure abstraction."[7] But even this is an oversimplification. In this article, I will explore the history of cooperative efforts between peasants and the state in a specific locality. By providing a "thick description" of the social processes at work, I bring attention to the serious and pressing problems faced by inhabitants of this region. In addition, the article will theorize how to reconcile the "commensurable" trains of thought posited by tradition and modernization by going beyond currently existing paradigmatic or ideal types and suggesting an explicit way for social theoretical conceptions to cohere with Chinese historical experience.

This article is based on materials gathered from ethnographic examination of Xiaocun's landscape.[8] I will discuss two major changes to the landscape that occurred between the middle of the twentieth century and today. The first major transformation was the creation in the 1970s of "strip fields" as part of the Mao-era socialist construction of agriculture. The second major transformation is the urbanization movement of the past few years.

Land and "Black Land"

Official statistics report that, in 1976, Xiaocun included about fifteen hundred *mu* of cultivated land. However, the actual area under cultivation amounted to more than seventeen hundred mu.[9] More than two hundred mu of "black land" (i.e., off the official books) was created in the 1970s through the "learn from Dazhai" movement and the creation of new strip fields. Before this period, although the entire structure of land rights and usage in the village had undergone several substantial transformations, the landscape was almost the same as it had been at the end of the nineteenth century. However, after the construction of "modern" farming fields in the 1970s, the landscape was completely transformed.

From this point onward, the village lost important historical landmarks. When I went to the village for the first time in 1974, old people laboring together were still able to point out water ditches, paths through the fields, large trees, and so on, and to demarcate where the border of each

household's land was. Not long after, these markers of former times—the crooked water ditches on the fields' edges, the paths and trees—were all replaced by geometric checkered fields. The irrigation canals that edged the fields became perfectly straight, as did the paths through the fields. Trees and ancestral shrines were all removed. Raised areas were leveled out for the convenience of creating irrigation canals, low ditches were filled in, and ponds were drained and turned into farmland. After undergoing such large-scale agricultural and irrigation reconstruction, the cultivated land in the village was about two hundred mu more than it had been twenty years prior.

For the state, the goal of creating strip fields was to advance agricultural modernization. Such fields increased the area amenable to tractor plowing, which would increase agricultural production. People in the Xiaocun area warmly embraced the creation of strip fields at the time, and for several winters villagers enthusiastically set about building them. All in all, one could not call this "resistance." Like any shared labor in the era of collective organization, the process was troubled by idleness and the shirking of duties. However, it would not be accurate to say that such "weapons of the weak" were used to resist a process of "modernization." Generally speaking, the creation of strip fields was completely normalized, perhaps most importantly because it added two hundred mu of "black land" to Xiaocun's total land area. If these fields were able to produce an estimated 1,000 *jin* of grain, the total grain production of these fields would be over 200,000 *jin*.[10] At that time, the village consisted of an estimated 350 households, so each household would receive an extra share of 570 *jin* of grain, which at that time was equal to the yearly per-person consumption of grain. As we can see, this was an extremely large quantity of grain. At that time, Xiaocun annually handed over to the state 15 percent of its collective grain, as well as any excess grain, over-purchased grain, and excess-over-purchased grain,[11] but because the "black land" did not appear on any official registers, its produce was not reported. One only has to point out this small fact to understand why the production team leader was eager to implement strip fields as a form of agricultural land use. At the same time, the reader will also ask, how could the peasants who seemingly were thoroughly overtaxed and deprived of "traditional" land-use methods continue to survive?

Why did they not "resist"? During this period of cooperation between peasants and the state to carry out agricultural modernization, sensible local officials—especially commune and district cadres—turned a "blind eye" to the production of these "black fields." Perhaps they believed, when they passed by them, as long as the "furrows were straight and the fields were level," everything was fine.

At that time, individual village leaders were key in facilitating the village's close adherence to state policies. As discussed in my book, *The Story of Xiaocun*, the production team leader was a man who came from outside the village and had political ambitions. In today's parlance, one might say he sought to make certain "political gains." Because of these motives, his implementation of the strip-field system ignored the problems posed by certain symbolic places in the village, such as the Liu family grave. Although his audacious behavior did receive some censure, by the time he stepped down in autumn of 1976, almost all of the village's agricultural land had been converted into strip fields. For many years afterward, the villagers were able to profit from the "black (or excess) land" so created.

The ability to create "black land" closely followed on the transformation of the village's irrigation system. From the mid-1950s onward, Xiaocun's irrigation conditions were improved by an expansion of the irrigation area. At the end of the 1960s, a floodwater control channel eliminated the problem of flooding and water collecting in ditches. On the basis of these irrigation projects, it became possible to reclaim the land underneath the ponds and streams and convert it into arable land. At the same time, water could now be brought into Xiaocun's highlands, including recently deforested land, to create rice paddies.

This "extra land" gradually spread throughout Xiaocun over the next twenty years, during which time no one explicitly spoke of it. During the period of collectivization, this land was not included in the production team's statistical reports. After the implementation of the household responsibility system, for a long period of time this "black land" was mixed in among the peasants' contract land. Shortly after the household responsibility system began in 1983, each household's actual share of land was a bit more than the nominal amount written in the contract. In the village, of course, no one was willing to point out this discrepancy. "Black land" was

first made public in 1995. That year, two newly appointed village leaders, in order to solve village deficit problems, uncovered the village's two hundred mu of "black land" and brought it back under collective management. To do this, the village leaders proposed a land survey. They announced that after the survey, any excess land would be reincorporated into the collective and rented out. At the village referendum, the land survey measures received the support of a majority of the villagers, who felt that the village leaders' plan to appropriate "public land" for the benefit of the village was reasonable. As a result of the land survey, almost every household lost a portion of the land it had been cultivating. In the following few years, the village collectively rented out the two hundred mu of "black land" to some outside businessmen to run a flower farm.

More recently, this "black land" has undergone another round of landscape transformation. During the process of urbanization, it was officially recognized as legal land. Such recognition meant that owners of the "black land," similar to owners of other cultivated land, now qualified to receive official compensation for land appropriations. This recognition of "black land" was motivated by the promulgation of "the greater Kunming plan," drafted in 2003. This plan stated that within three to four years, all of the current village land would be requisitioned and turned into urban land. Thus, Xiaocun's "black land" turned "white," marking the beginning of the complete disappearance of the black land.

