

From Social Equilibrium to Self-Production of Society: The Transition of China's Sociological Recognition on China's Society

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Abstract: There is a transition of China's Sociological scholars' recognition on China's society in 20th century, especially on China's vicissitudes of modernization. When accepting the idea of Sociology from the Western modern civilization, the forerunners of China's sociological studies in early 20th used to take sociology as a method of evolutionism for saving the nation from subjugation and ensuring its survival. For this purpose, many sociology scholars tried to cultivate or remake China's society. However, after almost 100 years of development, China's sociological studies find out that society has its own rule and it's hard to change, even under the period of modernization. In this paper, based on his analysis of one case history that China's society and traditional peasants have "social ground" and their own method of dealing with state, the author tries to point out the self-production of China's society.

Key words: Sociology, China's Society, self-production

In the year of 1897, Yan Fu, a famous important Chinese scholar at that time, started to translate a sociology book written by H. Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*. After 7 years, the book published with the name of *Qun Xue Yi Yan* (群学肄言), which means the textbook of collective studies. This is the first sociology book that was translated into Chinese from the Western world. Why did Yan Fu translate this book? In the year of 1895, in his book *Yuan Qiang*, which means an investigation on why a country could become rich and powerful, Yan Fu explained this. In this book, Yan Fu says,

"...Mr. Spencer is also from England. He named his doctrine as Sociology...I conclude his theories and find out that, his essentials are pretty much close to the

essentials of our *Great Learning*(大学) on the self-cultivation, the family regulation, the state governance and on the bringing peace to all under the heaven. However, our Great Learning does not have a detailed discussion on those topics, and Spencer's excellent books are profound and delicate, rich and speculative...his works especially focus on the principle of a country's rise and decline, the reason why people's morality becomes honest and why it becomes ruined" (Yan, 1895)

This article explains why Yan Fu translated this book and introduced sociology into China. He did those works because he wanted China to become powerful and rich. For him, Sociology could change China's society. And this is the earliest understanding and expectation of Chinese scholars on sociology. Such kind of understanding and expectation is very typical among the early 20th century's Chinese scholars.

1. Survive or Perish: Early Sociologists' Concern in China

The most famous work of Professor Fei Xiaotong in the whole academic world should be his book *Peasant Life in China*. It has been taken as a classical work of both sociology and anthropology by both Eastern and Western Sociology. Zhang Jing believes that this book should be taken as a new type of study on China written by new type of scholars that did not exist in the history of China (Zhang, 2017). In other words, it represents a new time of China's knowledge production and a new type of understanding of China's society. In the preface of this book, Malinowski calls Fei as a "citizen": "The book...contains observations carried on by a citizen upon his own people" (Malinowski, 1939: xix). This is a word that traditional Chinese scholars never used in the history of China to describe themselves.

Fei also considers himself as a modern scholar that was influenced by the May Fourth Movement and belong to the generation of May Fourth (Zhang, 2000: Pp645-646), which confirms the image of "citizen".

However, recent studies from Chinese scholars find out that, Fei also has an aspect of Chinese traditional "gentry". And he also admits such aspect of himself (Yang, 2010). In other words, Fei is a Chinese sociology scholar that has dual characteristics: traditional Confucianism scholar and modern social science scholar.

Such a duality of Fei comes from a wide-ranging influence. What we would like to point out in this paper is that, his early works, the works before the book of *Peasant Life in China*, could give us a clue of understanding this book and his duality.

Various of early works that Fei had done before his *Peasant Life in China* focused on one topic: transition of China's cultural and society. We can take it as a direct reflection of a bigger trend of social thoughts in early 20th China. It is mostly on saving the nation from subjugation and ensure its survival.

The current materials provide evidence that Fei starts his academic writing around 1933. In 1932, he wrote a preface for a translated article named *Eyewitnesser of War between China and Japan*. In this preface, Fei shows his concern of *saving the China* clearly and says that he wants to find a way out for China. Thus, like Yan Fu, sociological and anthropological study had become a method for Fei at that time to explore the way of modernization for traditional China's society. The basic question he raised in his early works is, how could a traditional culture find its own way of adapting modern society? From 1933 to 1937, many studies that Fei did show such concern. He clearly understood that China was on the eve of huge change and wanted to find out that where China would go and how to understand such a huge transition?

