

RIGHTEOUS REVOLUTIONARIES

Morality, Mobilization,
and Violence in the Making
of the Chinese State

JEFFREY A. JAVED



Righteous Revolutionaries

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Jeffrey A. Javed

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For Hu Zhanfen and Zhang Qiuju, who are sorely missed.

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ogist whose journey ended far too soon. Though she and Mr. Hu never met, they shared a remarkable bravery and fearless commitment to their political convictions. Mr. Hu was branded a rightist and purged from the Shanghai Municipal government during the Cultural Revolution after personally falling afoul of Yao Wenyuan, a member of the Gang of Four; he was never officially rehabilitated and continued to challenge the Party-state at great personal cost. Mr. Hu took a strong interest in this manuscript from the beginning. Aside from our many conversations about his life in the Maoist era, he constantly sent me material that he thought would aid the book, including his friend Xu Hongci's (then unpublished) firsthand account of land reform politics in the East China Bureau. I wished so much that Qiuju and Mr. Hu would one day be able to read the finished book, to which they contributed so greatly. Dedicating this book to their memory is the least I could do to express my gratitude.

Abbreviations for Major Archival and Documentary Sources

AHSTDGGZL	《安徽省土地改革资料》*
BSDA	Baoshan District Archives
CCDC	Fengyang County Archives, Contemporary China Documents Center
CCPM	Database on the History of Contemporary Chinese Political Movements, CUHK
JSPA	Jiangsu Provincial Archives
JSNMYD	《江苏农民运动档案史料选编》*
JSTGYD	《江苏省土地改革运动》
QJCA	Quanjiao County Archives
SBTGWX	《苏北土地改革文献》*
SHMA	Shanghai Municipal Archives
SNTGWX	《苏南土地改革文献》*
XCSSN	《乡村三十年: 凤阳农村社会经济发展实录 (1949-1983)》*
ZGTDGGS�XB	《中国土地改革史料选编》*

*Internal publication (内部资料 / 内部印行)

Introduction

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

—DAVID DER-WEI WANG, *THE MONSTER THAT IS HISTORY: HISTORY, VIOLENCE, AND FICTIONAL WRITING IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHINA* (2004)¹

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had just come to power when the famous anthropologist G. William Skinner was conducting his fieldwork in rural Sichuan. He recorded in his diary that shortly after the People's Liberation Army arrived and pacified the area, the Party set up a photographic exhibit in the local YMCA to introduce itself and its revolutionary message to the locals. Crowds flocked to the exhibit, which displayed photographs of the top Party leadership and the army, as well as a "series of woodblock prints telling stories whose moral was that the exploiting class in China is just that." Remarkable on this scene, Skinner noted a peculiar coincidence: "I must admit that the locale was a little strange: most of the pictures were mounted on top of earlier posters to the effect that Jesus is our friend, God is love, etc."² The CCP's superimposition of its revolutionary imagery over the religious imagery of the Christian missionaries may have been mere coincidence, but what is certain is that, soon after its military victory, the young Party-state was eager to portray itself as the new legitimate authority in the land, not just by broadcasting its righteous mission to the Chinese public but, crucially, by vilifying its predecessors.

This vilification gave way to significant on-the-ground violence in the form of a massive land reform campaign. China's land reform campaign (1950–52) was the world's largest and most violent episode of land reform, wherein millions of so-called landlords (地主) perished or endured extreme psychological and physical violence at the hands of local villagers in the name of “class struggle” (阶级斗争).³ Because of Mao's ardent commitment to popular participation in revolutionary violence, the nascent regime insisted on the widespread involvement of ordinary villagers in highly ritualized public acts of collective violence. At various mass rallies—for example, “struggle sessions” (斗争大会), “public sentencings” (公审大会), and “People's Courts” (人民法庭)—armed guards escorted victims to a stage or clearing where, in front of a crowd of their fellow villagers, locals would openly denounce them. The newly empowered “masses” (群众), having been transformed by the Party-state into “a vast number of self-righteous, incorruptible judges,”⁴ listened to these melodramatic testimonies, shouted slogans in sympathy with the denouncers and against the accused, and eventually recommended a suitable punishment.

The CCP's behavior after 1949 was not unusual: any state that wishes to build and expand its authority must confront the task of subjugating internal challengers who have traditionally monopolized political, economic, and social power at the local level.⁵ Coercion alone, however, is rarely enough. Even though a state might succeed in eradicating the coercive capacity of these internal rivals, doing so does not automatically diminish their social influence; a capable state must still enforce the primacy of its own rules and norms over the “people's own inclinations of social behavior or behavior sought by other social organizations.”⁶ States must cultivate normative power to achieve deeper goals of demarcating new “communities of belonging,”⁷ or, more dramatically, “restructure[ing] society from top to bottom and across the board.”⁸

Key to this state-building process, this book argues, is the thorough moral delegitimization of the state's internal rivals and the establishment of the state's authority as righteous and good. Even after assuming power, revolutionaries continue to barrage their citizenry with language excoriating the old order for its depravity and hypocrisy, and these appeals lay the groundwork for state violence against these internal challengers. The French revolutionaries sought to establish a “dramatically new political culture” by delegitimizing the decadent aristocracy; they decried the French king as a bad father and denigrated the queen with charges of sexual depravity, culminat-

ing in their execution.⁹ Shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviets staged agitation trials that symbolically put the czar, the bourgeoisie, and the landed aristocracy on trial for their evil deeds.¹⁰ The Iranian revolutionaries notably portrayed the shah as “evil,” with Khomeini calling him “satanic” and proffering Islam as a solution.¹¹

This book explores the intersection of the coercive and normative dimensions of state building by examining how states appeal to popular beliefs about good and evil to mobilize violence against their internal rivals and establish themselves as the new legitimate authority.¹² It argues that states establish and consolidate their authority—their ability to mobilize the governed to achieve state goals—where they subdue and delegitimize their internal competitors by typecasting them as morally retrograde. By dislodging and negating the symbolic foundations of their opponents, states position themselves as the leaders of a new moral order that still resonates with normative understandings from that which preceded it.

Through this process of *moral mobilization*, states forge new collective identities that bind a virtuous in-group to the state and set it against a morally tainted out-group. *Moral boundary work* leverages existing culturally specific norms regarding proper and improper behavior to delineate between “us” and “them.”¹³ Specifically, it imposes a symbolic boundary between “transgressors” and “victims” by locating and emphasizing the violations of moral norms by members of a targeted group, while acknowledging the victimhood and valor of the audience-community. By framing this out-group as an evil, degenerate minority, it situates them outside of the public’s “universe of obligation”¹⁴ or “span of sympathy”¹⁵ and prescribes and justifies discriminatory and violent behavior toward them.

Drawing new moral boundaries is necessary but not sufficient for mobilizing people to participate on the basis of these boundaries; mobilizers use *moral theatrics* to crystallize boundaries and catalyze participation by dramatizing “scripts” of moral transgression. The goal of this dramatization is to elicit moral-emotional responses: it “overcome[s] the distance between actor and script”¹⁶ to create empathy for the “victim” and outrage against the “oppressor.”¹⁷ Outrage has a particularly strong mobilizing effect: it drives people to punish those who are perceived to have violated moral norms.¹⁸ Meanwhile, empathy for those allegedly harmed by transgressors strengthens cohesion within the pool of potential participants through the cultivation of a sense of shared fate or victimization.¹⁹ Empathy also increases the willingness of citizens to accept violence in the name of “righteous” causes,

movements where “interested publics believe that the enactors of political violence are defending society’s most vulnerable and protecting a morally legitimate social order.”²⁰

Moral mobilization produces future compliance with state demands through establishing in-group and out-group identities that are amenable to state mobilization.²¹ Key to this is repeated participation in public acts of violence. Repeatedly participating in or even just witnessing public displays of ritualized violence—what Lee Ann Fujii terms “violent displays”—inculcates new group norms in spectators who hitherto did not identify strongly with the group, especially if these displays occur repeatedly over a long period of time.²² By becoming complicit in the state’s execution of “rough justice” against those deemed morally transgressive, participants publicly identify themselves as members of the “virtuous” and “righteous” in-group and, in turn, acquire a sense of solidarity or shared fate with the state.²³ Importantly, this in-group identity then becomes a powerful “participation identity” that the state can call upon to facilitate future mobilization; in addition, this out-group identity becomes a tool for mobilizing state repression.²⁴

BUILDING THE STATE THROUGH MASS VIOLENCE IN EARLY MAOIST CHINA

I develop this argument by analyzing the Chinese Communist Party-state’s mass mobilization of violence against local elites during the land reform campaign (1950–52). The success of this mobilization effort is remarkable considering that the ascendant CCP inherited a vast territory over which the preceding Nationalist state had little direct control, since it had delegated much of its power to rural elites. In the aftermath of the revolution, the regime exercised uneven coercive control across the country and spread Party and state personnel thinly across these territories. To govern a population of over five hundred million people, the Party’s 4.5 million members fanned out across the country to establish its rule, often in places to which they were outsiders.²⁵ Despite these inauspicious conditions, the CCP managed to carry out massive land redistribution and project state authority, albeit unevenly, down to the village level. Conscription and agricultural socialization swiftly followed, raising the question of how the new Party-state so quickly established authority at the local level across such a large and diverse territory.

While the violence of this period involved a considerable amount of mobilization work, we know surprisingly little about how the Party mobilized collective violence after the establishment of the People's Republic.²⁶ Most Western and Chinese scholarship has downplayed the land reform campaign's mobilization of violence and fixated instead on its economic impact or its historical evolution as a policy.²⁷ Selden and Pepper argue that the peasantry was responding more to the economic benefits of land reform, which included rent reduction and tax reform, than its political or ideological message.²⁸ Vivienne Shue, while acknowledging the "explicitly conflictual" nature of the land reform campaign, describes the overall socialist transition in the countryside as having been "accomplished with minimal violence and disorder."²⁹ Instead, the Party gained the sympathy of the peasantry and raised their class consciousness through the "restructur[ing] [of the peasants'] real economic alternatives so that peasants' perceptions of their personal interests *would* clearly coincide with their assigned class interests."³⁰ Even where scholars have alluded to the extreme violence of the campaign, they have not engaged in a systematic, comparative exploration of how this violence was mobilized and unfolded.³¹

Central Arguments

This book reexamines the violence of the early 1950s through the lens of violent mobilization and state building; it argues that the mobilization of collective violence in the early 1950s was fundamentally a state-building effort aimed at the symbolic and physical destruction of elites associated with the old order—particularly the Nationalist regime, the Japanese puppet government, and other prerevolutionary bases of power in the countryside—and establishing the righteousness of the new Party-state.

The Party-state simultaneously removed perceived threats to its authority at the grassroots and bolstered its legitimacy by leveraging existing normative expectations of elites to delegitimize them and encourage their destruction at the hands of the populace, a process I term *moral mobilization*. This mobilization process involved three steps: (1) it established new collective identities by drawing a moral boundary that designated a virtuous in-group of "the masses" and a demonized out-group of "class enemies"; (2) it incited outrage to mobilize the masses to participate in violence against this broadly defined out-group; and (3) it strengthened this symbolic boundary by making the masses complicit in state violence. This

recursive process of moral mobilization was at the heart of this state-building trajectory (see Fig. 1).

I make three additional arguments regarding the targeting violent mobilization, its necessary antecedent, and its downstream effects.

Targets of Mobilization as a Function of Regional Political Economy

Who fell victim to this violence? The local configuration of social relations determined the kinds of moral norms invoked and the targets of violence in the course of mobilization. The Party tailored its moral appeals to resonate with the configuration of a locality's social relations, particularly the norms that regulated the relationships between elites and nonelites.³² In different regional political economies, the Party located and dramatized the transgressions of the predominant moral norms that governed these social relations, be it between local officials and communities or landlords and tenants, to draw symbolic boundaries and mobilize outrage and pity. Those targeted and punished during the campaigns of the early 1950s were often—though by no means exclusively—prerevolutionary local elites, many of whom did in fact have large landholdings, but the moral norms invoked correlated with the nature of elites in a region and the normative expectations communities had of them. I identify two major clusters of norms across the two regional political economies I compare: *norms of propriety* and *norms of benevolence*. Norms of propriety refer to expectations that regulated how tenants and landlords should behave toward one another within their economic contractual relationship, while norms of benevolence denote the expectations community members had of political elites—officials, mainly—about governing justly and protecting the community from outside harm. I argue that transgressions of norms of propriety were more prevalent in land reform violence in areas with high tenancy rates, while violations of norms of benevolence were more common where the landlord-tenant relationship was less central to a community's social relations.

Coercive Control as a Necessary Antecedent to Moral Mobilization

A critical antecedent to this mobilization process was the establishment of a local monopoly of coercive force. Because individuals are less likely to overcome anxieties surrounding the use of violence where the threat of retaliation is high,³³ the Party was better able to mobilize more collective violence

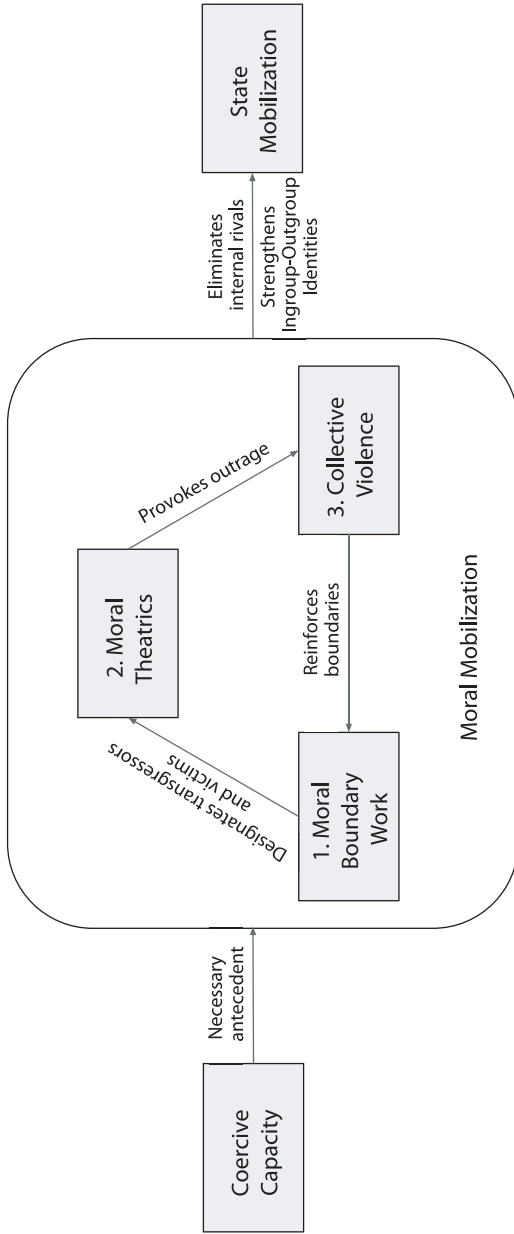


Fig. 1. Schematic of the Central Arguments

where it had secured coercive control for the duration of the campaign. This coercive control allowed cadres to engage in moral mobilization with little or no interference from competing actors and to guarantee the safety of potential participants.