From the history of "black land" in Xiaocun, we can see that villagers and local officials seem to "share" a tacit agreement: if villagers in Xiaocun would support the creation of strip fields, then the government would tacitly consent to not tax production from the "black land." Peasant studies have long acknowledged the role "mutual benefit" plays in defining norms of a peasant's relationship with the state and elites, among which Scott's "peasant moral economy" is an example par excellence. The way in which the state and village treated Xiaocun's "black land" readily fits into the framework of mutual benefit. However, the generality of the mutual-benefit framework does not suffice to explain the concrete reasons why and under which conditions the "black land" acquired such long-term existence. Before exploring alternative ways of conceptualizing the history of "black land" in Xiaocun, we may first note how the people of Xiaocun and the local government both

acted in accordance to social norms of reciprocity, which have structured village-state relations both before and since. These long-standing practical norms in villages such as Xiaocun are like the irrigation projects built in the era of the People's Commune: quietly standing there, irrigating the land, and informing a much more recent land politics. A kind of moral heritage is an important reason why peasants are also willing to accept extremely low compensation from today's government in return for requisitioning Xiaocun's farmland to build roads and expand urban areas. They trust that in the future the state will reward them.

The existence of "excess land" in Xiaocun expressed a local consensus or tacit agreement that points to a shared perspective on the part of peasants and the lowest levels of government with regard to land management and definitions of land. The coincidence of viewpoints can perhaps be explained by a shared "topographical tie," that is, the peasants and the local government both view the land as "state land." However, I want to emphasize a certain unmediated coherence of materiality and conceptuality in this situation and suggest that the concept of "state land" is a conceptual reconstruction of their very environment by the villagers of Xiaocun.[12] Although Xiaocun collaborated with local government when creating the "black land," the emergence of "black land" may have left a significant, unanticipated mark on the environment of this area.

"Sick Land"

The most concise and appropriate description of Xiaocun's transformation in the twenty-first century is perhaps "the disappearance of cultivated land." Today in Xiaocun the expression "lost-land peasants" has quickly become the peasants' self-appellation. In the village, I often heard people saying, "We are the lost-land peasants." I found that most villagers, when faced with losing their lands and the prospect of abandoning their agricultural livelihoods, were not particularly unwilling to give them up. Even less visible in the village was any sort of effort to safeguard farming traditions.

Each time I talked with Xiaocun villagers, we would discuss whether it was good or not to farm the land. A few of them told me, "Our village's allocation has already been farmed to 'sickness,' we can't continue to farm."

Upon further investigation, I found that this assessment emerged from comparison between their land and land in the distant mountains around Kunming. They would say, "The land there is not sick, they don't use pesticides at all, rarely use fertilizer, and their vegetables grow extremely well."

How should we view this "sickness"? If we consider the passage of time, we will find that the land is "sick" in Xiaocun because of the past fifty years of collective agriculture and land-use practices. The features of collective agriculture and land usage are also associated with the structural conditions of production and the social system, and so forth. In short, the appearance of "sick" land is closely related to the thirty-year history of the responsibility system (including the Maoist era) and recent agricultural specialization and marketization. In order to gain a clearer understanding of these relationships, let me examine the trajectory of Xiaocun's agricultural livelihood and land usage in the past half-century.

Up until the mid-1990s, Xiaocun's major crops were rice, wheat, fava beans, rapeseed, and vegetables. During the collectivization era, the state mandated that Xiaocun establish grain-and-vegetable mixed cropping areas. At that time, the area of village land given to vegetables, as opposed to grain, did not surpass one quarter of the total area. In the 1980s, after the responsibility system was implemented, Xiaocun residents were able to individually determine what types of crops to plant, based on the conditions of their land, and the number of vegetable growers began to increase. Yet until 1998, the whole village still had over seven hundred mu of paddy fields. Usually, these fields were situated in either inaccessible or low-lying areas between fields. With the improvement of transportation and drainage, however, the paddy fields were all turned into vegetable or flower fields.

In general, each year between May and June, one must transplant rice seedlings onto the paddy, and in September or October the shoots are ready for harvest. In winter the paddy fields can be planted with wheat, fava beans, and rapeseed. Vegetable cropland, on the other hand, can usually produce two to three seasons per year. In the 1970s, the main crops planted were cabbage, turnips, peppers, eggplant, tomato, various types of melons, and so on. Besides these common vegetables, the village also had forty-nine mu devoted to lotus seed production.

Cereal-and-vegetable mixed cropping has been prevalent in Xiaocun for

most of the twentieth century and can be considered the most basic condition of life there. Several locally important social historical events and disasters recalled by villagers are also related to this kind of mixed cropping. In 1997, I asked the village leader of the time, Ma Jian, why during the famine of 1960 almost no one from Xiaocun died of hunger, whereas in the larger villages many people died. Ma Jian did not attribute this to political or other social factors. Instead, he said, "Perhaps it was because my home village grew both grains and vegetables, of each type we had a little, therefore everyone could find something to eat" (from my field notes). Previously, I had already heard Ma Jian saying that during that period, many men in the village went to the communal fields every day to steal crops for their families. Ma Jian himself did this.

Besides the experiences and memories of avoiding famine, the other main event in Xiaocun's history also illustrates the importance of cereal-and-vegetable mixed cropping to the villagers. Starting from the latter half of 1961, under the charge of a work team sent by the Kunming municipal government, Xiaocun, along with more than twenty other villages, left the Second State-Run Farm and formed a commune. Xiaocun and its two neighboring villages became a large production brigade, and Xiaocun itself was internally divided into seven independent accounting production teams (at first it was six). Among these, three were vegetable teams and four were cereal teams. The people of Xiaocun opposed this division of agricultural labor. However, since it was an upper-level decision, they had no choice but to accept it. In the following several years, many conflicts arose between the vegetable-production teams and the cereal-production teams. In 1969, during the Cultural Revolution, Xiaocun's villagers, with the help of a military work team, finally reunited the seven separate teams into one production team. In *The Story of Xiaocun* I analyzed this event from the angle of village politics. Here I would like to point out that driving the villagers' dissatisfaction with the separation of the production teams and their enthusiastic embrace of reunification—and perhaps one of the very reasons that they chose to implement a "great collective"—was their reliance on mixed cropping as a strategy to reduce risks to basic livelihood. This topographical perspective, moreover, can also help us to better understand the complicated reasons behind Xiaocun's radical collectivist attitude. In a cereal-vegetable

mixed crop area, rainy and dry periods alternate, and alternating cereal and vegetable crops is one basic method that takes advantage of this environmental feature. Natives in the area as well as agricultural technology experts both believe that alternating wet and dry crops is one effective method of preventing the soil from becoming diseased. Throughout its history, Xiaocun has retained cereal-vegetable and wet-dry mixed cropping cultivation.