For example, in 1933, he wrote a book review on a book *The Pilgrims of Russian Town* that was written by Pauline V. Young and published by University of Chicago Press in 1932. In this book review, Fei's concern focuses on how a religious community, Molokan clan, which is totally different from American society from any aspect, survives in American cities and adapts to it. Such a perspective clearly shows Fei's concern on how China's traditional society, with its long history and with an influence from outside, could transform into a modern society.

This concern even shows up in his reading of Max Weber's classical work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Fei is probably one of the very earliest scholars who read the English version of this book. Around 1940, Fei wrote down a long book review of this book. The perspective he chose to read this book is also the transition of a traditional culture in modern society.

Such clue of his thoughts was directly shown in his work *Peasant Life in China*. In the preface for this book, Malinowski says: “the book, moreover, though it takes in the traditional background of Chinese life, does not remain satisfied with the mere reconstruction of the static past. It grapples fully and deliberately with the most elusive and difficult phase of modern life: the transformation of the traditional culture under the Western impact” (Malinowski, 1939: xix). Moreover, Malinowski notices that Fei’s village represents a bigger question of his country: “his great Mother-country to westernize or to perish” (Malinowski, 1939: xx)? In order to answer this question, just like Fei himself argues, sociological studies should respect the “live social reality” (Fei, 2009:104).

Such a work and concerns does not only exist in Fei’s works. In many of other sociologists and in many practitioners of rural construction movement, we can also find such kind of concern and understanding of China’s society.

There are two kinds of standpoints on this question. Some scholars believed that China’s society is under the huge change and needs change in order to adapt to modern society. Scholars and doers such as James Yen, had a very typical standpoint on this when he raised his own understanding about China. He carried out social investigation in China’s rural society in early 1920s, and concluded that Poverty, Weakness, Selfish and foolish are four main characteristics of traditional China’s society. His trial of reforming China’s society, which is called Civilian Educational Movement, started in 1921 in Ding county of Hebei province. Basically, the idea of this civilian education movement is to reform China’s society through four kinds of education: Arts education, livelihood education, citizen education and hygienism education.

However, many other scholars, including Liang Shuming and Pan Guangdan, had different standpoint on such a question. They believed that China’s society and its culture has their own value and vitality. And they are different from western society and western culture. In his famous book *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, regarding Western civilization as doomed to eventual failure, Liang did not advocate complete reform of China’s society and adoption of Western institutions.

He nonetheless believed that reform was needed to make China equal to the rest of the world. Instead, he pushed for change to socialism starting at the grassroots level and learn from traditional Chinese Confucianism method. To this end, he founded the Shandong Rural Reconstruction Institute and helped to found the China Democratic League. Same with many other sociologists, Liang Shuming believes that the rural village was the most important aspect of Chinese society. However, in the last few hundred years, China's history had been characterized by its destruction. Thus, the most important thing of saving China is to save China's rural society. Since such a society has been and is different from western society, China should not learn from the west simply.

Liang argues that, while China's culture stresses the importance of family, the Western society focuses on the relationship of the individual to the community. He insists that this leads China down a path dedicated to an ethic-based society, while Western society produces and individual-based one instead. China was led down its path because of feelings of kinship and emotional bonds, which dominated their society. The West, due to their emphasis on mutual rights, proceeded down a path revolving around class distinction, economic independence and laws. The Chinese, however, had a society of professional divisions due to greater social mobility, mutual responsibility and personal bonds to maintain orders.

Finally, Liang brings up his three-culture theory and China's position in it: Western-China-India culture model. He states that though China was in the second stage, she had skipped the first and consequently lacked the development of profit and power. Rather than suggesting she go back to the first cultural stage, Liang suggests the introduction of Western science and democracy into Chinese society to promote development in those areas. He tries to promote a kind of modern township treaty, which means education and politics together, education is politics and vice versa. Through such kind of treaty, he was trying to build up a basis for modern China's politics.