Although the repression of internal foes was critical to state building, it entailed far more than simple coercion; the state's military repression efforts only set the stage for mass mobilized violence against local elites. Shortly after victory, the People's Liberation Army's engaged in extensive maneuvers to eliminate armed insurgent groups—referred to with the catch-all term “bandits”—that continued to challenge the new revolutionary state “bandits.” Yet the Party knew that state-led military repression alone could not arrogate social control from local elites, and it was this conviction that motivated the central leadership's decision to use violent class struggle after the revolution. What followed was a complex mobilization process that aimed to establish state authority, not just coercive dominance, by systematically delegitimizing, and fomenting collective violence against, local elites.³⁴

Violent Mobilization as a Pathway to State Authority

The long-term objectives of the land reform campaign were decidedly Gramscian: to destroy the hegemonic order and create a new revolutionary subjectivity among the peasantry that would establish the Party-state's authority and facilitate further mobilization. Accordingly, I find that participation in collective violence increased solidarity between communities and the nascent Maoist state, at the expense of those targeted for violence. For the Party, this was one of the main goals of violent mass mobilization: it sought to increase its popular legitimacy by styling itself as the bringer of justice and to use this newfound legitimacy to recruit new Party members, spur agricultural production, and, even more importantly in the short term, entice locals to join the People's Volunteer Army (中国人民志愿军) to fight in the ongoing Korean War.

THE CENTRALITY OF MOBILIZATION AND ITS ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

This study shifts our attention to mobilization processes and their implications for understanding the uneven development of state authority at the

subnational level. Aside from not explaining the entrenchment of the Chinese Party-state's authority after 1949, these existing accounts offer no insights regarding the process behind the establishment and extension of authority. While it is clear that the Party-state relied on mass mobilization to entrench its authority, it is unclear what exactly it was doing to mobilize the masses so quickly after the revolution.

What were the possible pathways for mobilization? This section explores two major explanations for successful mass mobilization and why they do not fit the Chinese case: the provision of selective material incentives and the exploitation of existing social cleavages and grievances. Not only did the Party lack the ability and downright refuse to use selective economic incentives as a means of mobilization, the friction between its guiding ideology of class struggle and China's socioeconomic reality frustrated attempts to mobilize on the basis of class appeals alone. Since land was not a nonexcludable public good—everyone received some amount of land regardless of their degree of participation in any stage of the campaign—and the Party Center had prohibited, and criticized officials who relied on, coercive or “commandist” (强迫命令) methods, local officials were faced with a daunting task: how were they to comply with the Party Center's demands that they, alongside redistributing land, also mobilize villagers to engage in violence against a select number of landlords and other class enemies? I will address each argument in turn to demonstrate why neither can completely explain the Party's mobilization strategy.

The Selective Material Incentive Argument

Political actors who mobilize participation in violence face a daunting collective action problem: the grave risks of participating in violence and the possible moral aversion to engaging in such behavior are high “costs” that the commensurability and uncertainty of the potential rewards do little to offset. Instead of participating, individuals can “free ride” off the efforts of other participants. A common explanation for overcoming the collective action problem is the use of selective, usually material, incentives.³⁵ Popkin emphasizes the primacy of material incentives in peasant mobilization. In the context of subsistence farming, where peasants are living on the economic brink, he posits peasants as risk-averse utility-maximizers who will not participate unless there is a clear indication that participation will improve their economic lot.³⁶ Scholars of genocide have conjectured that

these material incentives may be particularly alluring in instances of economic depression or instability, which lower the opportunity cost for participation.³⁷

Because land reform was nominally an economic campaign, one would think that the Party mobilized violence through the provision of selective economic incentives; however, there is little documented evidence of locals receiving more land or other assets because of their participation in violence during this period. Over 60 percent of the rural population received some land during the land reform campaign,³⁸ and this land was redistributed to villagers regardless of their actual participation in violent class struggle. As Zhou Xiaohong explains, the 1950 Agrarian Reform Law called for less radical economic redistribution because leaders were concerned with economic reconstruction after the war, so they called for protecting the “rich peasant economy” (富农经济) and narrowing the scope of land confiscation to landlords, which left landholders in the middle of the land distribution alone. This policy of “flattening the ends while not touching the center [of the economic distribution]” (中间不动两头平) meant that middle and rich peasants often ended up having more land than the poor peasants and farmworkers, who were the main economic beneficiaries of the campaign.³⁹

Statistical data on per capita landholdings across the East China region illustrate this point. Figure 2 shows that before land reform there was significant landholding inequality: on an average per capita basis, a landlord owned over sixteen times more land than a poor peasant and seven times more than a middle peasant. After land reform, however, the Party flattened the distribution of per capita landholdings by confiscating and redistributing land from landlords and some rich peasants to farmworkers, poor peasants, and some middle peasants. Learning from the Soviet experience with antikulak violence, the Party leadership wished to avoid alienating the rich peasantry, which is why the average rich peasant witnessed a modest decrease in his or her land, retaining an amount well above the per capita average landholdings of farmworkers, poor peasants, and even middle peasants. The Party even allowed landlords to retain some land, not considerably less than the farmworkers and poor peasants, in order to provide them a “way out” (出路) of complete destitution. Ultimately, this meant that the poorest members of the community received modest, nonselective economic benefits from the post-1949 land reform.⁴⁰

Significantly, official Party policy forbade the use of selective economic incentives as a mode of mass mobilization, for both practical and ideological

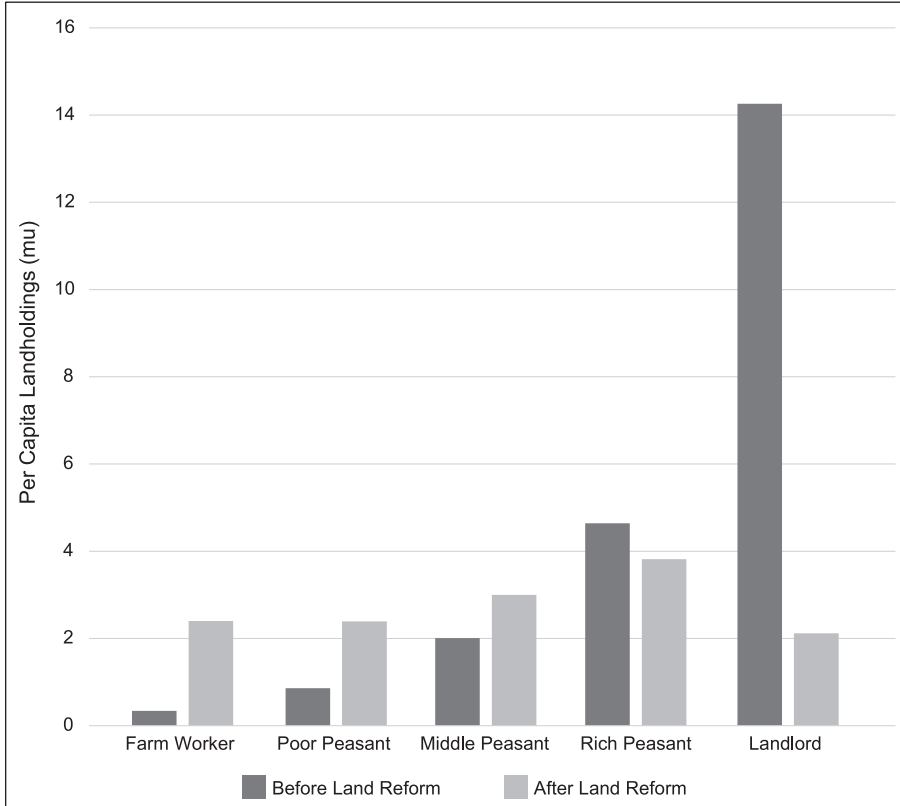


Fig. 2. Distribution of Per Capita Landholdings before and after Land Reform in the East China Bureau by Class Label

reasons. As Bernstein observes, the Party was particularly worried about how short-term economic gains brought by land reform might generate political apathy and demobilize the local leadership and create a bloc of resistance to the further socialization of the rural economy.⁴¹ On the ideological front, officials derided those poor peasants who were solely interested in the Communists' promise of land for their "small peasant mentality" (小农意识) and viewed them as an obstacle to mobilization.

Many peasants had moral reservations about the economic incentives themselves: indeed, many peasants who received land had to be convinced that it was morally acceptable for them to till confiscated land. Unfortunately for the Party, this sentiment was widespread among the very group that it wanted to empower to lead rural communities—namely, the poor

peasants and farmworkers (贫雇农). Officials noted that some poor peasants refused to take land because they thought land redistribution was morally wrong or they simply could not imagine living in a new social order. Li Huaiyin recounts a story in Qin Village, Dongtai County, where an officer asked an old villager about receiving redistributed land, to which the latter replied, “I don’t dare receive it . . . [b]ecause it would be even more troublesome for us to figure out the rent we would owe to our boss.”⁴²

This is not to say that there were no selective *political* incentives. The Party used land reform and other mass campaigns in the early 1950s to recruit promising young people into its ranks.⁴³ Villagers who participated in the movement as “activists” (积极分子) or as public denouncers (苦主) could possibly gain political office or even Party membership; however, the Party continually vetted and “cleansed” its ranks during and after the land reform campaign. It would be an exaggeration to assume that the Party’s recruitment efforts were an open-door policy for any and all participants in the land reform movement. Moreover, activists comprised a small proportion of the overall population that participated in the land reform campaign. While selective political incentives may explain activist participation, the Party sought and succeeded in mobilizing a much larger proportion of the local community.

The Relative Deprivation/Class Grievance Argument

A large umbrella of explanations of mobilization and collective violence concerns how preexisting grievances related to the social cleavage at the heart of the political ideology drive participation in violence. According to this literature, elites exploit preexisting social cleavages, often grounded in ethnic, religious, or class conflict, to mobilize mass participation in violence.⁴⁴ In the context of land reform, the CCP adopted the ideology of class struggle, rooted in Marxist-Leninist and Maoist thought, to guide its campaign. This class struggle perspective posits that socioeconomic inequality is inherently unjust, a product of the exploitative relationship between the owners of the means of production and those who lack it; in the “feudal” context, as the CCP described rural China, this was the contradiction between the landed elite and the landless or land-poor villagers. Moreover, a class conflict explanation, like other grievance-based arguments, views mobilization from the angle of Carl Schmitt’s friend-enemy distinction, which presupposes the existence of an impersonal category of “the enemy”

that lacks any moral valence. Since “[the enemy] need not be hated personally,” the land-poor masses, once mobilized, should have participated in violence as members of a collective group—“the masses”—and directed their violence against an undifferentiated category of “landlords.”⁴⁵

Yet the class struggle perspective assumes that class boundaries—even where they were antagonistic—were salient enough to be used as the basis for the mobilization of violence. Petersen calls this the “is-ought fallacy”—that is, “Because a group convention exists, it should be attributed moral power.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Wimmer exhorts scholars to treat the relevance of categorical boundaries as hypotheses to be tested: “One should be careful to avoid the Herderian fallacy of assuming communitarian closure, cultural difference, and shared identity rather than empirically demonstrating their existence.”⁴⁷ That is, we should not assume the salience of a priori categorical boundaries, such as class, and instead understand how people “relate to these existing boundaries by trying to change them or de-emphasize them and enforce new modes of categorization altogether.”⁴⁸ This is particularly relevant in the analysis of class boundaries because the operative mechanism behind class conflict tends to be “relative deprivation,” a phenomenon of frustration-aggression whereby people participate in violence to obtain something they lack yet feel entitled to possess.⁴⁹ Unless poor members of the community feel that they are entitled to the economic advantages of the landed elite, political elites will struggle to mobilize their participation by appealing to their class interests alone.

Still, one could argue that landholding inequality under the traditional Chinese system generated a host of latent resentments and grievances that the Communists could exploit to mobilize collective violence. Indeed, in the early 1950s the Party claimed to have mobilized class struggle simply by revealing to the peasantry the “factual truth” (事实真相) of their class oppression, which galvanized their “spontaneous organization to carry out struggle against the landlords” (自发地组织起来, 向地主进行斗争). It insisted, moreover, that this strategy of educating the peasantry was something apart from “sowing discord” (挑拨离间), as that would imply that the peasantry did not harbor hatred for the landlords and that the Party created conflict where there was none. “When talking with the peasants about the matter of struggling against the landlords,” an editorial in the Party-run *Guangming Daily* declared, “not a single one was not filled with glee (兴高采烈), as this precisely accorded with their needs.” It continued that all that was needed was for the Party to guide the peasants to act on their grievances by dispel-

ling their fears of the landlord class under whom they had been long oppressed.⁵⁰ The mobilization of class violence, then, was simply the natural outgrowth of class oppression. It was simply a “law of physics” (物理学的定律), one central leader asserted, that violence would erupt following the “liberation” of a people who had long suffered “under the pressure of thousands of years of authoritarian oppression.”⁵¹ A district Party secretary, when questioned about the pervasive violence, maintained that “it is not possible for the masses to struggle in a well-behaved manner” (要群众斗争规规矩矩是不可能的).⁵² Major historical accounts have continued to portray a similar image of the Party as having led the oppressed peasantry, in true Leninist fashion, to turn their shortsighted desire for vengeance against their feudal oppressors toward the feudal system itself.⁵³

Yet raising the peasantry’s weak class consciousness (阶级觉悟) presented real difficulties for the Party’s agenda during land reform. Early in the campaign, the CCP imposed “class labels” (阶级成份) to reclassify households according to assessments of their sources of wealth into new class categories—for example, farmworker, poor peasant, middle peasant, rich peasant, or landlord.⁵⁴ But these labels were abstract ideological constructs that did not map easily onto the crisscrossing ties of kinship, political affiliation, secret society membership, and religious identity that characterized Chinese society at the time.⁵⁵ Positive face-to-face personal ties between landlords and tenants often muted class tensions, and, as Odoric Wou writes, in traditional Chinese society “social cleavages seldom ran along class lines. The two main rural classes—gentry and peasants—shared a common identity in kinship group and residential community.”⁵⁶ As a result, “Many people resisted the new [class] categories; others who generally accepted them still found them not suitable for all facets of life and continued to identify themselves partly along more traditional lines.”⁵⁷