In 1983, after the household responsibility system was implemented, there was no way to uniformly implement across the entire village a coherent principle of alternating wet-dry cropping. However, the villagers quickly adapted to the transformed circumstances. They began to use deep-plowing methods to make already "cooked" (熟) land become fresh again. They plowed at least one meter or more deep so as to bring fresh earth to the surface. Another method they employed to improve the land was to collect fresh soil from Pao Ma Mountain and mix it with the "over-cooked" soil. After 1992, peasants in Xiaocun again started to alternate wet and dry crops. According to one of the first villagers who reimplemented this practice, he redug water channels on the side of his family's plot in order to avoid water running or seeping onto other people's vegetable fields. After his successful trial, many others began to imitate him. However, from 1998 onward, the village no longer farmed paddy fields, and few people continued to alternate wet and dry crops.

The history of mixed cropping in the village came to an end in 1999. This shift was related to Xiaocun's transformation into a specialized commercial vegetable- and flower-growing village. After 1998, the original seven hundred–plus mu of paddy fields were successively transformed into flower and vegetable fields to take advantage of the substantially higher market price of flowers and vegetables. This transformation was aided by the village's decreasing reliance on cereal production as a source of income and the declining costs of marketing vegetables and flowers. For some time, the cereals produced in Xiaocun had been mainly used for family consumption or intra-village barter. Now that the market price for cereals was relatively low, villagers could go to the market and buy grain for consumption. At the same time, by 1999 a wholesale vegetable market had been started in Xiaocun, and the neighboring village by then had developed a relatively large-scale flower market. These developments meant that the cost of get-

ting vegetables and flowers to market had decreased as well. These new conditions encouraged the inhabitants of Xiaocun to turn the rest of their paddy fields into high-investment vegetable fields or high-investment and high-risk flower fields. From the perspective of Xiaocun's residents, it was after the village began to specialize in growing vegetables and flowers that the land turned seriously ill.

Lost Land: The Freeway and the Dissolution of the Traditional Way of Life

Despite this history of many changes, none of the villagers could have imagined the transformations that began in 2003. In October of that year, construction began on the "Kunluo Highway," an urban avenue that runs from the northeast section of Xiaocun and cuts directly across the village toward the southeast. The construction of this road instigated intra-village social upheaval. On October 11 of that year, villagers held a protest against the road's construction, an incident now referred to as "10.11." The protest resulted in the resignation of the village committee head. While the 10.11 incident can be considered an instance of peasant protest, to best explain this episode and the significance of its consequences, we must "thicken" our interpretation of the "resistances and dominations" on display, by developing a fuller account of the circumstances prevailing in Xiaocun at the time. In keeping with the goal of this article, I will not recount the concrete events of the 10.11 protest, except to point out that the villagers' obstruction of the road construction was not motivated by opposition to the highway per se (acclaimed by the Kunming metropolitan government as a "paragon of modernity"); rather, they felt the local government exhibited fraudulent behavior when compensating peasants for the use of their land.

The Kunluo Highway, running north-south, cut the Xiaocun region in half. The farmland on the highway's west side successively disappeared over the past two years. Today, on the east side of the highway, only six hundred mu of farmlands remain, and at present they have already been incorporated into the government's greater Kunming plan. Peasants could have continued to farm these lands, except that construction of the Kunluo Highway destroyed the fields' irrigation system, aggravating what the vil-

lagers refer to as the fields' "sick condition." Because of this, these fields have been mostly abandoned.

One problem with the Kunluo Highway, intended to connect Kunming's northern district with the newly constructed Chenggong area, lies in the fact that it was planned and constructed without any consideration of the livelihood and habits of the people living in the villages that the highway passes through. For example, the highway was constructed such that its foundation and drainage ditch are approximately two meters higher than the farmland on either side. Thus, the irrigation channel that passes underneath the highway cannot transport water to the fields on the western side as easily as before, and the water-pumping station consequently has been forced to increase its output. As a result, the fields on the eastern side of the road have been subject to floods. The highway not only destroyed the Ma Liao River irrigation system that the villagers depended on; it also destroyed their floodwater release system. Thus, insofar as the highway and new buildings constructed along its edges have formed something of an "island," Xiaocun and other villages in its path have turned into a swale. According to the report of one local agricultural official, since the construction of the Kunluo Highway, practically every year during the rainy season, Xiaocun drowns in water, a direct result of which is that the six hundred mu of farmland on the eastern side of the highway cannot be cultivated from June to October. In addition, the highway allows for high-speed automobile travel yet does not have any safe pedestrian crossways. In 2006, a car struck and killed an elderly Xiaocun woman crossing the highway.

Under these conditions, generated by the state's grand development plan for the greater Kunming area, the best that the majority of villagers can do is abandon their traditional way of life as soon as possible, go to the eastern side of the highway as little as possible, and dispose of the land there as quickly as possible.

Lost Land: The "Greater Kunming Plan" and the Loss of Farmland

The Kunluo Highway occupies over two hundred mu of formerly cultivated land in Xiaocun. In addition, after the highway's construction, approxi-

mately six hundred mu of land to the north of Xiaocun was taken by a real-estate development project called the New Asia Sports Center. Altogether, this program took over twenty-two hundred mu of land from several adjacent villages. From 2003 to 2007, then, with the exception of collective land, residential land, and a few scattered plots, Xiaocun was stripped of all possible cultivated land except the aforementioned six hundred mu of farmland on the eastern side of the Kunluo Highway.

Today, Xiaocun is located in the center of what is called Greater Kunming. In the words of Xiaocun residents, it is the "city core district" or "navel" of the plan area. The Greater Kunming Metropolitan Area plan was developed by the Kunming municipal government in 2003, with the goal of incorporating the towns and villages surrounding the lake into a future city of Kunming, described as "one lake, four parts; one lake, four rings." This plan, in turn, has mandated earth-shattering transformations in Xiaocun's land use and relationship to the existing urban area. In the Greater Kunming Plan, Chenggong County, on the southern side of Xiaocun, is the future site for new city government offices and a university district. The Kunluo Highway running through Xiaocun will be the very road that links the current city area and the future city of Kunming.[13]

Images from Google Earth show that in the vicinity of Xiaocun, already very little farmland remains in the region north of the Guangfu Highway. Real-estate development has started to spread to the south of the Guangfu Highway along the Kunluo Highway in the direction of Chenggong. According to the "Kunming Modernization: General Layout Plan," put out by the Kunming Bureau of Land and Resources, both sides of the Guangfu Highway in the vicinity of Xiaocun are declared green areas. Yet, this is the very area occupied by the New Asia Sports Center building complex. According to Xiaocun residents as well as township and district government officials, the construction of the New Asia Sports Center in this area depended on approval from the central government, specifically, the Land and Resources Bureau. Much to the shock of local district and village cadres, approval for the complex, from initial inspection to the final granting of approval, took place extremely quickly. Given these circumstances, in both rural and urban areas around Kunming, many tales circulate about how the lands

were expropriated. Today, local cadres and villagers are equally shocked to realize that the project, now having been finished, is essentially a program of real-estate development.