2. Comparative Studies between China and Western Society

Besides Liang, many other scholars started to reflect the characteristics of China's society and its difference from western society. Among those scholars, Prof. Pan Guangdan's works are representative. Pan was one of the very early scholars who used European theory to explain Chinese society. In 1922, he did a paper about Feng Xiaoqing, a narcissism girl in Late Ming dynasty whose story was recorded in many books and poetries in Ming and Qing dynasty. Pan borrowed theory from Sigmund Freud and used it for his explanation of Ms. Feng Xiaoqing. This trail was very successful that Mr. Liang Qichao, his professor, put a premium on it. After he did this paper, Pan went to Dartmouth College and then Columbia University. He stayed about 5 years in USA and went back to China. Among this time, as a scholar who was influenced by Western civilization heavily, he started to think about the difference between China's civilization and Western civilization, especially the difference between Confucianism and Christian Civilization. And his writings also reflected his thoughts.

In 1927, Pan expended his paper into a book and published it. In this book, he put two epilogues where he explains the reason for him to do the research of Feng Xiaoqing. Both are related with his concern of China's society. Firstly, he put the case of Feng Xiaoqing as a case of diagnosing China's society, especially its attitude toward women. Secondly, he took Feng Xiaoqing as a case of narcissism and used it as a start point for his understanding of the trend of individualization in early 20th China. He believes that the trend of individuation in China comes from the western civilization and it is a symbol of modernization which China cannot avoid. However, excessive individualization has already endangered China's society, especially its marriage and family.

The second epilogue had already shown Pan Guangdan's complicated attitude toward modernization. As a sociologist, he did a series of studies on comparing the difference between the Eastern Civilization and Western Civilization. And he believed that the two civilizations and societies are totally different.

In 1928, Pan published another book *China's Family Issues*. In this book, he argues that family issues are especially important in China's sociology because traditionally, "China is the country that its family is the center of its society", however, in the modern transformation of China's society, the idea of family in China's younger generation has changed a lot (Pan, 1928/2000: 71).

In this study, Pan Guangdan analyses the data that he collected through his questionnaire investigation for China's younger generation on family issues. And he found out the trend of individualization in 1920s' China. The data shows that younger generations prefer romantic love more than family and marriage. However, Pan believes that in modern society, family still gets its value and can "fits modern ethics". The reason is, family represents a bigger function of human society: ethnic continuity (Pan, 1928/2000: 132).

Pan finds out from his research the trend of individualization of young generations. He believes that this is a big change of modern China. And More importantly, such a trend is especially obviously in those people who accept higher education. He uses the theory of Freudian narcissism on the analyzation of such a trend of individualization in modern society, and explains the crisis of China's society from the perspective of Eastern-Western comparative model. such a train of thought was very typical in Pan Guangdan's works in 1920s-1930s. In this comparative works between China's Confucianism and Western culture, he raised that a big difference is the sentimentalism of the west and the moderation of emotions in China. He mentioned a very similar point with Fei Xiaotong's *Cha-Xu-Ge-Ju* and argued that traditional Chinese people would prefer the moderation of his feelings and emotions in daily life. Thus he believes, if modern Chinese people stress individualism and emotion part of marriage, then they would fall into the path of narcissism. In this essay, he criticizes some behaviors of the young generation at that time in the name of "romantic love" and argues that this is nothing but a reflection of individualism. Thus we could say, Pan's works on Feng Xiaoqing reflected his concerns thoughts on China's social transformation and the change of identity.

In his study on China's family, Pan Guangdan also compares the cultural difference between China and Western society and criticizes individualism and its hurt toward traditional China's familyism. He emphasizes that in China, "family is the biggest pivot for individual's emotions" (Pan, 1928/2000: 236). He believes that China's scholars must look for the solutions of those social problems that are caused by individualism from China's traditional culture.