There is little evidence that ordinary villagers viewed the inequality of the prerevolutionary landholding system as inherently unjust; indeed, there were significant moral norms that undergirded the maintenance of this system. As Kuhn observes, in the traditional Confucian system inequality was not unjust; rather, the way in which the rich treated the poor was of much greater concern.⁵⁸ Fei Xiaotong notes that many villagers viewed paying rents to landlords and taxes to the state as a moral duty, while Zhou Xiaohong argues that the CCP during land reform had to use extensive propaganda work to dispel the peasantry’s notion that the socioeconomic status quo was “right and proper” (天经地义).⁵⁹

This is not to say that prerevolutionary class conflict did not exist or matter. Crook and Crook, in their eyewitness account of a northern village's land reform campaign in 1948 write:

In the old society, the misery of the peasants and their hatred of their oppressors had expressed itself in an often explosive but ultimately sterile sense of personal grievance and hatred against individual landlords and rich peasants. Yet despite the ways in which the clans and other institutions served to obscure class conflict, it tore at the very heart of the Chinese village. The Communists did not introduce class struggle; they made the peasant conscious of it and sought to harness it for the liberation of the country and the building of a new social order.⁶⁰

This narrative is not entirely untrue: prerevolutionary conflicts did frequently flare up into violent confrontations between tenants and landlords, but these instances were not simply “sterile” expressions of personal animosities or proto-class struggle. Rather, they occurred in response to perceived breaches of norms regarding social relations between villagers and the landed elite, such as unfair rent collection during a famine. Furthermore, these incidents contradict the predictions of relative deprivation theory in that they were fundamentally moral economic: they focused on moral transgressions within the context of social relationships rather than shared material interests or dissatisfaction with the relative socioeconomic status between the land-rich and the land-poor. In this regard, prerevolutionary rural rebellion in China resembled E. P. Thompson's analysis of eighteenth-century food riots in England, which he argued “operated within a popular consensus as to what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices in marketing, milling, baking, etc. This in its turn was grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations. . . . An outrage to these moral assumptions, quite as much as actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action.”⁶¹ Moreover, this moral economic tension was not exclusive to socioeconomic social relations; it also pertained to the relationship between communities and political elites. In many cases, the peasantry did not hate local landlords but rather other “local power holders who bullied and swindled them in every way, be they district (*qu*) level officials, *xiang*—and village—level subofficials, or other villages bosses of the *tuhao* (local bully) variety.”⁶² Duara has similarly stressed that during the pre-1949 period the principal social tension in the countryside was between the peas-

ants and entrepreneurial brokers who collected the state's burdensome taxes, the so-called local bullies.⁶³

I assert that the Party's mass mobilization of collective violence did not fundamentally break from the moral economic focus of traditional rural conflict; however, it did fuse these moral economic concerns with a more Marxist approach to class struggle. This process has some affinities with what James Scott calls "speaking the hidden transcript"—that is, instances where the subaltern voice their grievances against the powerful that they could hitherto only express in private, if at all.⁶⁴ Yet as China's vibrant legacy of rural protest demonstrates, the peasantry's "hidden transcript" was hardly hidden: during times of natural disaster, disagreements over the proper collection of taxes and rents sparked uprisings against state officials and landlords. This combination of economic exigency and perceived corrupt or unfair practices was sufficient to motivate peasants to use violence, reactively, to ensure their economic security; the peasants' sense of economic jeopardy was further enhanced by the belief that their cause was righteous and just.⁶⁵ What the Party needed to do in the early 1950s, however, was to convince the peasantry that it was somehow right and proper—morally correct and just—to use violence against members of the landed elite *proactively*, outside of a concrete crisis context.⁶⁶

This view is sympathetic to Chen Yongfa's argument about what "making revolution" really entailed during pre-1949 land reform. Key to Chen's argument is the idea that the Party exploited "the most acute tensions in a local community and use[d] them to break the community open," tensions that would have otherwise "remained largely latent and nonantagonistic."⁶⁷ Wou reiterates Chen's point: "In order to penetrate a settled community, the Communists had to veil their class struggles in terms of weak lineages versus powerful lineages, emergent liberal gentry versus established rural bosses, and disadvantaged communities versus privileged communities. It was by exploiting these cleavages that the Communists conducted their social revolution in the countryside."⁶⁸ The argument forwarded here does not disagree with the crux of Chen's or Wou's argument; however, it suggests that the Party did more than simply activate preexisting, albeit latent, grievances. It led locals to recall past normative violations to delineate new categories of victim and victimizer, which went beyond particularistic, revenge-based mobilization. Moreover, this guided recollection of old transgressions attempted to use *preexisting conceptions of right and wrong relevant to a local community's social relations* to manufacture the conditions that would have

normally led peasants to engage in collective violence, usually under acute economic pressures.

This analysis asserts that class awareness did not precede mobilization; rather, it was forged in the crucible of collective struggle. The Party could not easily exploit preexisting class animosity; rather, as part of the mobilization process the Party had to both impose class boundaries on a complex social fabric and somehow mobilize violence across these new class lines. Externally imposed categories mean little outside of the context—or “face-to-face situations”—of social actors; these categories must carry political or cultural significance.⁶⁹ A tenant farmer does not hate a landlord simply because the latter belongs to an abstract group the Communist cadres have labeled as an ideological foe; rather, the tenant-landlord split only makes sense when framed in terms that relate to the lived experience of those involved. It is the large landholder who has repeatedly beaten villagers or refused to waive rents during times of famine who becomes the face of the “landlord” as an object of derision, not simply a person who possesses a great deal of land and extracts income from rents and interest. Rural villagers simply did not view the socioeconomic order through a Marxist lens; this perspective was inculcated in them during the process of land reform mobilization. Thus, as Guo Yuhua and Sun Liping write: “While distinctions in rural society and the hardships peasants experienced before land reform objectively existed, the key [question] is how were they transformed into class concepts.”⁷⁰

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Focusing on central-eastern China, I explore the mass mobilization of violence in early Maoist China using a wide array of primary source data gathered in China over twelve months of field research between 2014 and 2015. For the case studies, I use approximately two hundred unpublished archival documents from six government and university archive collections. These archival materials encompass Party work team reports, inspection reports by county and regional Party committees, and internal Party committee memos. Because these materials were authored by Party committees, work teams, and inspection groups, these materials provide valuable insights into the perspectives of the Party at various levels of the political hierarchy. Triangulating reports from these different levels of the Party hierarchy, along with the other data described here, enabled me to sketch out a fuller picture of the

Party's mobilization process and revealed and helped resolve discrepancies in the data.

I supplement these archival materials with documents from over a dozen rare internally published compilations of Party materials (内部资料), totaling around two thousand pages. The Party published and circulated these compilations in the 1950s for internal reference; they include many policy directives from the central and regional governments. A tremendous advantage of using these compilations is that they also include reprints of archival materials from Party committees and, rarely, work teams. Considering the severely limited access to archival material in China currently, these internal publications help fill in the many gaps in the archival record. To get a sense of the kind of training local cadres and work teams were receiving, I also use a handful of cadre handbooks (手册) that were also published internally.⁷¹

For a macroperspective of patterns of violence and their relationship to important political and socioeconomic indicators, I use an original historical data set that I hand-coded from 250 local county gazetteers (县志) from Anhui, Fujian, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang provinces.⁷² Because missing data is a major problem with the county gazetteers (see Appendix A), I supplement the gazetteer data with archival and internally published materials that sometimes include data on land reform violence. Last, I use chronologies (大事记), brief historical accounts of political work in the 1950s, and, on rare occasion, published reports from the 1950s located in the appendixes (附录) of these gazetteers to enhance the county-level case studies.

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

Case Selection and Comparative Framework

I restrict the geographic scope of my inquiry to counties in the newly conquered territories of the East China Bureau (华东局), which spanned coun-

ties across Anhui, Fujian, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang provinces (see Map 1).⁷³ Geographically, Anhui and Jiangsu provinces are bisected by the Huai River valley into the North China and Lower Yangzi Delta physiographic macroregions, which roughly overlap with the regional north-south divisions of each province (see Map 2).⁷⁴ These two regions were known as Huaibei and Jiangnan, respectively.

Huaibei covered the impoverished, ecologically unstable environs of northern Anhui as well as the old Communist base areas of northern Jiangsu. In contrast, Jiangnan encompassed the wealthy and semiurban countryside of southern Jiangsu, the lineage-dense locales of southern Anhui and northern Zhejiang.⁷⁵ By looking at localities within the same central-level bureau (局), I can hold constant important macro-level political variables like central leadership, guiding policy directives, and timing of land reform implementation. At the same time, I can exploit significant regional variation in terms of socioeconomic variables like agricultural economic development, cultivation patterns, ecological volatility, landholding inequality, and local social structure, as well as variation in local political variables like coercive control and Party density. Throughout the book, I leverage the similarities and differences within and between these regions to demonstrate the mechanisms through which moral mobilization produced participation in violence and the factors that mediated the targeting practices and intensity of the resulting violence.

To illustrate the Party's use of moral mobilization, I conduct within-case "systematic process analysis"⁷⁶ of two "crucial cases": the relatively equal and poor region of Huaibei in the north and the unequal and wealthy region of Jiangnan in the south. According to both selective material incentive and relative deprivation theories of mobilization and collective violence, we would expect mobilization in Jiangnan to succeed and mobilization in Huaibei to fail. Because of Jiangnan's rich history of rent-based resistance that pitted landlords against peasants, this region should have been fertile grounds for violent mobilization. Sporadic collective violence between landlords and tenants indicate that there were social cleavages that hewed closely to the Party's class struggle ideology and could be exploited to create feelings of relative deprivation. Even if that were not possible due to local ambivalence about the class struggle narrative, Jiangnan's high levels of inequality and wealth would have provided cadres with ample resources to selectively reward local cooperation. For these reasons, I treat Jiangnan as a "least likely" case for a moral mobilization argument. In contrast, Huaibei, which has far



Map 1. County Sample and Case Study Area (1950 Provincial and County Borders)

lower levels of landholding inequality and less virulent landlord-tenant conflict, would be a “most likely” case for moral mobilization because the Party simply lacked salient class cleavages and ample material incentives to use as the basis for mobilization.

By looking at these two regions, I show how the process of moral mobilization undergirded the mobilization of collective violence in *both* Huabei and Jiangnan, despite their wildly different political economies. I find that socioeconomic grievances—that is, inequality, economic development, and so on—cannot explain popular willingness to participate in violent class struggle. Instead, the Party successfully mobilized collective violence in poor and wealthy, equal and unequal localities alike by leveraging popular morality to elicit outrage against a minority of elites framed as moral transgressors.

While the regional case studies demonstrate the cross-regional similarities in the meso-level process by which the Party mobilized mass participa-



Map 2. The Regions of Huaibei and Jiangnan within Anhui and Jiangsu Provinces

tion in violence, I use county-level case studies drawn from each of these regions to show how the Party tailored its moral appeals to different political economies. In Jiangnan, where most significant elite-mass relationships were between landlords and tenants and state officials and the community, the Party mobilized locals to identify members of the landed elite who had transgressed norms of propriety—behavior that violated expectations between landlords and tenants regarding fairness and cheating. Consequently, those selected for violent political struggle in Jiangnan tended to be landlords or rich peasants who had reputations for cruelty or dishonesty. Within Jiangnan, I use the case of Baoshan County to show how the Party used perceived transgressions of norms of propriety to select targets. In contrast, the principal elite-mass relationship in Huaibei was between military strongmen, as well as state officials, and the community. Locals here focused instead on violators of norms of benevolence—namely, expectations that political elites would refrain from corruption and predatory behavior and protect the community from external threats. Here, the main targets of land reform violence were corrupt officials, bandits, and petty criminals. Within

Huaibei, I examine the case of Fengyang County, where violations of norms of benevolence undergirded the target selection process.

Finally, I analyze county-level data from the county gazetteer database to understand the conditions under which the Party could mobilize collective violence. The statistical analysis reveals that socioeconomic indicators associated with selective material and relative deprivation/social cleavage arguments—for example, agricultural development, landholding inequality, and so on—are not significant predictors of levels of collective violence. Instead, I find more collective violence where the Party had secured coercive control before the launching of land reform, indicating that collective violence occurred mainly where Party-state agents could credibly guarantee the safety of participants and engage in moral mobilization work without outside interference. Finally, I find that collective violence generated feelings of in-group solidarity that facilitated further mobilization: where the Party mobilized more collective violence, it succeeded in mobilizing agricultural production, recruits for the Korean War (1950–53), and further state repression.

BOOK STRUCTURE

This book is organized into three parts. Part I lays out the historical context and origins of moral mobilization. Chapter 1 explores how the Party elite understood the purpose of collective violence after 1949 and explains the official policy for land reform mobilization. Chapter 2 traces the history of the repertoire of violence used during this period back to the imperial era.

Part II illustrates and dissects the process of moral mobilization and the conditions under which the Party successfully implemented it. Chapter 3 focuses on convergence: it traces the process of moral mobilization to show that socioeconomic context—that is, inequality, economic development, and so on—cannot explain popular willingness to participate in violent class struggle. Within-case analyses of the Jiangnan and Huaibei regions demonstrate that the Party successfully mobilized collective violence in areas where it provoked moral outrage, regardless of socioeconomic context. Despite its veneer as a class-based movement, Party and state cadres relied heavily on moral appeals to rouse righteous indignation against local elites, simultaneously justifying using violence against them and delegitimizing them of whatever symbolic power they still held. Chapter 4 examines

county-level patterns of mobilization and violence across the East China Bureau to understand where moral mobilization produced violence.

Part III examines the differential formation of out-groups in Huaibei and Jiangnan and the ramifications of collective violence for in-group solidarity. Chapter 5 explores how class labels were distributed and demonstrates how moral mobilization was used to target different kinds of elites in regions with different political economies. Chapter 6 examines a wide range of state-building indicators and finds that areas that had mobilized more collective violence during the land reform period succeeded in mobilizing resources and even future violence in the Maoist period. The concluding chapter discusses the legacy of land reform in post-Mao China, the scope conditions and generalizability of moral mobilization, and the relevance of moral mobilization for Chinese governance today.

PART I

Historical Context and Origins

CHAPTER I

The Context and Structure of Violent Land Reform after 1949

Experience has shown: land reform can only succeed by relying on the unified awareness and resolute struggle of the millions of peasant masses and [only] after demolishing the landlord class's resistance and sabotage. "Peaceful land reform" (和平土改) will get us nowhere.