It is said that in Kunming, the only other land-appropriation process resembling that for the above-mentioned sports center was that of the adjoining Century City. Besides these two cases, all other land appropriation took place more or less in accordance with current standard procedures, conducted through "public auction listings." Although how these auction listings work differs somewhat from case to case, the common result is the transformation of farmland into land for urban planning. Thus, "land appropriation" points to an important question: how do farmers respond to projects of "high modernism" undertaken in the name of the state? To address this question, I want to first provide an account of how land appropriation has taken place in Xiaocun over the past few years.

In land seizures occurring as part of state-sponsored development projects, although governmental "planning" and "approval" (批文) are extremely important, it has still been necessary to "reason" with the land owners—that is, the peasants—as their approval proves critical to the successful implementation of any plans. Since the upper-level government issued an order that to appropriate peasant land one must collect signatures of the villagers, the villagers' team leaders, and the village committee, acquiring land has depended on whether villagers and their leaders could obtain enough promises or benefits from the government. In Xiaocun in 2005, after incorporating the village's farmland into their plans, the government gave 15 percent of the land back to the villagers as "retention land." Xiaocun, in turn, rented this land on a seventy-year lease to some businessmen. In addition to retaining this land, Xiaocun received a one-time grant of 260 mu of development land to construct a new village. This land has been divided among the households into equal pieces of 96 square meters (503 pieces in total), and Xiaocun is now using this land to build a "New Village." The retention land, its rent, and the development land constitute forms of direct and indirect compensation received by Xiaocun in the process of land appropriation.

The compensation fee for each mu of appropriated land was a key point in negotiations between villagers and the government. For example, at the

beginning of 2007, the city government had already planned for the remaining six hundred mu of farmland in Xiaocun to become the future city center of the new Greater Kunming. The land was expected to become the Snail Bay International Commercial Center—a large-scale commodity wholesale market. The compensation rate offered for appropriation by the Kunming city government was 160,000 yuan per mu. However, Xiaocun villagers and those of several other villages thought the compensation fee was insufficient and refused to accept such a low amount. In January of 2007, when I was again in Xiaocun, I was informed that the village representatives and village leaders had signed a contract. The land-appropriation compensation fee was set at 165,000 yuan per mu. Half of the compensation payment had already been received, and the remaining portion would be given when the land was handed over. As for the other two conditions put forth by the village—compensation for rented land and allocation of land to be retained by the village—the government promised to meet their demands.

Although the land-appropriation payment had basically remained the same, of the four villages whose land was being appropriated, three signed away their land after holding out for several months. The people of Xiaocun had initially publicized their refusal to sign, yet in the end they did not fight but folded, and seemingly without much complaint. Did they submissively hand over the land because they believed government rhetoric about land appropriation being for the "public good"? Or was it because they were afraid of the strength of the state? How could the farmland be so peacefully given away in return for compensation much lower than the market price for the land?

Not only did villagers seem reluctant to engage in prolonged political battles over their land, and despite some uncertainty about future livelihoods, many in Xiaocun seem to be enjoying their recent release from farming activities. On summer and autumn nights when the weather is clear, hundreds of people will gather at the New Asia Sports Center on the north side of Guangfu Road to sing flower lantern songs, whip spin tops, and jump rope. Every day before dawn, many villagers, including the former village leader Ma Jian, go to the sports center for jogging and other morning exercises. During a recent visit to Xiaocun, one member of the local opera

troupe rehearsing for a performance, scheduled as part of the upcoming Flower Lantern Festival, happily relayed that over the past two years, the lack of farm work has provided them plenty of time for practice.

Conversations with middle-aged and elderly people squatting by the door of the large village temple reinforce the sense that Xiaocun's residents are enjoying life in a new way. In 2006, I ran into a former fellow villager in front of this temple who was in the same production team as I was during the collectivist era. He contracted to build a public toilet at the temple, and every day he guards the toilet and collects a fee to use it. He is now called the "toilet boss" by the people who gather in front of the temple to chat and pass the time. When we talked about how to survive without land to farm, he told me, "I'm not worried, my sister married into a village that completely lost their land back in 1989, and they live a good life."

Recently in Xiaocun, Ma Jian and I walked back together to the village from Guandu Street. The road passed the site where we had previously dug by hand for lotus root, which now is home to the newly constructed New Asia Sports Center complex. When we arrived at the produce market on the edge of the village, Ma Jian spoke of the private owner to whom Xiaocun had sold the produce market about two or three years ago. Feeling lucky that Xiaocun had sold the land to him because soon the state would build a highway on the site, he said, as if summing up, "Our country is not the same as the United States, France, England, and those sorts of countries. Homes in those places, yours is yours, mine is mine. In China, our country, yours is mine, and mine is also yours. What is the point of being the first to make money? To buy land? How do you know that your land won't some day be taken to build a road? Then you will have nothing!"

In light of Ma Jian's comments concerning the process of land appropriation in Xiaocun, the concerns of China's peasantry seem far removed from the discourse of human rights and property rights that pervades neoliberal discourse about state-society conflict. The perspective of individualism simply does not allow us to access how Chinese villagers themselves conceive and reason about rural China's land-loss problems and the relationship between rural populations and the state.[14] The Scottian conception of the state would seem to have little resonance among the residents of Xiaocun.

Farmers, "Officials," and the State

Although land expropriation in Xiaocun is merely one instance of a more general phenomenon, it clearly shows the deep logic of the relationship between Chinese peasants and the state. At this point, we can make a preliminary summary of this relationship.