What is the difference between Eastern and Western culture and society? Pan Guangdan believes that the idea of God in Christian culture cannot be understood by China's culture, especially by Confucianism culture on daily ethics. In China, the factor of human relations is the most important thing for the understanding of society. However, in Christian culture, human relations are not the most important things because the God is much beyond the human beings. Simply speaking, China's culture is a culture of family, and Western Culture is a culture of individualism. If China follows Western culture in a simple way, it will cause severe social problems.

As an influential professor, Pan Guangdan's another research effort focuses on higher education, especially on liberal arts education. His thoughts on higher education and liberal arts education are related to each other closely and come from his own sociological theory: *Zhong He Wei Yu*, meaning equilibrium, harmony and sociologists should investigate any social issue from its own cultural, history and social background. When he uses this theory for the study of China's new higher education in early 20th century, he criticizes that such an education is "totally failed" (Pan, 1933/2000). This failure can be proved by the bad performances of those government officials in the desperate situation of China, which means the invasion of Japanese into China. And the reason of this failure, Pan Guangdan believes, is this "new education" which focused only on professional education and did not emphasize the cultivation of human beings. His understanding of the cultivation of human beings mostly means the cultivation of traditional Confucianism scholars. In other words, Pan Guangdan believes that traditional Confucianism is still valuable and even necessary for modern China. And modern university education in China did not provide such an

education and thus became failed. For that reason, he advocates liberal arts education which can play such a function. This kind of liberal arts education, he believes, is even more important than professional studies.

3. Social Ground and the Self-production of the Society

After the Cultural Revolution, Chinese scholars translated Weber's book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, into Chinese. In 1980s, this book suddenly became a phenomenon. Sociologists and even wide academia circles read it and discuss it. In this book, Weber explains the culture elements of European modernization and emphasizes the unique rationalization of the Western culture as its very essence of the Western modernization. Chinese scholars studied it passionately because they wanted to find out the possibility of modernization for Chinese culture. Scholars wanted to find out their own answers of such a Weberian question: why Modern Capitalism (Modernization) did not happen in China?

This question is related with another question directly: how should we understand China's society? Since 1980s, many works of foreign scholars on China had been translated into Chinese and introduced into China's academia. This new wave of translation reflects Chinese scholars' concern on this question. Among these new translated books, many of their topics focus on the relationship between state and peasants or local society.

In this period, some scholars argued again that China's society should reform into a society similar with western society. For example, when comparing China's society and Western society, some scholars find out that China doesn't have its own civil society. Thus China's society should produce its own civil society. And many scholars started to study social organization. That is why in China's sociological studies, how social organizations that envision social reforms interact with existing social and political structures in their practices is the key for some scholars to study. A "social production" perspective and related study on the structural features and poverty alleviation practices of a philanthropic organization, which has successfully solved the entry problem and

meanwhile clearly recognized and maintained its independence, was used by Sun Feiyu in one of his papers (Sun, 2018). Sun studied how an organization, with a clear vision, actionable goals, compatible and strict management as well as monitoring systems, has encountered many obstacles that are inconsistent with its goals. The organization thus may not be able to realize its goal in practice, and fall into a detached state, and even become a structural space for the reproduction of local society. From a “state-society” perspective, Sun tries to understand the obstacles that this organization encountered and studies it by re-embedding the organization into the local social-political context. Sun argues that, the reason this organization became an academically interesting issue is because it shows the complexity of the transition process of Chinese society and allows us to observe the self-reproduction process of the society.

In their study on China’s transition, especially the transition of the rural society, some scholars take an inclusive view of peasant village in their discussions on intersections between state and society (Strauch, 1981; Oi 1989). Oi concludes that there are two contrasting models for understanding the relation of state and society in communism states. The first one is a totalitarian model which stresses mostly state power and its influence on society, such as the works of Friedrich and Brzezinski. Another model is called the “interest group model”, which places the influence of local identifiable groups on state power. Oi uses the peasant village as the meaning of society in his functionalism society-state model. Different from the two models, Oi describes the village politics in China as “clientelist” and choose a “clientelism model to describe the village politics, especially on the elite-mass linkage” (Oi, 1989: 7).