—LIU RUILONG, DEPUTY CHAIR OF THE EAST CHINA BUREAU'S LAND REFORM COMMITTEE, 1950¹

What was the structure of land reform after 1949, and why was it so violent? In the beginning of this chapter, I situate land reform in the post-1949 context of state building during the early Cold War and explore how Party leadership viewed violent land reform as a way of mobilizing the peasantry for economic production and military recruitment for the Korean War. I then detail the procedures for both the labeling and expropriation of landlords and the less formalized procedures for mobilizing collective violence against them, including the hallmark techniques of moral mobilization used to mobilize collective violence during the land reform campaign: speaking bitterness (诉苦) and struggle sessions (斗争大会).

WHY VIOLENT LAND REFORM?

After the CCP pushed an especially violent brand of land reform during the Chinese Civil War (1946–49), it appeared for a moment that the Party was going to embrace peaceful land reform in the early 1950s. The Party faced a daunting task in conducting land reform in the newly conquered territories because of its limited personnel, most of whom were foreign to these territo-

ries, and the sheer amount of land to be redistributed.² Recognizing these concerns, at the second session of the People's Political Consultative Conference on June 14, 1950, Liu Shaoqi argued that land reform during the civil war was violent, understandably, because of the intensity of the wartime situation, but that the focus of land reform needed now to shift to economic development with minimal violence. In his "Report on the Question of Land Reform" (关于土地改革问题的报告), Liu called for "preserving the rich peasant economy" (保存富农经济) and restricting land reform violence to "People's Court" (人民法庭) trials of landlords who were guilty of grievous crimes. "As for regular landlords," Liu asserted, "[we are] only abolishing their feudal system of landownership and them as a social class; we are not eliminating their bodies" (废除他们这一个社会阶级,而不是要消灭他们的肉体).³ Liu was most likely responding not only to the reckless violence of the civil war period toward rich peasants and others, but also to the antikulk violence during the Soviet Union's disastrous collectivization campaign.⁴ At the time, Mao seemed to have supported this peaceful economic version of land reform. He, too, emphasized the necessity of preserving the rich peasant economy to promote economic development and suggested that post-Liberation land reform would encounter serious obstacles if it followed in the bloody footsteps of the civil war-era land reform campaign: "The agrarian reform in the north was carried out in wartime, with the atmosphere of war prevailing over that of agrarian reform, but now, with the fighting practically over, the agrarian reform stands out in sharp relief, and the shock to society will be particularly great!"⁵

Shortly after Liu's report, the Party promulgated the 1950 Agrarian Reform Law (土地改革法)—the principal guiding policy document for the post-1949 land reform campaign—which reflected Liu's view of land reform as a vehicle for rural economic development.⁶ The law appeared to be a "victory for the moderates" because of the protections it put in place for rich peasants and for setting aside some land for dispossessed landlords to till for their subsistence.⁷ Aside from incorporating Liu's and Mao's concern for protecting the rich peasant economy, it also acknowledged the distinction between pre-1949 wartime and post-1949 peacetime land reform, and emphasized using land reform primarily to "free[] the rural productive forces" and "pave the way for industrialization."⁸

Yet the Party's commitment to peaceful land reform was short-lived. The leadership quickly jettisoned the idea of economic land reform, though the exact timing is unclear. Teiwes notes that the shift began in late summer of

1950 and was likely a reaction to local reports about on-the-ground resistance to the campaign.⁹ What is clear is that China's entry into the Korean War in October 1950 afforded the top leadership an opportunity to reintroduce violent class struggle into land reform against the backdrop of war. Mao and Liu spoke of economic land reform as less a preference than a necessity, as they were clearly troubled about the viability of mobilizing violent land reform without the backdrop of war. Tao Zhu asserted that the Korean War offered the opportunity that allowed for this shift:

If the Center advocated a more moderate land reform in the past, that was because there was no longer a war. Implementing [land reform] too violently would have been too great a shock to society. . . . Now that the Korean War has broken out and created such a great shock, we can precisely now set about resolving the domestic issues of suppressing the counterrevolutionaries and land reform.¹⁰

Even Liu Shaoqi, the former champion of peaceful land reform, argued that the “loud gongs and drums” of the Korean War could drown out the otherwise “unbearable noise” of violent class struggle in land reform.¹¹

It is unclear, however, if Mao's desire for continuing the revolution at home through violent land reform motivated the decision to enter the Korean War,¹² but what is clear is that the Party leadership viewed the violent land reform campaign as inextricably tied to its state-building efforts after 1949—namely, economic reconstruction and war mobilization.

Land reform was, technically, a campaign to promote economic production, and the Party leadership saw mass violence as a way of easing the peasantry into socialized agriculture. One report from northern Jiangsu noted that eliminating the landlord's system of “feudal exploitation” would “liberate rural production forces and develop agricultural production, opening a path to industrialization under the New China” (解放农村生产力, 发展农业生产, 为新中国的工业化开辟道路).¹³ In Fengyang County in northern Anhui, cadres were to link propaganda work for land reform and the impending autumn grain requisition with slogans like “Do well in production, carry out land reform” (搞好生产, 进行土改) and “Land reform is for the sake of developing agricultural production” (土改为了发展农业生产).¹⁴ The link between mass violence against landlords and economic production becomes apparent when looking at the timing of land reform violence. Higher-level Party committees directed their subordinates to com-

plete land reform, including struggle sessions, before the autumn harvest, a time during which the peasants would be their busiest. Despite complaints by locals that land reform mobilization distracted them from their work, the Party believed that struggle sessions would stimulate the peasantry's productive initiative (生产积极性).

In addition to promoting economic production, the Party viewed violent land reform as integral to war mobilization during the “Resist America, Aid Korea” (抗美援朝, RAAK) campaign, which was launched in the summer of 1950, just months before China's formal entry into the Korean War. It is telling that the East China Bureau shifted tremendous resources to the land reform campaign after October 1950. A member of an East China Bureau land reform inspection team wrote in his memoir that when Rao Shushi visited the Party school he attended in Shanghai, Rao had announced to the students that they were not needed on the external front in Korea, but more importantly on the “internal front” for land reform.¹⁵ The intensification of mobilization during land reform was intended to aid the war effort. The Southern Jiangsu Region's Peasant Association Committee remarked, “Only on the foundation of thorough education and thought mobilization can the broad masses be made to proactively respond to this call [to join the People's Volunteer Army].”¹⁶ The East China Bureau reported that areas in Jiangnan—particularly southern Anhui, southern Jiangsu, and Zhejiang—that had finished land reform quickly segued into mobilizing for the RAAK campaign.¹⁷ Liu Ruilong, vice chairman of the East China Bureau's Land Reform Committee, reported that the peasantry had come to see protecting the “benefits of self-emancipation” and protecting the motherland as one and the same by the end of the land reform campaign, and had come to associate the landlord class with American imperialism.¹⁸ Ouyang Huilin, reporting on the situation in southern Jiangsu, said that the RAAK campaign and land reform campaign had been linked together and had experienced similar results.¹⁹

By late 1950 there was little doubt that the Party desired to foment violent class struggle as part of the post-Liberation land reform campaign. Liu Ruilong, deputy chair of the East China Bureau's Land Reform Committee, succinctly articulated the Party's consensus on the issue: “Experience has shown: land reform can only succeed by relying on the unified awareness and resolute struggle of the millions of peasant masses and [only] after demolishing the landlord class's resistance and sabotage. ‘Peaceful land reform’ (和平土改) will get us nowhere.”²⁰ In the East China Bureau, the promulgation of the policy of “going all out to mobilize the masses” (放手发

动群众) in December 1950 signaled the shift from peaceful to violent land reform.²¹ A Central Policy Research Office report ominously observed that, beginning in December, the “extreme leftist phenomena of reckless seizures and reckless beatings” (乱抓乱打的过左现象) erupted throughout the areas implementing land reform in the East China Bureau.²² By the end of 1950, the Party had undoubtedly reverted to the “dialectical logic” (辩证逻辑) of the civil war-era land reform campaign, which emphasized the need for both moderate and radical action, and the conviction that “there can be no construction without destruction” (不破不立).²³

THE STRUCTURE OF “ECONOMIC” LAND REFORM

There were two related though distinct sets of procedures for land reform—one for carrying out land confiscation and redistribution and another for mobilizing mass violence, which I term “economic” and “political” land reform, respectively.²⁴ The 1950 Agrarian Reform Law (土地改革法) and the East China Bureau’s directives on land reform detail an elaborate set of procedures for economic land reform, which the Party categorized into four general stages: propaganda and organizational work; class labeling; land confiscation and redistribution; reinspection and the issuing of land certificates. To this I add a preparatory stage, which preceded the launching of the movement. Before describing each of these stages, I review the major actors in implementing land reform.

The Major Players: Work Teams, Cadres, Activists, and the Masses

The two guiding forces of the land reform campaign, in theory, were the land reform work team (工作队) and the local Peasant Association (农民协会). Work teams—usually a small handful of young Party members and urban intellectuals trained and sent down by the county land committee (土地委员会)—were to advise and guide the entire land reform process along with the assistance of local cadres and activists.²⁵ These cadres held posts in government organs or Party-organized mass associations and were usually from the locality where they worked, though they were not necessarily CCP members. Activists (积极分子), politically ambitious or zealous villagers, helped with the logistics and held key positions in local mass organizations.

The Peasant Association was a mass organization, established by local

cadres, that was meant to represent “the masses” (群众), or ordinary villagers. The Party intended the poorest segments of the rural community—landless “farmworkers” (雇农) and “poor peasants” (贫农), or land-poor tenant farmers—to assume leadership positions within the Peasant Association, though “middle peasants” (中农) were far more likely to take these roles, probably because of their relative economic security. The Peasant Association, as one of the two main organizations in charge of the campaign, worked with the work team to distribute class labels, redistribute land, and determine who would be subjected to violent “class struggle.”

THE FIVE STAGES OF ECONOMIC LAND REFORM

Preparatory Stage. The Party mandated extensive preparatory work to establish a foundation for mobilizing participation in mass political violence. In its official directive on land reform preparatory work, the East China Bureau stated that Party and government organs at all levels should begin this preparatory work in the spring of 1950 and finish it by the end of fall so that they could launch the campaign by winter. The first step was to investigate local conditions, draft a plan for carrying out land reform, and report back to superiors for comments and approval. Before and after the summer harvest, Party work teams and local cadres underwent intensive training during which they learned the intricate details of land reform policy and were made aware of the harsh disciplinary punishment they would endure if caught engaging in corrupt acts—for example, embezzling or taking bribes.²⁶

Propaganda and Organizational Work Stage. Even before the arrival of the work team, cadres were to begin widespread propaganda and education efforts to dispel any misunderstandings or misgivings locals had about the movement and to explain to them the “righteousness” (正义性) and “necessity” (必要性) of land reform. Cadres would also help establish Peasant Associations (农民协会) if they had not already been formed. By the time of the fall harvest, Party work teams descended onto the villages to assist the Peasant Association and local cadres in carrying out land reform.²⁷ Land reform work teams, soon after their arrival, began by investigating local socioeconomic and political conditions, after which they inspected and rectified mass associations and conducted further propaganda work.²⁸ Much of this propaganda and education work was carried out in small face-to-face

meetings—for example, “informal chats” (漫谈会, 座谈会) and “small group meetings” (小组会)—with the landless and land-poor members of the community.²⁹ It was also during this preparatory stage that the Party implemented “model experiments” (典型试验) in one or two “key-point” (重点) villages in each county and compiled summary reports of their experiences to help guide future work once the campaign was fully underway.³⁰

Class Labeling Stage. After the end of the preparatory stage, the Party organized the poor and farmworker peasants to distribute “class labels” (阶级成份). According to the Agrarian Reform Law of 1950, local cadres were to demarcate class boundaries according to the amount of land owned, the percentage of land tilled by one’s own household, the percentage of income derived from “exploitation”—that is, rents and interest—and the amount of hired labor.³¹ This resulted in five major classes: landlords (地主), rich peasants (富农), middle peasants (中农), poor peasants (贫农), and farmworkers (雇农). The distribution of class labels was extraordinarily important in the socioeconomic reconfiguration of the countryside. On the one hand, they were “the fundamental basis for the equal redistribution of wealth,”³² as they determined how much land could be confiscated and what proportion of the population would be either expropriated or given land. In addition, because the landlords were the main targets of expropriation, the Party sought to use these class labels to foster solidarity among the farmworkers, poor peasants, and middle peasants while “isolating” (孤立) the landlords from the rest of the community.³³

Confiscation and Redistribution. By the 1950s, the Party had adopted a milder land reform agenda that called for “the preservation of the rich peasant economy” (保存富农经济) and the confiscation and redistribution of land from one tail of the landholding distribution to the other without confiscating the land of middle peasants or rich peasants (with some exceptions). On the basis of class labels, individuals would have their land confiscated, and others would receive some amount of land. Not only land was confiscated and redistributed: the “five great assets” (五大财产) of land, draft animals, agricultural tools, houses/furniture, and grain all went into the communal pot. Before confiscation, cadres and activists needed to register all households’ landholdings and assets to calculate how much land should be confiscated and redistributed.

Reinspection and Issuing Land Deeds. After the completion of the principal stages of land reform, work teams would reinspect the distribution of class

labels and rectify errors of over- and underlabeling. In a symbolically potent climax to the campaign, cadres would distribute new land deeds to peasants who had received land.

THE STRUCTURE OF “POLITICAL” LAND REFORM AND ITS REPertoire OF VIOLENCE

Looking only at the formal process of land reform described above, one would think that the land reform campaign involved minimal violence. Strikingly, there are no references to mass mobilized collective violence in the 1950 Agrarian Reform Law; the phrase “struggle session” (斗争大会)—or even “struggle” (斗争)—does not appear anywhere in the document. Only Article 32 of the Agrarian Reform Law touches upon the issue of violence. It echoes Liu’s recommendation that violence be restricted to the People’s Courts for the purpose of punishing resisters, saboteurs, and “evil tyrant elements (恶霸分子) whom the majority of people loathe and want to punish.”³⁴

THE THREE STAGES OF VIOLENT MASS MOBILIZATION

The mobilization process behind collective violence during land reform overlapped with the five stages of the “economic” land reform campaign, but in reality there were only three stages: preparatory work, target selection, and mass rallies (see Fig. 3). I will address each stage in turn.