First, let us look at the negotiations between the farmers and the government during the process of land appropriation. Out of all the possible issues, compensation payments were the most important point of dispute. Notably, the farmers did not persist in demanding that the government pay market price for their land. The government's offer of 160,000 yuan per mu made "sense" in light of the 120,000 yuan/mu compensation that had been paid for the Kunluo Highway, and government negotiators had professed that they "absolutely could not go any higher." The villagers, however, knew that if this land were not reserved for government appropriation, it would rent at a market price of 500,000–600,000 yuan per mu. The government, in turn, pressed the principle of "necessity for the public good" (or eminent domain) to make its case. It, of course, alone decided what constituted the public good. On this point, the former village head Huang Dayu expressed a viewpoint similar to that of Ma Jian: "The key is that they came down to us with government documents, and it won't do if you don't give it up to them. At least they gave us over 100 thousands [of RMB]. That's my analysis, what else can you do?" (from my field notes).

Essentially, people do not expect that in land-appropriation scenarios such as took place in Xiaocun, which Huang Dayu described as "coming down with documents," that the government will compensate them at market prices. They know that the government will act in accordance with the "brought documents" that stipulate the terms of the land appropriation and that the compensation fee cannot be changed. In this process, the best that the farmers can do is try to retain some land for rehousing.

As Ma Jian said, the villagers do not really believe that land rights are absolute. Because of this, explanations for their conciliatory behavior and attitudes cannot point only to the state's ability to deceive the peasants or by the peasants' fear of state violence, even though these factors did appear as influential factors during the land-appropriation process.

In reality, at the same time the government maintained that compensation payments could not surpass 160,000 yuan per mu, the peasants were able to increase their actual compensation by demanding other conditions that were accepted by the government. For example, one of the conditions put forth by the Xiaocun village committee before approving the land-appropriation payments included an increase in the items for which they would receive compensation as a village. Specifically, they let the state negotiate on their behalf with Boss Zhang, the richest man in Xiaocun, who had been using rent from collective land to fund his furniture plant. Once the state negotiated a compensation payment with the renter for the ninety mu of rented land, Xiaocun not only benefited materially but also was able, with the help of the state and developers, to sideline Boss Zhang, who was both hated and thought to be a nuisance. While having to deal with the "fixed conditions" set forth in government documents, the local government officials in charge of land appropriation could still negotiate a resolution that would satisfy both their superiors and the peasants. In other words, they had to both adhere to the set policy—160,000 yuan per mu—and come up with certain accommodations (or rather, a way to pass the burden further down the line), to somewhat satisfy villagers' demands.

As the different undertakings above illustrate, the exchange between the government and villagers is a sort of bargaining. This bargaining takes shape around the official discourse of good governance by rule of *li* (propriety, 礼治 *lizhi*) and unofficial promises of benefit, as well as the state's ideal of administration by law. Of course, as the 10.11 incident shows, the process involved peasants' protest against land appropriation as well as government oppression and domination. Yet these apparently contradictory factors can in the end achieve logical coherence in the social process of land appropriation. In summary, this sort of ordered "chaos" is what we must confront. Moreover, among the reasons we should consider as contributing to the preservation of a cooperative peasant-government relationship amidst the chaos of the events described above is a shared orientation by the peasants and local government officials toward the land. That is to say, the peasants and local officials perhaps both fundamentally view the land as being that "of the state."

Such a view has historical precedents that still linger in Xiaocun's collective memory. As the changing landscape I have discussed here, on the banks of Dianchi Lake, attests, in the beginning of the 1950s, land reform and collectivization organized by the socialist state both embodied the state's sacredness and created an imaginary that the land belonged to "the state." Today, peasants feel both fear and trust toward the state. They believe the state's promise that in future they will realize "unification of the urban and rural,"[15] that lost-land peasants will enjoy the same benefits as urban residents, and that the unemployed will receive insurance compensation, for example. It is on the basis of trust in these promises that the peasants no longer tenaciously cling to their land.

This peasant/state/land relationship further takes shape on the basis of a filial view of the state. That is, the peasants still see "the state" (but not the particular local government) as "parental." Although the actual "government" occasionally swindles the peasants, and bargaining based on personal benefit is still present in peasant dealings with government officials, we can also see a concept of a parental state playing out in these same interactions. This concept receives elaboration and reinforcement in people's daily contact with mass media, which frequently broadcasts news about the positive role the state is playing in response to disasters and thereby reaffirms the state's trustworthiness. Taking the case of the New Asia Sports Center in Xiaocun for example, while an outsider might claim that the people have been "deceived," locals do not express dissatisfaction. They do not so much blame the local government but instead claim that the local government, too, had to acquiesce to the desires of the "bigwigs" "from the Central Committee," who stipulated what they must do. They therefore thought the conditions reasonable and continued to feel that the officials could be trusted. Furthermore, they view this sort of submission as a positive "contribution" to the construction of the state.

From this perspective, we can begin to analyze at two levels the beliefs held in common by the government and peasants during the process of land appropriation. In their concrete interactions, the peasants and local government disputed every detail. The practical contests between official and unofficial interests, an interest in making trade-offs, a language of "being

sensible," and so forth, operate according to a kind of relational logic of practice that is embedded into the sociocultural conditions of the Chinese countryside. At this level, the villagers saw a "government" or "officials" who not only appealed to their emotions and reason or endlessly argued with them to "be sensible" but also threatened and deceived them in order to execute their land-appropriation plans. When the local residents use the terms *official* (*guan'er*) or *an official of* (*dang guan'er de*) to talk about the government and officials, they convey a flavor of obvious scorn and derision. According to my observations several years ago in different circumstances, while the villagers are polite to the officials, they do not generally respect them. Meanwhile, the officials' attitude toward the villagers is similar: in general, they do not expect the peasants to revere them; instead, they brag about their own relative position of power, using phrases such as "administer by law" or "the big dog fucks the little dog." Given this sort of attitude and the brash behavior that accompanies it, the peasants neither respect nor trust the *guan'er* (officials), and therefore, they don't hold them accountable.[16] In short, in the eyes of the villagers, the government is not a respectable partner; they are merely *guan'er*, not "parents." However, what is expressed by the phrase "threaten a person if threats work; deceive a person if deception is effective" is the idea that in order to fulfill their assigned tasks, local government officials, on the putative grounds of reciprocity, often promise benefits to the peasants or play a few "edge balls" [i.e., carry out an activity of ambiguous legal status—trans. note]. In the case of Xiaocun, approval to build a new village, promises of compensation for the value of rented buildings, and steps to help Xiaocun retain land are all actions in the interest of the village that resulted from the "carrot and stick" and "being sensible" strategy of government officials.