However, from the studies of Land Reform, some scholars find that the relationships between individual, community and state are more complicated. CPC’s trial of entering local society was immediately involved into the local social and political structure. Local power structure started to influence the power from outside (Guo and Sun, 2002; Sun, 2013).

Similar with Oi, Philip Huang also points out that there are three traditions of Chinese peasant studies from different dimensions. The first tradition, which is

represented by western economists, such as Theodore Schultz (1964) and Samuel Popkin (1979), describes the peasant as a kind of capitalist entrepreneur. The second tradition, which is represented by Karl Polanyi (1957), suggests a “substantive” economics “that would stress the social relationships in which economic behavior in premarket societies was ‘embedded’” (Huang, 1985: 5). The third tradition, which is contrast to both the formal and substantive points, is the Marxism tradition from Karl Marx to Mao Tse-tung.

In his famous book *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*, Huang presents his critic to all the three traditions: a common tendency in the studies above about Chinese villages is to take villages as units which are “socially and economically integrated” into a larger social and economical systems. Meanwhile, peasants have “generally been depicted as a single ‘peasant class’ that transcended villages and acted as one” (Huang, 1985: 27). Huang tries to put peasants within their own village communities and to explore the political function of Chinese villages in twenty century from this “community”-state perspective. He argues that China’s “village-state” relations “were shaped not only by the nature of governmental power, but also by the internal structures of villages” (Huang, 1985: 32).

By showing how the state power meet the “indigenous village political organizations” in early and middle twenty century’s China, Huang notes: “how the larger processes of agricultural involution and social differentiation...affected village communities and their relations with the state” (Huang, 1985: 32).

In this paper, I would like to choose a case that Yang and Sun did in order to describe the transition of China’s rural society from the perspective of relationships directly in-between peasants and state. In this perspective, I will refuse to describe the peasants as chessman that are controlled, or mobilized, or constructed passively in a large transition of the history: I would like to describe them as an initiative social group from the perspective of social self-production. I want to emphasize that, they have their own thoughts, interests, and plans about their own choice.

4. A Case History of a Peasant

On the basis of our field work in Xichuan City, the provincial capital of M Municipality in the Western China, this paper carries out its empirical explorations firstly within the phenomena of unequal contests between local government and peasant in contemporary China with passive urbanization.

Unequal contests between local government and peasant refers to their confrontation and struggle because of related opposite purposes under the situation that there is a great disparity in their status and strength.

In order to upgrade the city levels and develop local economics, in last thirty years, many local governments in China extend their city area, which directly changes the populations, locations and administrative organizations of the local society. Lives of millions of traditional rural peasants were altered from the rural area to the urban area by local governments' actions of expanding the scale of cities. However, such a transition doesn't necessarily follow up with supportive industrial networks or good business that could provide many opportunities of work. Thus it is not a rare phenomenon that suburban peasants have the passive attitude and even resist this kind of urbanization, and their urbanization could be described as passive (Yu, 2005).

In this case story, the village peasants had already met this kind of passive urbanization since early 1990s. During their process of passive urbanization, confrontation would happen between the local government and peasants due to different appeal of interests. Such kind of confrontations are usually not balanced since local government controls much more resources than peasants and could achieve their purposes. However, from this case study we will find out that there is another aspect for us to understand the relationship between local government and peasants.

Xichuan City government carried out the "Strategy of Large Xichuan" in 2002 and brought a typical phenomenon of passive urbanization in its suburb.

Ba Village locates in a connection zone between urban and rural areas, and confronted the problem of land expropriation very early. In 1990, 1995, 1998 and 2001,

local government did four times land expropriation. The price that the government paid to local peasants was different in each time. In 1995, the price of each Mu that the local government gave peasants was 8,000 RMB. After 2000, followed up the rise of land price in market, and with the request of peasants, the price of land expropriation started to raise up. Along with this urbanization and land expropriation, after 2000, more and more peasants in this village went to Xichuan city and tried to find a job there. Agriculture were not the most important livelihood in this village anymore.