Preparatory Work

The investigation of local conditions and propagandizing of land reform policy doubled as an effort to find potential struggle targets and convince locals that land reform would rectify injustices committed by certain members of the community. While investigating local conditions, local cadres, and later work teams, gathered information on alleged abuses and misdeeds, particularly by those whom they believed were landlords.

The principle of mobilization in the preparatory stage was “speaking bitterness” (诉苦)—that is, the public expression of stories of personal suffering. Cadres met with villagers in small, face-to-face meetings—known as “infor-

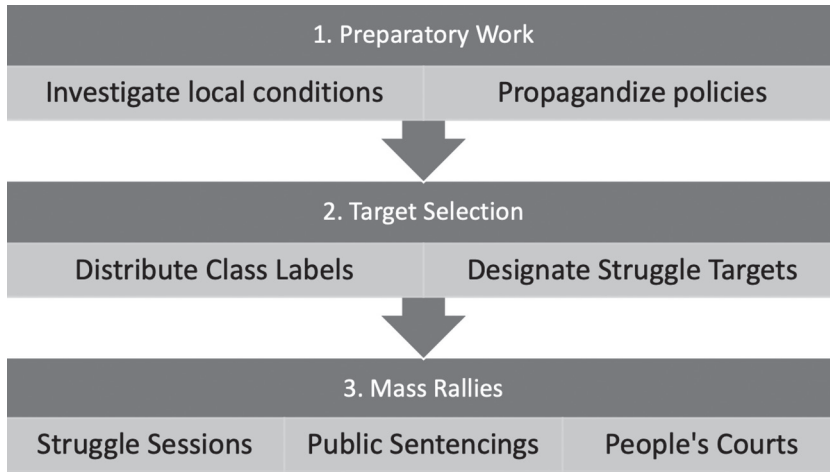


Fig. 3. A Model of the Process of Mobilization of Collective Violence during Land Reform

mal chats” (漫谈会) and “small groups” (小组)—and guided them to express and make sense of their suffering in order to draw a symbolic boundary demarcating them as oppressed victims and their oppressors as part of the evil landlord class. Not everyone at small group meetings spoke bitterness, but for both the speaker and the listener, speaking bitterness “construct[ed] the old order as oppressive, inherently violent, and immoral by recalling instances of social antagonism between individuals who occupy very different positions within hierarchies of power in Chinese society.”³⁵ In this way, speaking bitterness could create and unify various strata of peasants—the landless, the land-poor, and even the average landholder—as “oppressed class subjects.”³⁶ Later, at mass rallies like struggle sessions, these bitter stories could serve as the basis for moral theatrics that roused the crowd to violence.

Target Selection

After the end of the preparatory stage, the work team convened small groups of poor and farmworker peasants to oversee the selection of “struggle targets” (斗争对象), often in secret.³⁷ As mentioned before, only Article 32 of the Agrarian Reform Law provided any guidance for target selection, though this article applies specifically to People’s Courts (人民法庭), not struggle ses-

sions. It states: “Evil tyrant elements (恶霸分子) whom the majority of people loathe and want to punish, along with those who have resisted or tried to sabotage land reform, shall be punished according to the law.”³⁸ Significantly, the term “evil tyrant elements” does not specify class affiliation but only public sentiment toward a target, while political resistance to the land reform campaign—commonly referred to as sabotage (破坏)—similarly does not require the target to be of a particular class background. The ambiguity of this language and the conspicuous lack of class-based criteria established the importance of public input in the selection process and granted considerable leeway to local communities and Party work teams to decide who deserved to be punished.³⁹

Mass Rallies

The culminating event in the mobilization of violence was the staging of mass rallies during which struggle targets would be publicly humiliated, denounced, beaten, and possibly tortured or killed. The work team sought to mobilize the masses to participate in collective violence against “struggle targets” (斗争对象), who were technically supposed to be from bad class backgrounds, such as “rich peasants” (富农) or “landlords” (地主), or who had committed counterrevolutionary crimes. Locals could participate in collective violence against these targets as denouncers or attendees at mass rallies—for example, “struggle sessions” (斗争大会), “public sentencings” (公审大会), and “People’s Courts” (人民法庭). Denouncers publicly attacked, both verbally and physically, struggle targets in these face-to-face confrontations. Those in the audience also played an important, active role during struggle sessions. As an attendee, one was part of the crowd that would assist in “voting” on the sentence for the target, shout slogans, or even directly intervene to use physical violence.

A struggle session typically conformed to the following sequence. The struggle target (or targets) would be paraded to a clearing or onto a stage, bound with ropes and accompanied by armed guards. Denouncers would then stand up and tell a story about how the target had supposedly wronged him or her, a practice known as “speaking bitterness” (诉苦). Activists were on hand to maintain the enthusiasm of the crowd and help analyze these stories of bitterness to the crowd—usually by framing and identifying the source of the speaker’s suffering; sometimes they themselves participated in the criticism of targets.⁴⁰ Once all accusers had spoken against the target or

targets in question, the crowd would be called upon to recommend a punishment. Though Party officials were, theoretically, supposed to weigh public input in the final decision, they could override the crowd and provide a different sentence.⁴¹ This would continue until all targets had been struggled against; those condemned to death would have their sentences carried out immediately—if the accusers and the crowd had not already killed the victim by the end of the session, that is.

A single struggle session could last for hours and possibly involve tens of struggle targets—some of whom would be struggled against together (this was usually the case for couples)—and even more denouncers. The number of denouncers per struggle target varied, though there is little systematic evidence to ascertain the connection between the identities of struggle targets and the number of people who spoke against them. Archival data indicates that a single struggle target endured public denunciation and humiliation—and often physical violence—from a sizable number of accusers.⁴² According to summary statistics from the regional governments of Anhui and Jiangsu (Table 1), under 6 percent of the population made public denunciations, while about two-thirds to three-fourths of the population attended these rallies. These figures demonstrate that participation in collective violence, as denouncers or attendees, was far from complete, which refutes the notion that the Party made attendance compulsory. Moreover, the small but sizable percentage of denouncers suggest that audiences were observing more than just the actions of one or two local villagers during a struggle session.⁴³

While the Party officially proscribed torture, some forms of violence became institutionalized parts of struggle sessions. Oral histories with eyewitnesses and participant memoirs—as well as the archival record—reveal that struggle targets were almost always tied up and paraded to the struggle session site, akin to what Mao originally observed in 1927. A former land reform work team member from Baoshan County in southern Jiangsu noted that armed guards would bring the accused, hands tied behind the back, onto stage, and if he or she refused to be obedient or admit to faults, the accused would be hit on the side of the head, forced to kneel, or even strung up.⁴⁴ In this way minor physical abuse—slapping, for example—was completely normalized.⁴⁵ In neighboring Jiading County, a longtime resident, who later served as the locality's brigade leader, remarked that various forms of nonlethal violence were commonly used during struggle sessions, including hitting targets on the side the head (打耳光), applying pressure to the skull (with rocks), and forcing the accused to kneel. Yet the degree of punish-

TABLE 1. Percentage of the Population That Attended or Publicly Denounced Struggle Targets during the Land Reform Campaign in Northern and Southern Anhui and Jiangsu

Region	Attendees (%)	Denouncers (%)
Northern Anhui	66.46	5.97
Southern Anhui	76.53	4.88
Northern Jiangsu	NA	NA
Southern Jiangsu	58.66	1.32

ment used against a target was contingent on his or her behavior during the struggle session itself: “If the landlord showed good behavior (表现好), he or she would be allowed to stand on stage and only beaten lightly to get the point across; if the landlord did not behave well, then he or she would be beaten more severely.”⁴⁶ Xu Hongci wrote that, in Taizhou County in northern Jiangsu, PLA soldiers paraded targets sentenced to death to the execution site on rickshaws; the targets were bound with ropes (五花大绑) with execution flags (斩旗) attached to their backs.⁴⁷

SUMMARY

Peaceful land reform—which the Party leadership briefly entertained as a possibility after 1949—was fundamentally incompatible with the Party-state’s imperative to remake the economic and social basis of the Chinese countryside. Land reform violence could be harnessed to mobilize economic production and rally for the masses to contribute to the war effort, all the while crushing local resistance that threatened the fledgling state’s authority at the grassroots. Because land reform had both economic and political objectives, there were overlapping yet distinct processes for redistributing land and mobilizing mass participation in violence, the latter of which featured the CCP’s hallmark techniques of speaking bitterness and struggle sessions. The following chapter explores the imperial and folk origins of these techniques.

CHAPTER 2

Tracing the Origins of Moral Mobilization

Take every opportunity to instruct villagers in Confucian moral precepts, employing local dialects and colloquial speech, so that all could comprehend.

—THE QIANLONG EMPEROR ON THE USE OF THE “VILLAGE COMPACT” SYSTEM, 1753¹

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

—FENGYANG COUNTY PARTY COMMITTEE, *SUMMARY OF MASS MOVEMENTS IN FENGYANG COUNTY*, 1950²

For many observers of the Chinese Communist revolution, the CCP’s mobilization tactics were peculiar in nature and puzzling in origin. “The [Communist] Eighth Route Army is really strange,” one villager remarked. “If they want the poor people to laugh, the poor people will laugh; if they want the poor people to cry, the poor people will cry.”³ Thinking on the possible Western origins of these strategies of “mass persuasion,” Frederick Yu remarked that the Chinese Communists “appear as such veterans of what seem to be psychiatric and psychoanalytical practices that one could even suspect that they had read Freud and Jung along with Marx and Lenin in their early revolutionary days. But there is no evidence that they did so.”⁴ Other scholars have turned to China’s own cultural heritage to understand Chinese Communist practices. Levenson has described Chinese Communism as a syncretic blend of Marxism-Leninism and Confucianism, “a foreign creed tamed down to Chinese specifications.”⁵ According to Elizabeth Perry, early Party leaders, in contrast to their Nationalist counter-

parts, excelled in the art of “cultural positioning”—that is, “the strategic deployment of a range of symbolic resources (religion, ritual, rhetoric, dress, drama, art and so on) for purposes of political persuasion.”⁶ It is clear that by 1949, and at least as early as the Yan’an Period and the Chinese Civil War, the CCP had codified and implemented an effective strategy of mass mobilization capable of redefining the moral boundaries of local communities and eliciting violent moral outrage against specifically defined targets—namely, perceived normative transgressors among the landed elite. Yet the question remains: where did these techniques of moral mobilization come from?

I contend that this repertoire of violence has a genealogy that stretches back to Chinese imperial practices of moral governance. In this chapter, I “read history forward”⁷ to demonstrate how the CCP innovated upon techniques and insights from the imperial state’s methods of moral governance, rural folk culture, and traditions of protest to craft its repertoire of moral mobilization techniques.

This argument builds on a long sociological tradition that emphasizes the significance of culture in understanding how social actors find and innovate upon techniques of social mobilization.⁸ Tilly argues that actors do not invent new forms of contentious action but rather innovate upon preexisting behaviors from their historical context—that is, their “contentious repertoire”; this “paradoxical combination of ritual and flexibility” allows for both innovation and historical continuity.⁹ It is somewhat unclear, however, how people learn about past practices and why they choose to use and innovate upon some practices rather than others.¹⁰ Often, actors build strategies of action from the traditional practices of the very system they oppose. As Traugott points out, contentious behavior uses “tactics normally reserved for use by the authorities, often subjected to some symbolic or parodic reversal, and the tendency [is] to direct such actions to third parties who are invited to intervene on behalf of participants.”¹¹ Regardless of the precise source of cultural influence, a strong argument for cultural continuity must establish the mechanism of transmission of knowledge of existing practices and how this knowledge is melded with other practices to produce a strategy of action. In the case of the Chinese Communist Party, I argue that it was through the prism of peasant culture and traditions of rebellion that the Party learned about and improvised on these imperial practices.

LEARNING FROM THE QING AND THE PEASANTRY: THE ORIGINS OF SPEAKING BITTERNESS AND STRUGGLE SESSIONS

Though moral mobilization appears in other historical and cultural contexts (see Chapter 7), China has a long tradition of moral governance that explains how and why the Chinese Communists were able to develop particular techniques of moral mobilization to mobilize the masses. Although many scholars of Chinese politics and history have noted the centrality of morality to Chinese political culture and the Chinese Communist Party's political work,¹² this section focuses on the specific political and cultural practices that later influenced the Communists' use of morality in mass mobilization. In the rest of this section, I explore how the Party incorporated imperial practices of moral governance and traditional rural culture and protest into its main techniques of mobilizing violent class struggle—namely, speaking bitterness and struggle sessions. In both imperial and socialist practices, we see a clear distinction between moral and immoral individuals perceived as having transgressed norms of appropriateness in the community.

MORAL BOUNDARY WORK THROUGH SPEAKING BITTERNESS

One of the principal tools of moral boundary work in the repertoire of land reform mobilization techniques was “speaking bitterness” (诉苦)—that is, the public expression of stories of personal suffering. Though the precise cultural origins of speaking bitterness are unknown, the Party developed it into a structured technique that plausibly drew upon cultural norms regarding the public expression of suffering and storytelling traditions. Anagnost suggests that speaking bitterness may have emerged from norms of public grievance expression in rural Chinese society, though she does not specify the nature of these norms.¹³ Wu instead connects speaking bitterness to storytelling traditions:

From a cultural perspective, speaking bitterness was a political reinvention of public story telling based on the value of past bitter memory to drive a person to pursue a certain political goal. This technique also involves sharing personal trauma to turn it into a collective asset. Open expression of sorrow and crying in public are not stigmatized, but are met with sympathy and are encouraged.¹⁴

It is likely that speaking bitterness is a combination of both traditional storytelling and norms regarding the function and expression of suffering. Speaking bitterness's goal of making its audience sympathize with suffering and demand retribution resembles the neo-Confucian idea that one can cultivate virtue through witnessing and being upset by suffering. As De Bary explains, "For the Neo-Confucians it was the mark of the humane man that he could *not* endure the sufferings of others, but felt compelled to take action to remedy them."¹⁵ This neo-Confucian precedent could possibly explain how the Communists came to see this technique as a legitimate and effective form of political education and why ordinary villagers may have considered it a normal mode of grievance expression. As a storytelling technique, the Communist use of sensationalized tales of sorrow to shape public opinion—though on a local scale—has a more proximate precedent: it draws on what Eugenia Lean describes as the media sensationalism of the Nationalist era that sought to solicit the public's "sympathy" (同情) on cases of vengeance.¹⁶

The structure of speaking bitterness and its attentive focus on public performance appear to be inspired by China's folk operatic tradition. The ways in which cadres coached "accusers" (苦主) to speak bitterness resembled acting lessons. In his research on the use of speaking bitterness during land reform in Shandong and Hebei during the civil war, Li Lifeng observes that speaking-bitterness participants received a great deal of instruction on how to deliver their tragic stories: speakers need to learn how "to summarize several most heinous crimes that could make the masses feel a high degree of hatred and thus a desire to join the struggle." A cadre would push an accuser, when delivering his or her stories, to "wear a sad facial expression" and to "become an actor who can move the people."¹⁷ In fact, when the Party introduced speaking bitterness to the PLA during the 1947 Speaking Bitterness Movement, it used an opera—*Wang Keqin's Squad* (王克勤班)—to demonstrate the technique: the titular character literally performs speaking bitterness on stage at one point in the opera.¹⁸

Though in use before then, by the Chinese Civil War period speaking bitterness had become a mainstay of the Party's repertoire of land reform mobilization techniques, a tool for "soliciting tales of suffering for mobilizing the masses."¹⁹ At the heart of the practice of speaking bitterness was moral boundary work. The Party had learned that speaking bitterness could generate both "extreme hatred toward landlords" and Nationalists and "extreme feelings of love toward the Land Reform Movement and the CCP."²⁰ This

technique of forging and putting into opposition collective identities was used extensively during the civil war-era land reform campaign (1946–48) and retained its central role in mobilization work after 1949.