In the vocabulary of economists, "carrot and stick" tactics and "be sensible" arguments are types of "rational" interactions. Although Xiaocun did not give its land to the government at the prices current in the market, the two sides eventually reached a compromise on the basis of an "agreement" on lower-than-market expectations. Such agreement was possible because of the actors' assumptions that placed the existence of "the state" at another level and therefore expected remuneration downward, though they did not expect this remuneration to be entirely fair. Within the context of a general

expectation, shared by peasants and local government officials alike, that "the state" will provide security for the life and livelihood of lost-land peasants, both groups trusted that "the state" ultimately would pay back the peasants in some form for "the losses now before their eyes." Today, this optimistic imagination is still widespread. The state as "backup" at higher levels is a trustworthy thing.

Therefore, in Xiaocun today, while the loss of their land causes many people to express unease over the future, there are others who believe that both the village and they, its residents, are leading the best life they've ever had in history: they no longer have to work the land for food, their families live in new houses, they still have a bit of money on hand, and furthermore, the state (through the municipal government) promises that in the future they will receive the rights and benefits of urban residency. Is this not heaven? Have peasants not spent an entire life trying to become urbanites? Has this not now been realized?

In addition, as discussed above, in the eyes of the villagers, the soil of the lands of Xiaocun had become "sick" and was no longer worth farming. The only remaining farmland in the village was the six hundred mu mentioned above that, after being surrounded by the Kunluo Highway and real-estate development, had become waterlogged anyway.

Considering that the peasants had an unchallenged concept of "publicly owned" land, and that many problems arose in the process of land appropriation, there has always been a prevalent idea that the most thorough solution to all conflicts would be to privatize the land. While this idea sounds reasonable, it does not really get to the key issues. In reality, the people involved were quite certain that, in the face of a "parent" state, all rights are "given" by the state, including private-property rights. In the state-developmentalist discourse, no "sacred inviolability" of property rights, whether public or private, can be guaranteed. Examples are ubiquitous, such as the relentless demolition of homes during the process of urbanization in many parts of China. The state, then, paradoxically, is conceived as fundamentally "reliable," and it is from this standpoint that the strategies and actions of the peasants and local government make sense.

In sum, then, behind the peasants' willingness to sign away their land is not merely submission to "the extortion of exorbitant taxes" (although in the

view of outsiders, it appears to be like this) or an essential "gullibility." The context enabling the agreements reached between Xiaocun's peasants and the government included the peasants' long-standing assumptions about land and their sense of justice, as well as, in particular, a shared trust in the state. These convictions and senses of trust and justice have been formed through a long history; they have embedded themselves in the local history of land and irrigation works, as well as in socialist traditions. They are grounded in the ways in which the people have adapted to and become entwined with the environment of Dianchi Lake.

Conclusion: Radical Interpretation, the Topographical Approach, and the Problem of Xiaocun

Given the ways in which work on the land has brought into relief important processes of ongoing transformation in Xiaocun, it seems important to discuss how the turn to land, as a distinct methodological approach, has enabled new perspectives on social change. In recent years, anthropology has taken a so-called "topographical" turn.[17] According to Kirsten Hastrup, the emergence of topographical metaphors has generated a degree of controversy in the past several years. While the objects the topographical approach takes up are such commonplace things as routes, spatial practices, visual thresholds, movement, dwellings, and so forth,[18] it must also be noted that behind this turn is a shift in the epistemology of anthropology that has much to do with contemporary pragmatic philosophy. I have in other places discussed the influence of this sort of pragmatist philosophy on anthropology. Donald Davidson's philosophy, especially, has been a source of important epistemological reconsiderations that have led to anthropology's "topographical turn." Here it is necessary to give a brief explanation of the way in which this branch of philosophy has influenced anthropological epistemology.

Two core concepts in Davidson's philosophy seem to have made the deepest impact on current anthropology: "radical interpretation" and "the principle of charity." In a series of analyses, Davidson uses these two concepts to challenge some questions of "relativism," "incommensurability," and "untranslatability" that postmodernists take for granted.[19] In the past ten

years, anthropologists have also cited these concepts in their critiques of the "crisis of representation" that have circulated in the field since the 1980s.[20] In addition to upsetting postmodern preoccupations with representation, Davidson's "nonreductive physicalism" or "anomalous monism" has also erased the dichotomy between the "psychological" and the "material." Epistemologically, this move has eliminated tension in the dichotomy between "materialism" and "humanism," destabilizing a key opposition that has continuously entangled social science.

Building from Davidson's work, John MacDowell has taken a further step in dissolving the philosophy's "coherentism" and its antithesis—the theory of the "myth of given"—which MacDowell presents as the commonplace philosophical presupposition that definite borders exist between "the space of causal logic" and "the space of natural logic."[21] It seems to me that, from the standpoint of anthropological epistemology, one result of MacDowell's "diagnosis" is to challenge the "mutual irreducibility" assumed in anthropological descriptions, between the material and the psychological. Thus, in anthropology, epistemological boundaries between descriptions of material and the psychological worlds can be erased. One must point out, however, that only in the past ten years has MacDowell's work achieved widespread attention and debate within the Western philosophical world. Moreover, the connection between MacDowell's philosophy and social science still lacks several conceptual links, and because of this, it has yet to receive mention in most anthropological work. At present, the epistemological discussion within the anthropological world has yet to go beyond the limits of Davidson's concepts.

If we follow Davidson's essential points, however, how should we "radically interpret" the positions of the people of Xiaocun? Radical interpretation should start from the shared speech, representations, or representational events of those involved. Simultaneously, it should start from the material realities—such as topography—connected to these representations. The terms put forth in this article—*black land*, *sick land*, *lost land*, and *the state's land*—are just these sorts of representations. When interpreting the local people's shared discourses and representations, one should precisely describe the associated landscape or material world. Participant observation that takes in local discourses, experiences and observations, and the

material world in which these take place allows the interpreter to locate the practical significance of abstract concepts and theoretical expressions. These abstract concepts and theoretical expressions can be "indigenous," yet they can also be "analytic" terms. By linking the material to the abstract in a single account, radical interpretation distinguishes itself from "local" interpretation.

As this topographical research on Xiaocun illustrates, past attempts by researchers to use a state/society or modern/traditional framework, as is found in work that takes a social-justice or environmental-protection approach to rural problems, have missed the key point. For example, Scott's work has influenced a number of studies that argue that peasant resistance against the state expresses an indigenous form of environmental protection, one that provides a standpoint for critique of the state. Peasant resistance, understood in this framework as a defense of a traditional lifestyle, cannot but contradict state modernization projects. Therefore, peasant resistance, guided by an environmental awareness, can improve and strengthen civil society (assumed to be the state's foil).