The case that we met in our fieldwork happened under such a circumstance.

4.1 The Rural Democracy Event

(A)The Village Politics

Ba village has 104 households and more than 300 people. The largest kinship in Ba village is the S family, who has more than 30 households. This family kinship is a very tight group. And it is one of the most important reasons that this family had been the most powerful family in Ba village before 2001. Among this kinship, the SUL's father started to work as village head since 1966 until 1978. After 1978, this old father's three sons SYL, SYK and SUL followed him and continued to take the key positions in this village, such as the village head (SYK and SUL), and CPC committee member and accountant (SYL). Since this family had been staying in the center of the village power before 2001, they were called S dynasty in Ba village by peasants. Another large family kinship in this village is Z family. Z family also has more than 30 households. However, Z family members were not as tight as S family, neither were they enthusiastic to the village politics. Besides S and Z families, there were some other small families in village, including a household with family name W. Family W is a migration family. They moved into the Ba village in 1990s. In Ba village, W family was in a marginal status in village politics. Most of the villagers did not like them because none of the three brothers from this family did farm work. In villagers' opinion, they did not have decent jobs and were like idlers. Among the three brothers, the big brother, WS, is their head. He used to work in large cities, had several different jobs, including construction.

Later on, he became a labor contractor. Besides S family and Z family, most of the families in this village were ordinary peasants before 2001. And these kind of families are the largest groups in this village.

The story of this rural democracy started from WS's request.

(B)Checking Account

Along with the process of urbanization, the land expropriation fees were getting high. And as a rule, a certain percent of the expropriation fees were kept by the village committee as collective property. According to the rule, the property of village was kept and managed by the local government as collective property. So there was a large number of the money that should belong to the villagers was held by local government. In our fieldwork, villagers told me that they were not satisfied with this kind of distribution. And they was worrying that the money was illegally allocated or spent by the local government officials. However, they didn't have any clear evidence, so the general attitude among villagers was to bet the village head to "watch" the money.

Meanwhile, all villagers knew that an important reason that S family coul stay in the center of the village politics was because they were very "obedient to the local government", and "the local government like them". So they had reason to believe that S family was not very honest with them.

In early 2001, WS, the big brother from W family, reported to the local government that the village head of the Ba village, the SYK had "economic problem": he embezzled part of the land expropriation fees. It seemed that WS prepared very carefully before he did this: he wrote an report and listed 21 issues on SYK's bad behaviors. Given the strong evidence he reported, the local government had to send out an investigation team to Ba village to investigate SYK's economic issues. Finally, 2 issues from 21 were confirmed. Although the related money was less than 9,000 RMB, and SYK himself had found enough excuse to explain it, he couldn't maintain his position anymore. WS's purpose was to hit S family, to shake their powerful position in village, however, he did not get his purpose either. S family were still strongly supported by the local

government and the village committee. The decision they made was to ask the S family's big brother, SYL to replace his second brother, continue S family's powerful status in village.

An unpredicted effect that WS made was about the trust from part of the whole villagers. WS started to get supports from villagers because he did successfully prove that the checking account was a reasonable request and SYK did have economic issues. However, WS was not satisfied with this ending.

(C) The Petition Event

The purpose of WS is very simple: to become the village head. To achieve this target, he must successfully pervade the local government to carry out a new village election. However, given his influence was very weak in the local government, this work seemed just impossible.

In June of 2003, WS and his close supporters wrote a letter. In this letter, WS stated very clearly that most of the land expropriation fees were kept by the local government. And he expressed a strong will that the villagers wanted the money back. With this letter, WS visited all most all of the households in village and asked peasants to sign it. He promised that he would negotiate with the local government as villagers' representative to retrieve the money for them. Most of the villagers signed the letter, even including those people from S kinship. So WS got a letter, with almost all of the signatures from the village.

However, before he went to the local government, WS changed the content of the letter. He kept those signatures, but changed the content page. The letter became a petition with most of the villagers' name subscribed: they wanted to change the village head, and they wanted to do a village election.