STRUGGLE SESSIONS

The inspiration for struggle sessions—mass meetings designed to publicly humiliate, harm, and kill class enemies for their alleged transgressions—can be traced back at least to Mao’s famous 1927 Hunan Report, in which he observed peasants terrorizing local landlords and officials.²¹ Notwithstanding the likely embellishments of his observations, Mao witnessed and described the decidedly moral flavor of the peasants’ violence against their enemies. Based on what Mao observed in his report, the Communist struggle session formulation appears to inherit elements of the village compact system, traditional peasant protest, and rural folk opera.

“Signalize the Good, Separate the Bad”: The Imperial Precedents of the Struggle Session

The Chinese imperial state’s techniques of moral governance—strategies designed to regulate public morality and proselytize Confucian orthodoxy—inspired, directly and indirectly, the Party’s tactic of using struggle sessions to humiliate perceived norm violators and political enemies and rally public outrage against them. A Qing-dynasty county magistrate handbook traces the imperial tradition of moral governance back to the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE), citing the following lines from *The Rites of Zhou* (周礼): “Signalize the good, separating the bad from them; give tokens of your approbation to their neighborhoods, distinguishing the good so as to make it ill for the evil, thus establishing the influence and reputation of their virtue.”²² The idea of governing thought traces back similarly far. Philosophical writings on “techniques of the mind-and-heart” (心术) predate the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), and the “Learning of the Heart-and-Mind” (心学) and its associated concept of “the Art of Governing the Mind” (治心之术) were integral to the Song neo-Confucianism that predominated in later dynasties.²³ Indeed, the Qing state relied specifically on Song neo-Confucianism as a mode of ideological control because it “stressed social duties and human relationships.”²⁴ The handbook asserts that moral governance provides rulers with important

practical benefits. Proper moral education could maintain social stability and ensure the obedience of one's subjects, in ways ranging from refraining from criminal behavior to paying taxes: "If education is neglected the people will not know the principles of filial piety, brotherly love, propriety, and virtue, and all manner of antisocial and disruptive behavior will occur."²⁵

The most significant tool of moral governance in the Chinese countryside was the village compact (乡约) system and the reading of the Sacred Edict (圣谕). The village compact system employed lectures on public morality to indoctrinate villagers to be obedient and virtuous subjects. Mandated in 1670 by the Kangxi Emperor, officials used the village compact system to host public readings of the Sacred Edict, which contained Sixteen Maxims regarding proper behavior in all realms of life. The imperial state even produced an explanatory guide for the Sacred Edict to ensure that its message reached even the most uneducated segments of society.²⁶ Though village compacts had appeared in earlier dynastic periods, they were heavily promoted during the Qing. As Terada explains, under the Qing the village compact became a "public lecture" circuit concerned mainly with proselytizing villagers to follow an officially approved moral code, which expanded the system's audience to encompass the entire rural populace.²⁷

A village compact meeting began with an elaborate morning ceremony held in a large and clean open space in front of the imperial tablet, situated on a high table in a dragon pavilion along with incense, candles, and flowers. After kowtowing to the imperial tablet, the principal lecturer and his assistant alternated reading and explaining each of the Sixteen Maxims of the Sacred Edict, with each maxim punctuated by a single strike of a sounding board. Also positioned at the meeting site were the "the registers of good and evil deeds." The red-covered register of good deeds listed upstanding villagers, such as chaste women, filial sons, and those who had performed selfless or generous acts, while the black-covered register of evil deeds named those villagers accused of having committed immoral acts.²⁸ The registers—alternatively known as the "ledgers of merit and demerit"—were originally written and used as guides for moral self-cultivation, but by the time of the Ming-Qing transition they had become a part of the moral governance of local life.²⁹ The registers of good and evil deeds were posted at "exposition pavilions" (申明亭) alongside imperial edicts. Evil deeds, particularly those concerning the negligence of "filial and fraternal duties," would remain in these pavilions until offenders had made amends. Hsiao aptly describes these ledgers as a "spiritual pillory with which the authorities hoped to

shame villagers and townsfolk into better behavior or at least to deter them from straying from the prescribed path of duty.”³⁰

The village compact system had fallen into disuse or, ironically, become a vehicle of corruption by the end of the Qing dynasty, though it was still being implemented regularly in many parts of the country. By the early twentieth century the village compact system had lost much of its authority, and many peasants viewed the system as being complicit in state corruption. The ceremonies became opportunities for corrupt local officials to extort money and gifts from locals, who were sometimes coerced to attend. The increasingly top-down nature of the system, which had devolved into a mechanical tool of state indoctrination, no longer engaged with local community issues. Strangely, village compact officials even ceased to do moral indoctrination work; in many areas these officials had transformed into tax collectors or political.³¹

Strikingly, the legacy of the village compact system lived on through the rebellious behavior of the peasantry in the late-Qing and Republican periods. Although discredited, it became an important component of the peasantry’s contentious repertoire, which provided them the knowledge and tools that shaped the character of rural rebellion. Turning the official system on its head, it became common to see peasants draw on similar rituals from the village compact system when forming coalitions and attacking corrupt officials and landlords. For example, during rent-resistance movements, peasants would sometimes create their own “compacts” (约) to ensure solidarity among members to refuse to submit rents to their landlords; they would then use violence to police the behavior of their members to ensure unity in their ranks.³²

Most strikingly, Mao observed that the peasants intimidated their opponents by brandishing the “register of good and evil deeds” used during village compact meetings, where locals were lauded or admonished for their behavior. In his 1927 Hunan Report, Mao described this as the Qing practice of “the other register”:

In the Ching Dynasty, the household census compiled by the local authorities consisted of a regular register and “the other” register, the former for honest people and the latter for burglars, bandits and similar undesirables. In some places the peasants now use this method to scare those who formerly opposed the associations. They say, “Put their names down in the other register!”³³

Mao does not use the term “register of good and evil deeds” or “ledgers of merit and demerit” to describe these two registers, but “the regular” and “the other” most certainly refer to registers used in village compact ceremonies. He also observed that the peasants cast a net far wider than that presupposed by Marxist notions of class: “The peasant movement targeted local tyrants, gentry, and landlords, but also corrupt urban officials, patriarchy, and even bad rural customs.”³⁴ Preempting critiques of the peasants’ violent means of resolving local social conflict, Mao claimed that the peasantry used what legalists would call moral retributivism—that is, they tailored their punishments to fit the severity of the crime:

The peasants are clear-sighted. Who is bad and who is not, who is the worst and who is not quite so vicious, who deserves severe punishment and who deserves to be let off lightly—the peasants keep clear accounts, and very seldom has the punishment exceeded the crime.³⁵

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

There are no policy documents explicitly linking Mao’s Hunan Report to the institution of the struggle session, but there are remarkable similarities in the practices of the struggle session and the situation Mao described in 1927. The mere idea of classifying people based on their moral behavior had clear precedents in the village compact system and imperial moral governance more generally. Just as the imperial state categorized people “according to the attitudes and reactions which they showed at a given time” into “good people” and “weed people,” “wicked sticks,” and “bandits,”³⁶ the Party sought to classify rural society into “good” classes and various kinds of “non-people”—landlords, counterrevolutionaries, Nationalists, and so on.³⁷ While far more theatrical and engaging than the old village compact lecture circuit, struggle sessions also put good and evil deeds on public display, though with a much greater emphasis on the latter.³⁸ This use of public forums to judge moral behavior has its roots in neo-Confucian thought: Zhu Xi, in his writings on the village compact system, recommended “group criticism” as a way of regulating the proper behavior of community members.³⁹ At struggle sessions, offenders were commanded to repent and “bow their heads to the masses” (向群众低头), which could possibly earn them a

reprieve. As the head of the East China Bureau stated, “Landlords who obey the law and bow their heads to the masses should be treated with magnanimity” (对守法并向群众低头的地主, 应宽大处理).⁴⁰ Certainly, this form of public shaming and violence pales in comparison to the public display of immoral acts in the registers of good and evil deeds, yet the general spirit of the practice is similar: through the public accounting of immoral behavior, the state could regulate the moral conduct of the masses and establish itself as a legitimate moral arbiter.

The Influence of Rural Folk Opera on Struggle Sessions

Many scholars have remarked on the theatricality of struggle sessions during land reform, as well as the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries.⁴¹ As Julia Strauss writes, “[Struggle sessions were instances of] real theatre in which spectacle, state-sanctioned morality and audience participation coalesced into one remarkable show.”⁴² This “state-sanctioned morality” of class struggle, however, drew on moral tropes from rural folk opera that influenced these public performances at struggle sessions. As Eugenia Lean observes:

During Yan’an, the civil war years, and into the 1950s, “spontaneous” struggle sessions against landlords and other “reactionary” elements of society enflamed the strong affective commitment of the “masses.” While often touted as spontaneous by leftist organizers, these struggle sessions were, in fact, carefully orchestrated to conform to long-standing and highly familiar moral narratives of good and evil drawn from China’s vernacular storytelling and operatic traditions.⁴³

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

Traditional rural opera exhibited strong themes of anticorruption and retributive justice that mirrored the imperial state’s moralized view of official corruption, in terms of its moral dichotomy between good and evil officials and the benevolent center and the abusive localities. As Hung writes, “What we do know is that many of these tales [in traditional operas] are saturated with stories about the plight of commoners under evil officials, miserable subjects appealing to benevolent and parent-like higher authorities,

and how the bad officials were penalized and avenged in the end.”⁴⁴ For example, the popular Lord Bao (包公) operas—a Song-dynasty judge known for his impartiality and incorruptibility—dramatize Lord Bao’s investigations into and rulings on cases of corruption, murder, and other wrongdoings in which powerful evildoers are brought to justice in the end.⁴⁵ In these operas, Lord Bao’s facial makeup (脸谱) is predominantly black with a white crescent moon to represent his “iron face without selfishness” (铁面无私)—that is, his stern impartiality and incorruptibility.⁴⁶ Aside from their themes of anticorruption, these operas sometimes directly influenced rural rebellion by supplying characters and rituals that rebels incorporated into their contentious repertoires. Notably, *The Investiture of the Gods* (封神演义), a novel-turned-opera from which the Boxer rebels drew many of their major deities, portrayed the struggle between the future Zhou dynasty founder and his allied deities and “the least corrupt and evil ruler of the Shang [dynasty].”⁴⁷

The CCP translated these tropes of good and evil from traditional folk operas into the idiom of class struggle through the production and staging of “land reform” operas—for example, *The White-Haired Girl* (白毛女), *Liu Hulan* (刘胡兰), and *Red Leaf River* (赤叶河). These operas portrayed to their audiences a “rural society [that] was rife with intense class hatreds due to a universally evil and exploitative landlord class.”⁴⁸ Brian DeMare has shown that Communist cultural troupes modeled land reform operas on folk operas in both content and artistic form. Land reform operas contained similar themes of retribution against cruel and unjust officials that were prevalent in traditional rural opera. One of the prevalent archetypes DeMare identifies in land reform operas is the morally depraved “evil landlord.” In *The White-Haired Girl* and *Red Leaf River*, the evil landlord antagonist is “notable for both his love of cheating the peasantry and his predilection for sexual assault.” These vilified landlords were transgressors on multiple fronts. *The White-Haired Girl* portrays the evil landlord Huang Shiren not just as a sexual predator but also as a kidnapper and a drunk.⁴⁹ While many of these operas were based on the traditional *xibanzi* operas, the way in which they used pre-existing artistic conventions aligned with their portrayal of certain characters as valorous or villainous. For example, composers used melodies for “evil or crafty” characters in traditional opera in scenes that portrayed antagonists like landlords and other “reactionary” types.⁵⁰ The power of these operas to elicit moral outrage was such that they unintentionally provoked audience members to attack the performers. A troupe performing *The White-Haired Girl*, for example, reported that audience members would sometimes throw rocks at the actors playing villains on stage.⁵¹

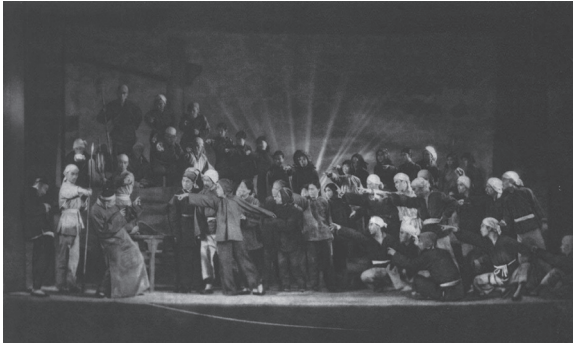


Fig. 4. The Struggle Session Scene from *The White-Haired Girl*

Although land reform operas were independently important as tools of boundary work that distinguished between immoral landlords and the innocent masses, they also helped introduce the ritual of a struggle session to rural audiences.⁵² The climax of *The White-Haired Girl* is in fact a violent struggle session against the landlord antagonist (see Fig. 4).⁵³ In front of a peasant crowd, the heroine speaks bitterness against her tormentor, “whipping the crowd into such a frenzy that peasants attending the meeting begin beating the two villains before she could even finish her accusations. After she concludes her story, the two are beaten again and taken away to await trial and execution.” By viewing an artistic performance of a struggle session, the actual peasant audience learns how to perform and stage their own.⁵⁴