Property rights and institutional economics have provided another relatively popular view of rural development in China. This viewpoint argues that once China establishes clear property rights, problems generated by the government's invasive land appropriation and environmental destruction will also be resolved. A more evenhanded view of the question of property rights argues that all property, whether public or private, including all peasant property, is de facto within the government's grasp. From this perspective, recurring debates about private property and public property cannot be resolved. The only solution would be to shift one's target and direct it against "the state." From here, the argument claims that a call for "constitutional governance" will naturally arise.

However, in reality, the grand ideas of "radical transformation," promoted by such theories, are less important than revising those statutes or clauses in current laws and regulations that lead to abuses of public rights. Such statutes and clauses include extant "property law," the previously discussed article 25 of the Land Management and Regulation Implementation Act of People's Republic of China, and the relevant definition of "public good" in use within the Chinese legal system. If we do not revise these

rules and regulations, and if we do not resolve the related problems, then the actual effect will be to "overdraw on" and eventually sap the peasants' confidence in the state. The case of Xiaocun illustrates that this confidence is truly at the root of the countryside's ability to preserve order in the face of vast transformation. Yet from history we can see that this ongoing "overdraft" is not limitless.[22]

In addition, events in Xiaocun demonstrate that both the peasants and the state are easily captivated by "developmentalist discourse."[23] From a world-historical perspective, no constitutional nation has avoided suffering the ravages of developmentalist discourse, whether eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England or nineteenth- and twentieth-century United States. On the contrary, developmentalist discourse—whether in the modernization model or the more recently popular neoliberal model—is a product of Enlightenment modernity. The naturalism, science, reason, and linear progress worshipped by both the Enlightenment and modernity is the core of developmentalist discourse. However, under the prevailing conditions of the modern world, this sort of development ideology seems to make "all that is solid melt into air."[24]

However, this expression from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels does not completely hold within the current Chinese context. The solidities assumed in a local tradition have not completely disappeared. Nor has the transformation of material and social life only been effected by the advent of Western-style modernity. "Tradition" does not really constitute the opposite of development discourse's "modernity." Instead, we can see from the over seven-hundred-year-long history of Dianchi Lake that, long before developmentalist discourses, daily human activity had transformed the waters and the shores of Dianchi Lake. Yet these changes did not radically transform the world on the banks of the lake where people dwelled, nor did they obstruct the continuation and invention of a complete tradition. In the past, the people time and again transplanted "tradition" into new living environments. Today, they have transferred ancestor worship and village festivities again, this time to modern high-rises. The Stove God has been established in kitchens with electric stoves, demon mirrors and demon knives have been hung on iron security gates, and Flower Lantern songs are sung in the square of the New Asia Sports Center.

Whether "commensurability" exists between tradition and modernity does not seem to be a question for the people of Xiaocun. Thus, the opposition between traditional peasants and the modern state posited by recent work in the social sciences is not afforded much empirical ground in this ethnography. Those who want to resolve today's major crises (for example the environmental crisis) from within a binary framework—such as tradition versus modernity, (popular) resistance versus (state) dominance—by strengthening either "tradition" or "resistance" are prescribing the wrong medicine.

However, the notion of a "commensurability" between tradition and modernity can also be problematic insofar as it uses a Foucauldian application of a "micro" concept of power to commensurate lifestyles or systems that can actually be significantly different.[25] The idea that peasants and the state share a vision of modernity, as discussed here, can easily slide into some such conflation. How can we get out of this trap? Perhaps we need to first reconsider and see the limits of the explanatory capacity of the Foucauldian approach. Secondly, it is even more necessary for us to regard the world as one that is open and full of various potentialities and contingencies. In this world, different peoples and cultures can indeed mutually understand each other and communicate, however this communication or medium of commensuration varies with time, place, or material conditions and can manifest itself in various ways. In this sense, discourses of "power" or "power-knowledge" are merely accepted tools of commensurability created by happenstance.

This study of Xiaocun also raises a few methodological considerations. Using a topographical approach to study Xiaocun is essentially a holistic method. This approach allows us to clearly see what problems the village has faced in the past century. It is a coherent approach without boundaries between materiality and mentality. It achieves a unity in the threads of people's thoughts about their environment and history, historical actors and their morals, including ideological core values (such as developmentalist discourses).

We must now turn to how thinking about the mutual "commensurability" between tradition and modernity, and the ways in which they can complement one another, can help us work through issues such as those

arising along the banks of Dianchi Lake. For example, in Xiaocun, when the peasants assessed what they thought should be the price of the land, they expected the land-compensation payment to truly encompass "moral principles." Although I cannot say whether this expectation articulates a peasant political economy (taken to be a kind of cosmology) or has its roots in some other peasant tradition, the key consideration here is how this view of "moral economy" and its consequences are precisely located in conditions set by the state that allow for the effective, efficient, and modern accumulation of capital. An obvious fact is that against the background of the state land-appropriation process, the peasants will readily accept a compensation payment far below that of market price. Another obvious fact is that the peasants are completely clear what the market price is. Based on these obvious facts, an anthropologist with practical concerns should first develop a clear understanding of the peasant view of the economic and acknowledge the commensurability between peasant traditions and modernism. She or he must then resolve to conduct a social critique. When carrying out such a critique, we must consider the following two dimensions: first, critiques should expose how real-estate developers and local governments exploit a peasant moral economy to seize land and profiteer. Secondly, tradition and modernity should emerge as mutually coherent instead of incompatible, so as to open institutional channels for redistribution of wealth, substantially and symbolically, toward the "indigenous people."

Translated by Jean Lin

Notes

1. See Roger M. Keesing, *Custom and Confrontation: The Kwaio Struggle for Cultural Autonomy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 6–10.
2. John Gledhill, *Power and Its Disguises: Anthropological Perspectives on Politics* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 69.
3. Michael Herzfeld, "Political Optics and Occlusion of Intimate Knowledge," *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 3 (2005): 375.
4. Ibid.
5. Steven A. Wernke, "Negotiating Community and Landscape in the Peruvian Andes: A Transconquest View," *American Anthropologist* 109, no. 1 (2007): 130–52.