The local government had to concern about this letter because of those signatures. However, this was not enough to change their mind. WS had already prepared one more step. As a former labor contractor, he was familiar with the contraction market. He did a personal investigation and had found that the properties were allocated by the local government in order to build up a new local market zone. And in this process, there

must be some officers who were not clean. With this guess, he warned the local government that the only thing he wanted was only a new round of election in his village. If he couldn't get what he wanted, he would reveal the evidences, which he actually did not have, and report them to the upper level's authorities.

In the messages from S family, the local officers had already known that WS was not an easy-going ordinary peasant. On the other hand, after all, all he wanted was only a new round of election. Given the powerful position of the S kinship in village, the local government believed that this request was only WS's own farce. Thence they agreed with WS's request and decided to make another election in Ba village. It was until this decision was made, most of the villagers, including S families, just realized that the content of the letter was not about retrieving money. But it was too late, and the local government had already started the procedures.

On the other hand, in order to appease the villagers' angry about his cheating behavior, WS made a bolder promise to the villagers: if he was elected, not only would he get their money back, he would also find a construction company and build up one two-story house for each household in a very low price so that they did not have to pay too much for it besides that money.

His plan and budget seemed clear. From his research, he knew how much money they would get back from government: about 4.5 million RMB in total. Surely there was still a shortfall in the budget. However, he could find a construction company who would like to work before they get their money. The villagers could get more money from further land expropriation. And they could pay the rest of the money with that. The purpose of WS was clear: he wanted to show the villagers that he didn't want to become village head only for his own interest, but for the interests of the whole villagers. In our fieldwork of 2003, we knew that the only thing that most of the villagers worried about was the corruption of the new village head. However, WS clear indicated that since the budget of building houses for them was clear and large, he could not embezzle any money for himself. On the country, he might put his own money into this construction plan. Throughout this clear budget, WS successfully re-built his image in

the villagers. WS thus was fully prepared for the election.

There were two candidates in this election: WS and the present village head SYL.

(D) Two Round of Election

However, the first round of election was resisted by whole kinship of S. The reason was simple: WS wanted to put the ballot box in his own house. WS thought that this could make himself influential on the election. However, as a tight group, all of the people from S kinship refused to go. According the rule, the people who actually voted must exceed the half of the people who should vote. Thus the election could not get enough tickets to be valid.

But WS still believed that he could get elected if there were enough voting. The only problem for him was to get enough people to vote. His plan for second election included three parts: (1) he suggested local government to use the local middle school for election, and he asked the chief executive of the local township government come to supervise the election; (2) He asked the local government to announce that, everybody who came to vote, no matter who he/she voted, would get award of 50 RMB (after he was elected, he paid those voters through village's public funds); (3) He secretly mobilized enough people who would vote him. He did the mobilization work under the table mostly because he clearly realized that no family in this village would like to offend S family because of him. So this kind of secret mobilization even made him more popular.

Meanwhile, S family was too optimistic about the election. And the successful resistance in the first round helped this kind of mood. All of the 33 households of S kinship went to vote. Their thoughts were just like SYK's wife told us in our fieldwork: "at that time, our chief executive of government called us to vote. Everybody who went there will get 50 RMB, no matter you vote or not, and no matter who you vote for. So who would not like to go? Everybody went there and voted happily."

S family thought that they would get the money and WS would still lose this election.

However, the result is, WS got more than 60 votes and SYL only got 33, exactly

the number of the S household. This is a huge change in Ba village and S dynasty finally ended. Although many people from S family couldn't accept this result and in our fieldwork, SYL's wife even told us that she believed WS cheated in the counting of the ballot. However, there is no evidence that could prove her. Even the leader of the S family, SYL didn't have doubt about this. This rural democracy that was supervised by local government were totally valid.

(E) The weapon of Peasants

Thus WS became the new village head. But what kind of village head he would be? In our fieldwork of 2003, we heard some of his performances after he became the village head.