The theatricality of struggle sessions certainly conformed to the kinds of moral narratives presented in land reform operas and traditional folk operas before them, but the selection of targets and the use of violence was grounded in concerns of retributive justice that characterized pre-1949 rural protest. Eyewitness accounts comment on the theatricality of land reform struggle sessions, but they also reveal their remarkably retributivist nature. Hinton’s description of a struggle session in Longbow Village illustrates the use of theatrics to elicit moral outrage against a man who hoarded grain while his fellow villagers starved. In his description of the first struggle session held in the village for Kuo Ch’ung-wang, who was “not the richest man in the village but . . . one of the meanest,” the organizers of the struggle session clearly wanted to sensationalize the ill-effects of his greed—namely, his seizing and hoarding of grain during a famine year in which his others starved to death:

On the day of the big meeting [the struggle session], the grain, which could have saved the lives of dozens of people, lay in the courtyard in a stinking mildewed heap. The people who crowded in to accuse walked over the grain

and, as the courtyard filled up, some of them sat down on it. The smell and the sight of it reminded them of those who had died for want of a few catties [of grain] and filled them with anger.⁵⁵

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

Fairy Temple was a dilapidated small town; [the county officials] used a clearing on the east side of town as the site for the struggle session. The Jiangdu County Party Committee knew that all these high-level officials were coming, so they fixed up the space to make it very stately; they even carefully selected and organized the peasant masses who were to attend the session. The "speaking bitterness" session was ordered and methodical (次序井然), and there were frequent climaxes (高潮迭起); it was rich in theatricality (极富戏剧性). . . . Time passed minute by minute, second by second, and in the final moment, the county Party secretary announced that these two landlords, guilty of heinous crimes and having refused to reform their ways, would be executed. The soldiers dragged them to the side of the meeting space; the young [landlord] struggled for his life, trying to shout something, but the rope tied around his neck was pulled so tight that he couldn't make a peep. In a flash, the crowd blocked my view and two gunshots rang out. . . . This was my first lesson in the bloodiness of class struggle.⁵⁶

Xu's account reflects the resemblance between the government-staged struggle session and a morality play, though with meticulously crafted theatrical-

ity. As Chapter 3 elaborates, organizers took pains to ensure that these sessions were neither too spontaneous nor too structured so as to maintain the audience's interest and the Party's control over the ensuing violence.

Some of the techniques of violence used during struggle sessions were taken from the peasantry's own contentious repertoire. Mao observed that, in carrying out terror against the landed elite, peasants "tie up the gentry with ropes, put tall paper-hats on them, and parade them through villages."⁵⁷ In the public executions during the Red Terror at Peng Pai's Hai-Lu-Feng Soviet in Guangdong Province, the peasants proactively pushed for theatrical forms of violence, some of which mimicked past state violence used against the local communities. These events became "festival[s] not to be missed which many peasants attended, making themselves hoarse with shouts of 'kill, kill, kill.'" The peasants went so far as to use ritualized cannibalism to punish targets, mimicking the cruel local magistrate's practice of forcing family members, often father-son and brother-brother pairs, to eat parts of the victim while he still lived.⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

The Party's techniques of moral mobilization were not entirely new. Imperial practices of moral governance and the dramatization of moral transgression in traditional folk opera shaped how the Party developed and used techniques like speaking bitterness and struggle sessions. This long genealogy explains the inspiration for the Party's use of moral mobilization, but it also suggests why this approach may have resonated strongly with China's rural population. The imperial practice of proselytizing state morality in the countryside bore some resemblance to the Party's intensive propaganda efforts to change villagers' moral worldview. Aside from this familiarity with state techniques of moral indoctrination, the Communists' use of popular tropes of good and evil officials and themes of retributive justice in moral boundary work and moral theatrics may have facilitated the acceptance of using violence against certain members of local society for transgressions ranging from petty corruption to dishonest and cruel behavior. As the following chapter demonstrates, what was truly novel was the Communists' ability to conflate class and morality to mobilize the masses against members of the landed elite, not for their class status or affiliation, but for their perceived moral failings.

PART II

Mobilizing Violence

CHAPTER 3

The Process of Moral Mobilization

The hearts of the masses are easily moved. Someone raises an arm or calls out and the crowd jumps up with him. As long as the speaker's words sound reasonable, they'll be accepted. As for whether the speaker has other motives, this is not something that can be carefully discerned in the midst of the chaos. Once the people act, it is easy for them to overdo it; one could go so far as to say that they often overdo it.

—HUANG YANPEI, “REPORT INQUIRING INTO SOUTHERN JIANGSU’S LAND REFORM”¹

Today! We shall resolutely strike down feudalism and eliminate the evil tyrants. A thousand years of injustices will be redressed; ten thousand years of animosity will be repaid! We shall shoot them dead!

—LYRICS FROM “THE PUBLIC SENTENCING OF THE EVIL TYRANTS,”
*THE JIANGNAN LAND REFORM SUITE: MUSICAL SCORE*²

In the dramatic climax of the 1961 film *The Hurricane*, based on Zhou Libo's novel about his experiences as a land reform cadre in northeastern China, an angry mob wielding spears and rifles drags the villainous landlord Han Laoliu toward the stage, beating and jeering at him along the way. A local cadre, standing on the stage before a banner that reads “The Communist Party Is the Savior of the People,” announces the start of the “struggle session” (斗争大会). The crowd falls silent as a young woman escorts an elderly couple through the crowd and onto the stage. “Han Laoliu, you beast!” the old man yells. “I never thought you'd get yours today.” The man then launches into a dramatic retelling of the night, ten years ago, when Han sexually assaulted and killed their sixteen-year-old daughter. In tears, his wife takes out a long lock of hair—her daughter's hair—and presents it to the audience, saying she has kept it for ten years, waiting for the day when some-

one would come to redress this injustice. “Today,” she exclaims, “the Chinese Communist Party has come! My child, you can finally close your eyes.”³ A cadre calls for revenge and the crowd roars back in agreement. The scene continues with a montage of the faces of additional accusers—men and women, young and old—superimposed on the jeering crowd. At the end, we are given a glimpse of the official pronouncement of Han Laoliu’s sentence—execution—along with a description of his many misdeeds.⁴

Many decades later, a documentary film team visited Yuanbao Village, the original site of *The Hurricane*, and discovered that the real Han Laoliu did not quite conform to the stereotypical image of a wealthy landlord as depicted in the movie and novel. In fact, he was not even a wealthy landowner: he was a middleman, a so-called sublandlord (二地主) or managerial landlord (经营地主), who collected rents for larger, urban-dwelling absentee landlords. “His house didn’t have much of anything in it (屋里没啥玩意),” recalled one villager.⁵ Because he was semiliterate, he headed the local Maintenance Association (维持会) that cooperated with the Japanese puppet government to extract resources for the Japanese army and to report on any anti-Japanese activities. It appears that his unenviable position as a middleman between tenants and landlords and then later between the local community and the Japanese army provided ample fodder for the land reform work team’s mobilization of public ire. Yet even in the film that portrays him as an unsavory member of the gentry class, Han Laoliu is ultimately condemned and punished not for his wealth or his landlord status, but for having raped and killed another villager. In both fiction and reality, cadres identified and dramatized Han Laoliu’s alleged wrongdoings to elicit the community’s righteous indignation and generate an irrepressible desire for violent retribution.

Han Laoliu’s fate exemplifies the Party’s strategy of morally discrediting local elites and dramatizing their alleged transgressions to mobilize civilians into sanctioning and participating in collective violence against them. In this chapter, I demonstrate that the CCP mobilized ordinary villagers to attend public rituals of violence and to denounce, beat, torture, and kill alleged “class enemies” where it engaged in *moral mobilization*. Through moral mobilization, Party and state cadres leveraged shared norms of right and wrong behavior to demarcate a virtuous in-group and a villainous out-group, eliciting sympathy for the former and outrage against the latter. In this “war for sympathy” against local elites, cadres elicited villagers’ sympathy for the suffering of their fellow villagers to generate in-group solidarity,

while rousing outrage against a select number of alleged transgressors among the local elite to push them, as a group, outside of the community's "span of sympathy."⁶

I explore the process of moral mobilization through a "most different" design that delineates parallel processes in two radically different socio-economic contexts:⁷ the impoverished northern region of Huaibei and the prosperous southern region of Jiangnan in central-eastern China. A campaign of mass violence rooted in the ideology of class struggle should, one would expect, generate more enthusiasm in wealthy, unequal parts of a country; conversely, it should falter where objective socioeconomic differences are few. Because of Jiangnan's rich history of rent-based resistance that pitted landlords against peasants, it should have been fertile ground for class violence. Sporadic collective violence between landlords and tenants indicates that there were social cleavages that hewed closely to the Party's class struggle ideology and could possibly be exploited to create feelings of relative deprivation. Even if that were not possible because of local ambivalence about the class struggle narrative, Jiangnan's high levels of inequality and wealth would have provided cadres with ample resources to selectively reward local cooperation in lieu of more normative appeals.⁸ For these reasons, I treat Jiangnan as a "least likely" case for a moral mobilization argument. In contrast, Huaibei, which had far lower levels of landholding inequality and less virulent landlord-tenant conflict, would be a "most likely" case for moral mobilization because the Party simply lacked salient class cleavages and ample material incentives to use as the basis for mobilization.

The similarity of the process and application of moral mobilization across these two radically different regional political economies is striking. By leveraging popular morality to construct in-group/out-group identities that separated oppressors from the oppressed, the Party turned class into a proxy for moral turpitude, which allowed it far greater freedom to mobilize in areas where objective socioeconomic conditions were less conducive to class-based violence. Nevertheless, moral mobilization failed where the Party lacked the organizational ability to use moral appeals or where contextual factors impaired the plausibility of these new narratives.

The structure of the rest of this chapter is as follows. First, I provide an overview of the process of moral mobilization. Next, I review the methodological approach used and hypotheses tested in the case studies. I then present the within-case analyses of mass mobilization in the regions of Jiangnan and Huaibei and conclude with a discussion of the case study findings.

MORAL MOBILIZATION AS A PROCESS

That political actors often succeed in mobilizing collective violence is surprising because potential participants must overcome significant moral and emotional barriers to engage in violent behavior.⁹ Simply put, violence does not come easily to most people,¹⁰ and people are far more likely to use violence when they feel that they are in the right.¹¹ Although armies are trained to use violence, officers are far more reluctant to use violence against domestic targets, which is why many regimes establish separate highly trained violence specialists to carry out domestic repression.¹² Yet even in interstate war, a startling proportion of soldiers, for example, do not fire their guns in combat; and, generally speaking, conflicting groups are more likely to stand down in face-to-face confrontations than they are to escalate them.¹³ Violence between groups, even those with acrimonious histories, tends to be rare.¹⁴

Despite the importance of morality in understanding individuals' willingness to engage in violence, morality is often absent from or underexplored in most accounts of mobilization and collective violence. Instead, collective violence is usually construed as a "collective action"—or "free rider"—problem, which posits that collective action is unlikely in the absence of selective incentives for participants.¹⁵ While selective incentives may explain the participation of core activists who hold official positions and receive compensation,¹⁶ it is infeasible and undesirable for a movement to provide material incentives—that is, political positions and monetary rewards—to all participants. Moreover, participation frequently occurs where material benefits are weak or nonexistent. Social norms, network ties, and "peer pressure" can motivate and sustain participation by raising the cost of nonparticipation,¹⁷ but there are other, nonmaterial individual benefits that encourage participation. Most notably, individuals who feel a strong commitment or obligation are far more likely to engage in collective action.¹⁸ These committed participants are not the altruistic "conscience constituents" of McCarthy and Zald, who sympathize with a movement's cause but do not benefit from its goals, but rather those who derive real emotional benefits from their participation.¹⁹ Collective violence and the mobilization process itself can bring self-actualizing and expressive benefits to participants—"pleasure of agency," sense of "honor," and so on—and build common identities among participants where they act on moral commitments.²⁰ Individuals may also participate in collective violence to defend against emotional harm through the loss of respect or honor.²¹ The large lit-

erature on emotions in social mobilization demonstrates that emotions can have various effects on mobilization, including bolstering collective solidarity,²² mobilizing participation,²³ sustaining participation,²⁴ shaping participation identities,²⁵ and structuring the trajectory of movements.²⁶

Yet these accounts that stress the importance of moral commitments and emotions in participation do not elucidate the “meso-level”²⁷ processes by which political actors create or shape these commitments in the hearts and minds of potential participants. As Lichbach explains, merely highlighting the importance of normative commitments neglects the question of normative origins: “It assumes that dissident norms exist but that a dissident social order does not—yet the latter is clearly a precondition for the former. . . . A community of norms must ultimately be created either by long-term exchange (a contract) or by long-term coercion (a hierarchy).”²⁸ Thus, when looking at collective violence, it is imperative to examine the *process* by which political groups translate their abstract ideological message into a comprehensible popular idiom that can mobilize participation and generate a belief in the legitimacy of their cause and the extreme means they employ. That is, we must account for the process by which “potential victims are collectively categorized into a monolithic group by perpetrators”²⁹ and, as Fujii articulates it, the “skill and ingenuity on the part of the norm entrepreneur [required] to establish a new norm, particularly one that conflicts with a longstanding proscription against killing others.”³⁰

To understand the link between morality and collective violence—and collective action more generally—we must situate morality within a mobilization process. That is, how do political actors, in the course of mobilization, alter the moral imaginary of their target audience—that is, how do they exploit or create new moral convictions, present their cause as righteous, and elicit emotional responses that can rouse people to action?

The Process of Moral Mobilization

Moral mobilization is a recursive process that defines a righteous in-group against a decadent and corrupt other and dramatizes alleged transgressive behavior by members of the latter to justify sanctions against the entire out-group. Moral boundary defines an out-group and casts its members outside of society’s “span of sympathy” by alleging them to be morally bankrupt and builds solidarity within the in-group by cultivating empathy for the plight of fellow members. Once this boundary has been imposed, political actors

activate it through moral theatrics, which dramatizes specific alleged transgressive acts to provoke outrage from the in-group against (specific) members of the out-group. Outrage, in turn, justifies support for or participation in violence against the out-group. As Figure 5 illustrates, this is a recursive process that imposes, activates, and crystallizes boundaries, initiating a positive feedback loop that promotes and sustains violence over time.