6. Anita Chen reminded me of this in a recent discussion at the Australian National University. The prominent example among China studies scholars is a series of works by Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li. Zhang Xiaojun has paid attention to land property from the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital. See Zhang Xiaojun, "Symbolic Land Rights and Cultural Economics: A Study of the Land Rights History in Yangcun, Fujian Province," *Chinese Social Sciences*, no. 3 (2004). Peter Ho's book is another example. His recent research on land shows that there is an "intentional policy ambiguity" with regard to Chinese village land rights. That is, the state intentionally blurs the attribution of village land ownership, leading to the increase in land disputes in the 1990s, and most importantly, letting local government easily expropriate village land. See Peter Ho, *Who Owns China's Land? Policy, Property Rights, and Deliberate Institutional Ambiguity*, trans. Lin Yunran (Beijing: Social Sciences Documentation Publishing House, 2008).
7. Herzfeld, "Political Optics," 375–76.
8. For a related study of Xiaocun, see Zhu Xiaoyang, *Xiaocun gushi: Zuiguo yu chengfa* (*The Story of Xiaocun: Offenses and Their Punishment*) (Tianjin: Tianjin Historical Press, 2003).
9. One mu equals 0.67 hectares.
10. One *jin* is half a kilogram.
11. Kunming City Guandu District Historical Literature and Document Selections, no. 5, 167.
12. A discussion related to "radical interpretation" can be found at the end of this article.
13. Qiang Li, Yingmin Zhang, Qian Liu, and Yan liu, "Leverage 'Greater Kunming' Economic Cycle Development's Pivot," *China Financial Times*, December 25, 2005, www.finance.sina.com.cn (site discontinued). It is worth pointing out that of the entire Dianchi basin, the majority of Kunming's four districts (Wuhua, Panlong, Guandu, and Xishan) and three counties (Chenggong, Jinning, and Songming) are located within this area. The total area is 2,920 square kilometers. If we count only the plains and basin areas, however, the total area is only 590 square km. According to the website of the Kunming Land Resources office, in the cited document there is a passage from the Land Resources department that was put out December 1999: "With regard to the Kunming Metropolitan area land use master plan (1997–2010) response" document, by 2010, the Kunming metropolitan urban center should occupy 164.25 square kilometers. Yet according to these materials, in 1990 Kunming occupied 70 square kilometers, and by 2004 the land area occupied had already reached 170 square kilometers. From 2004 to today, how much has the city again expanded? This is a key question because, according to the implementation of the Greater Kunming plan, Kunming's main expansion will occur along the banks of Dianchi Lake. According to the most recent Kunming government village transformation report, the Kunming metropolitan area's central district is 249 square kilometers. See "Kunming Declares War on 336 Villages, Public Expression on the Projects' Benefits Has Reached Up to 1,000,000 Citizens," Kunming government report, Xinhua net Yunnan channel, February 28, 2008, www.yn.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2008-02/28/content_12567285.htm.

14. The farmers' beliefs of this sort are perhaps related to the experience of the transformation of property rights that occurred over the most recent century, particularly memories of the state-led land revolution in the early 1950s.
15. A rural government leader declared that after this, urban and rural unification will be realized. In actuality, at present the lost-land peasants' safeguards still come from land-compensation payments. From the compensation for each mu, a fixed amount of funds is taken out and handed over as the peasants' social deposit account. For example, according to a report, metropolitan government research by Kunming revealed last year that for newly appropriated land, for each mu, 30,000 yuan must be handed over as social deposit.
16. This sort of analysis does not imply that the peasants and town officials do not have an unofficial differential matrix of relationships based on shared geographical and blood ties. On the contrary, these sorts of relationships are still practiced and, indeed, are continuously reproduced. In the midst of these sorts of practices, the relationship between village leaders and local government compared to the relationship between residents in other villages and the government is slightly closer in Xiaocun. It is generally believed that in the land-appropriation process, village leaders have been able to get somewhat more benefits than ordinary peasants.
17. See Kirsten Hastrup's "Social Anthropology: Towards a Pragmatic Enlightenment?" *Social Anthropology* 13, no. 2 (2005): 133–49. In this article, she points out how Davidson, Hilary Putnam, and others have forced anthropology to enter a "pragmatic enlightenment" and to make a "topographical turn."
18. Ibid., 145–46.
19. See Donald Davidson, "Radical Interpretation," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 125–39; Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in *Logic and Language: Selected Works in Classic Analytical Philosophy*, ed. Zhai Chenbo and Han Linhe (Beijing: Oriental Press, 2005), 557–77.
20. These works include James Bohman, *New Philosophy of Social Science: Problems of Indeterminacy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993); John R. Bowlin and Peter G. Stromberg, "Representation and Reality in the Study of Culture," *American Anthropologist* 99, no. 1 (1997): 123–34; Hastrup, "Social Anthropology; Elizabeth Povinelli, "Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and Inconceivability," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 319–34; Richard Wilson, "The Trouble with Truth," *Anthropology Today* 20, no. 5 (2004): 14–17. In addition, for a summary related to these works, see Zhu Xiaoyang, "Rethinking the 'Crisis of Representation' Approaches from Donald Davidson and John MacDowell," *China Anthropology Review* 6 (2008).
21. John MacDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).
22. Now in hindsight, I almost think that this or that "revolutionary" perspective criticized in this article all share the same fundamental problem: how to recognize signs of Chinese social order, as well as how to recognize the Chinese "state." These questions have become

muddled. Speaking bluntly, it is clear that these various viewpoints all come from a Western political science state and rights framework. They first attempt to use this framework to describe and demarcate the Chinese social order and the state, and later from the same framework find a method to solve China's problems. Such a method has reified several binaries, including those between property rights and collectivism, and uncritically emphasized individual rights and the rule of law.

23. Current consensus among researchers in China studies is that the main initiatives of local government land appropriation are subject to the influence of two institutional factors. The first is the financial and taxation systems. The second institutional factor is the "political success" assessment. One could say this second factor is directly related to the state discourses of development emphasized in this chapter. Local economic development (manifested in a series of successes in attracting investment) is truly the sword of Damocles hanging over the head of leaders at every level of government. Under these conditions, one method of addressing a grassroots crisis would be to implement reforms aimed at changing the two factors mentioned above. Or perhaps the standards of the so-called political success assessment should be changed so that the assessment of a good official should make reference to one who keeps the peace.
24. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (in Chinese) (Beijing: People's Publication House, 1997), 29–30.
25. Elizabeth Povinelli's work is an example of this sort of viewpoint. See Povinelli, "Radical Worlds.