Firstly, he did ask the money back. There were more than 4 million RMB that he asked back from the local government. And he really used the money to start his promise about the townhouses. There was another story about how he used the strategy that S family wouldn't use. He threatened the local government on two things: (1) the evidence that he had about their corruptions; and (2) in 2002, Xichuan city hosted an international Auto & Motorcycle Tourism Festival. This is the largest international event for Xichuan in 2002. Right before the opening of the festival, WS went to the local government and threatened the chief executer that he would mobilize his villagers to do protest if the government did not give the money back to them. Given the situation that tens of thousands of foreigners and journalists would come to the city, the local government decided to give what he wanted.

Secondly, however, in our interview with WS's daughter, we found that the construction company had a very close relationship with him. And not surprisingly, we heard that he got a lot of income from that company.

Thirdly, in 2003, the city government did land expropriation in this village. As part of the plan of building up "big Xichuan", the Xichuan city government decided to expropriate a large number of land from suburban area, including 200 mu of land from Ba village. However, because villagers were not satisfied with the price that the Xichuan government gave, and the negotiation between the villagers and government

broke up, the government decided to expropriate their land by force. And thus, the conflict outburst between the peasants and government. According to the words of a peasants, “all those men who wear peaked caps in Xichuan city came to our village”. However, in this confliction, WS disappeared. He was there on the scene, but did not do anything. In the night of the confliction, he signed the contract, and started to persuade his villagers to sign it. He still got strategy to do this. He let people know that the first twenty households who sign the contract would get 300-500 RMB higher of the price per Mu. More and more people went to his house and signed the contract.

In 2005, when our team went back to revisit our interviewee, my teammate found that the townhouses that he promised the villagers had almost finished. However, he asked every household who wanted to buy the house to pay a certain percent of fee before they were allowed to move in. And of course, some family couldn't afford the price. This situation was becoming a public issue in the village and WS didnot provide a solution before the fieldwork team left there.

(F) Self-Productive Society and its relationship with State

The various social realities and problems we observed from this case can be seen as an analogy to China's current political and social issues. It thus helps us to develop a holistic understand of the phenomena, mechanisms, and issues in China's political and social transition process.

In the interactions between government and peasants, there do have space for peasants to make their own pursue. The peasants also had their own thoughts on the local politics, community and their own choice. In this perspective, I will refuse to describe the peasants as chessman that are controlled, or mobilized, or constructed passively in a large transition of the history: I would like to describe them as an initiative social group. The community that they live in makes them easy to choose similar attitude, however, this doesn't mean that they could are easy to handle. They have their own thoughts, interests, and plans about their own choice.

5. Social Ground and Sociological Studies in China

In their works, Yang and Sun ask such a question: how to understand the internal operational mechanism of Chinese society? As the core question of Chinese Sociological scholar's efforts of building up the subjectivity of China's sociology, the answer to this question demands an thorough understanding of China's society and even the sociology itself. Yang and Sun raise a concept of *social ground*, which refers to those "unchanged/stable subjects" in the history of Chinese society. This paper finds out that, after the Cultural Revolution, some factors of traditional China's culture emerged quickly, especially family-oriented culture. China's society is under a huge change, in this huge transformation, there are some traditional cultural factors that are still there, never changed. On the contrary, it combines with the new historical condition and produces new possibilities of history while keeping its deepest historical meanings.

Yang and Sun raise their idea of *social ground* based on a series of fieldwork studies (Yang and Sun, 2015). They choose a perspective of relationships directly in-between peasants and state in order to understand China's society. In this perspective, they refuse to describe the peasants as chessman that are controlled, or mobilized, or constructed passively in a large transition of the history: but would like to describe them as an initiative social group. The community that they live in makes them easy to choose similar attitude; however, this doesn't mean that they could be easy to handle. They have their own thoughts, interests, and plans about their own choice.

In this paper, the author picks up one fieldwork that Yang and Sun have done in order to explain the term of *social ground*. Such kind of understanding is very close to the famous term Cultural Self-Consciousness(文化自觉) that was raised by Fei Xiaotong in his late period(Fei, 2013). It might be even proper to say that the studies of social self-production in China and the social ground are part of efforts of sociological studies on Cultural Consciousness in China.

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