Before explaining each of these mechanisms, I would like to clarify what I mean by morality. I define morality as shared understandings of what constitutes proper behavior and good character—and their opposites. These shared understandings vary by culture and time and do not represent a universal standard of what is good. Those who invoke morality may represent or view themselves as righteous, but their appeals to moral beliefs say nothing about the goodness of their behavior; that is a normative judgment for others to make. Importantly, I distinguish morality from justice, for two reasons. First, justice implies an impartial, rational, and somewhat institutionalized adjudication of what is or is not fair. In contrast, morality often begins from emotion, which is retrospectively rationalized.³¹ Morally tinted emotions like outrage, sympathy, and disgust influence how people determine what is or is not right. Someone who believes homosexuality to be a sin does not consider whether it is “just” to discriminate against LGBT persons as much as see them as something impure to be purged. Second, justice principally concerns norms of fairness, while morality encompasses a range of norms regarding sanctity, loyalty, fairness, care, and tradition.³² One may consider nepotism morally acceptable if one values familial loyalty more than fairness to strangers, for example.

Moral Boundary Work

Political actors introduce and transform their ideological scripts into participation identities for mobilization through moral boundary work, which leverages existing culturally specific norms regarding good and bad behavior to delineate between “us” and “them.”³³ It constructs the value differentials that usually underpin long-standing in-group/out-group antagonisms by drawing symbolic boundaries that designate certain groups as virtuous and others as reprobate.³⁴ Moral boundaries are forged “on the basis of moral character . . . qualities such as honesty, work ethic, personal integrity and consideration for others,”³⁵ though the specifics of these qualities will necessarily vary by social context. In the context of moral mobilization, moral

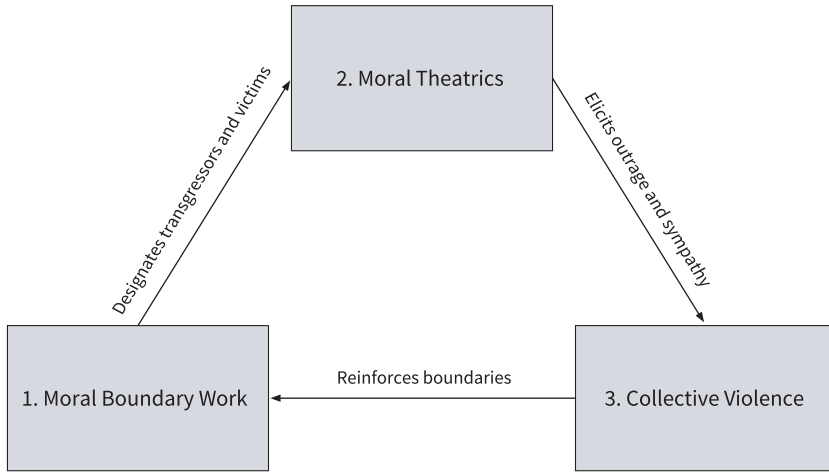


Fig. 5. The Process of Moral Mobilization

boundary work is an active political process whereby external political actors impose new categorical boundaries and imbue them with moral content using familiar normative appeals. That is, moral boundary work does not merely draw a line between an in-group and an out-group: it simultaneously forges feelings of belonging within an in-group and prescribes hostility toward a defined out-group.³⁶ To use Wimmer’s language, this involves the imposition of categorical and sociobehavioral boundaries—that is, boundaries that define membership in a category but they also those that determine how individuals relate to or treat members who belong to that category.³⁷ It is this process of moral boundary work that not only imposes new boundaries between targeted groups and the public, but also changes their sociobehavioral valence by using moral norms to exclude from the public’s “span of sympathy”—that is, to frame them as an evil, degenerate minority who, by virtue of their allegedly nefarious and inappropriate behavior, are deserving of punishment. So while political actors often impose new categorical boundaries rooted in their ideological scripts—for example, landlords versus the masses, heretics versus the devout, Communist sympathizers versus patriots—these boundaries take on moral meaning through elite appeals to the audience’s sense of right and wrong behavior.

Unlike resource competition theories of intergroup conflict,³⁸ moral boundary work does not require salient preexisting resource competition between groups to delineate group boundaries. Of course, political actors

cannot draw boundaries pell-mell: boundary work draws on preexisting moral norms—shared understandings of good, correct, and appropriate behavior—and traditional patterns of exclusion and resource distribution within local communities; therefore, *social relations* limit the norms and symbols political actors can successfully invoke to define new symbolic boundaries or to elicit moral-emotional reactions.³⁹ Even when groups engage in boundary work themselves, these boundaries are “determined by available cultural resources and by spatial, geographic, and social-structural constraints, i.e., by the particular set of people with whom we are likely to come in contact.”⁴⁰ Political elites seeking to mobilize face a similar concern: a movement’s appeals must somehow resonate with the audience’s social reality. According to Gould, “An appeal to solidarity will only succeed to the degree that the collective identity it invokes classifies people in a way that plausibly corresponds to their concrete experience of social ties to others.”⁴¹ It is these “group boundaries people explicitly invoke” that form the basis of what Gould calls “participation identities”—that is, the boundaries that political actors use to mobilize participants and which shape how participants view and understand their participation in a cause.⁴² Still, mobilizers have significant leeway in shaping these identities.

Moral Theatrics

Drawing new moral boundaries is necessary but not sufficient for mobilization: political actors crystallize boundaries and catalyze participation by dramatizing “scripts” of moral transgression by members of the targeted out-group to audiences, who are usually members of the in-group, and by structuring in-group/out-group dynamics in a clear narrative of perpetrator and victim. The existence of a perpetrator and victim imbues this mobilization strategy with its emotional power. While attributing blame to a perpetrator may provoke outrage, it cannot provoke sympathy, as there is no person with whom the audience can sympathize. Through the public display and performance of transgressions, political actors “overcome the distance between actor and script”⁴³ to create empathy for the “victim” and outrage against the “perpetrator” or “oppressor.” Performance operates through the elicitation of moral-emotional responses, “feelings that stem from violating evaluative cultural codes, that is, codes that indicate what is good or bad or right or wrong in a society,”⁴⁴ chief among them being outrage and empathy. Outrage is an emotion that “motivates people to shame and punish wrong-

doers” in response to perceived violations of moral norms.⁴⁵ Unlike fear, which tends to demobilize, social psychologists have found that anger and outrage have mobilizing effects,⁴⁶ reduce an individual’s risk threshold,⁴⁷ and heighten desire for punitive action.⁴⁸ It appears, however, that when anger is situated within a moral framework, thus becoming outrage, it has a stronger and more sustained mobilizing effect.⁴⁹

Through sympathy, moral theatrics builds political solidarity between civilian perpetrators on the same side of a symbolic boundary.⁵⁰ Empathizing with another’s pain triggers the same affective responses in an individual as if he or she were the recipient of pain.⁵¹ In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith’s defines “sympathy” as a “fellow-feeling” that “does not arise so much from the view of the passion, as from that of the situation which excites it . . . when we put ourselves in his case, that passion arises in our breast from the imagination.”⁵² Empathy for those allegedly harmed by transgressors strengthens cohesion within the pool of potential participants through the cultivation of a sense of shared fate.⁵³ It also increases the willingness of citizens to accept violence in the name of “righteous” causes, movements where “interested publics believe that the enactors of political violence are defending society’s most vulnerable and protecting a morally legitimate social order.”⁵⁴ Indeed, empathy for the targets of violence is a potential obstacle for political actors attempting to mobilize collective violence. During the mass mobilization of violence during the Chinese Civil War, the CCP bemoaned that where landlords were able win the empathy of the masses, the masses refrained from participating in violence against them.⁵⁵

To be clear, moral theatrics does not merely refer to the conveyance of information; it is not a cognitive mechanism but an emotional one. Political actors do not present transgressive acts to persuade audiences to accept evidence of their transgressiveness but rather to provoke a visceral emotional reaction. In contrast to “moral shocks,” which are exogenous events that provoke outrage, political actors actively deploy moral theatrics by presenting transgressive acts to an audience with the intent to elicit an emotional response.⁵⁶ Past normative breaches between individuals or between an individual and the community at large are usually the base material for the dramatization of moral transgression, which draw their potency precisely from the centrality of these norms to a community’s social life. Stalin’s mass mobilization of factory workers during the Great Terror to “unmask” so-called Trotskyist-Zinovievites drew on Soviet norms of benevolence toward labor—

that is, that good Soviet officials should protect their workers from harm—to conflate the idea of anti-Stalinism with negligent factory management. The virulent campaign of denunciation against industrial “wreckers” was fueled by the idea that political enemies were those who caused or allowed industrial accidents to maim or kill innocent workers, an issue that was a major point of contention between factory management and workers on the shop floor.⁵⁷ Senator Joseph McCarthy’s crusade against Communists within the ranks of the State Department exploited the American public’s moral aversion to homosexuality to galvanize public support by emphasizing that homosexuality was a hallmark, if not the cause, of Communist leanings.⁵⁸

Moral Mobilization as a Ritualized Recursive Process

Moral mobilization is a fundamentally recursive process: mobilizers repeatedly engage with their target audiences to draw moral boundaries and galvanize them through the dramatic revelation of transgressive behavior, which further consolidates these boundaries. Repeated participation in “righteous” violence crystallizes the symbolic boundaries—for example, between the “exploited” masses and the “exploiter” class—that political actors initially impose,⁵⁹ and builds in-group solidarity between those on the side of the moral boundary that views itself as victimized. Moral mobilization strengthens feelings of solidarity between political actors who mobilize violence and their civilian constituency by making the latter complicit in the execution of “rough justice” against those deemed morally transgressive.⁶⁰

Members of newly constituted in-groups need not believe that they are actually victimized or oppressed in order for these boundaries to matter. Repeated performance of an act, in contrast to beliefs, is sufficient to make an identity real.⁶¹ A person’s behavior and perceived group affiliation, whether adopted or imposed, reveals boundaries that determine how others regard the person; in this sense, group boundaries work from the “outside in” to influence individual behavior and affect an individual’s life chances.⁶²

METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESES

To illustrate how the Party used moral mobilization to foment collective violence, I conduct within-case “systematic process analysis”⁶³ of the Jiangnan and Huaibei regions. My analysis proceeds through each step of the land

reform mobilization process, as described in Chapter 1, to compare and assess hypotheses about the role of class conflict, revenge motives, and moral-emotional factors in mobilizing popular participation in violence. The rest of this section addresses each argument in turn.

Class Conflict. According to a class conflict perspective, the Party would have mobilized participation in violence by appealing to socioeconomic inequality, feelings of relative deprivation, and preexisting class hatred. If the Party were relying on class appeals, it would have tapped into existing discontent over the unequal distribution of economic resources or, if this discontent did not already exist, the Party would have somehow created dissatisfaction with the economic status quo to motivate participation. We would expect little differentiation in the targeting and treatment of landlords—except perhaps according to wealth and perceived success—and we would expect that communities exclusively targeted members of the landed elite.

Revenge Motives. From a revenge perspective, the Party would have mobilized participation in collective violence by actively searching for and encouraging individuals to use their personal disputes and vendettas as the basis for selecting and punishing targets. The ability to punish one's personal enemy would have functioned as a kind of selective incentive that only those who participated in violence could enjoy. In a similar though observationally equivalent process, rural communities, in pledging to cooperate with cadres to carry out collective violence, would have cloaked their personal vendettas in the language of class struggle to exact revenge against private enemies.⁶⁴ The intensity and prevalence of these preexisting rivalries would then predict levels of participation in collective violence.

Moral-Emotional Factors. Conversely, the moral-emotional perspective asserts that the Party mobilized participation in violence through leveraging a community's norms of right and wrong to provoke their moral outrage against certain individuals typecast as a morally retrograde "other." Perceiving that villagers lack class consciousness, officials would engage in moral boundary work to create new participation identities based on community assessments of individuals' good or bad behavior—for example, poor villagers will participate as "the oppressed." This would be reflected in communities choosing targets not according to class affiliation but rather according to their perceived moral violations. The Party would have used sensationalized accounts of moral transgression to provoke outrage and demands for violence; it would not be exploiting fear of these groups. Violence mobilized

against these targets would differentiate between targets based on the perceived gravity of these violations.

By weighing these competing perspectives, I argue here that the Party found a middle ground: through moral mobilization, the Party mobilized violence by identifying and emphasizing moral transgressions among members of the landed elite—the Party’s targeted group—to frame them as morally reprehensible. Because the Party intended to target the landed elite, it guided communities to choose targets who existed in *the overlap between moral offenders and the local elite*. This meant that while many targets belonged to the landed elite, a sizable number of targets were chosen purely on the basis of their perceived moral transgressions. Furthermore, the participation identities forged through moral boundary work compelled land-poor villagers to participate as “the oppressed” primarily and “poor peasants and farmworkers” secondarily. The Party did in fact mobilize outrage against those labeled as class enemies using their perceived moral transgressions, though they also sought to use these “evildoers” to create, by association with the landed elite, a psychological link between wrongdoing and class identity. Figure 6 presents the sequence of key mechanisms that comprise the process of moral mobilization. For each conceptualized mechanism, I summarize the key empirical observable implications that must be present to support this argument.⁶⁵

To clarify, I define *participants in collective violence* as those who *voluntarily* use physical or psychological violence against others in a public group setting as well as those who voluntarily attend such episodes and provide support to direct perpetrators of violence. I consider voluntarily attending an episode of collective violence to be the most minimal form of participation because larger group numbers increase the propensity for collective violence by lowering the emotional threshold for violence and generating peer pressure.⁶⁶ Thus, the outcome of interest here is not simply violence but *voluntary participation in collective violence*. This is a crucial distinction that the Party itself made: Party leaders believed that top-down violence that failed to rely on mass mobilization or on the participation of a small loyal group of civilians would alienate the public. Since the mobilization of collective violence aimed to increase solidarity between the Party and its civilian perpetrators, the goal was to find ways to win over popular support for the use of violence rather than to coerce it or carry it out directly without public input. Whether or not it was possible, the Party sought active participation over resigned compliance.

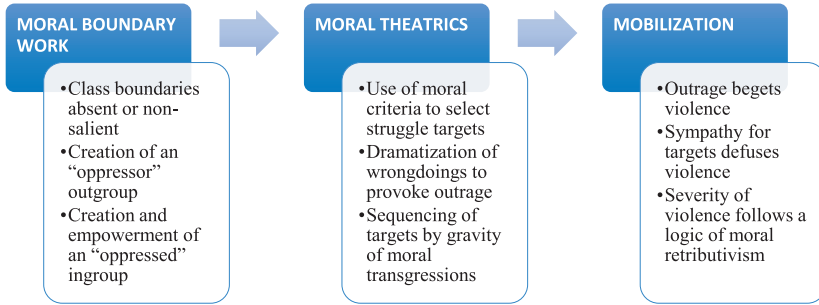


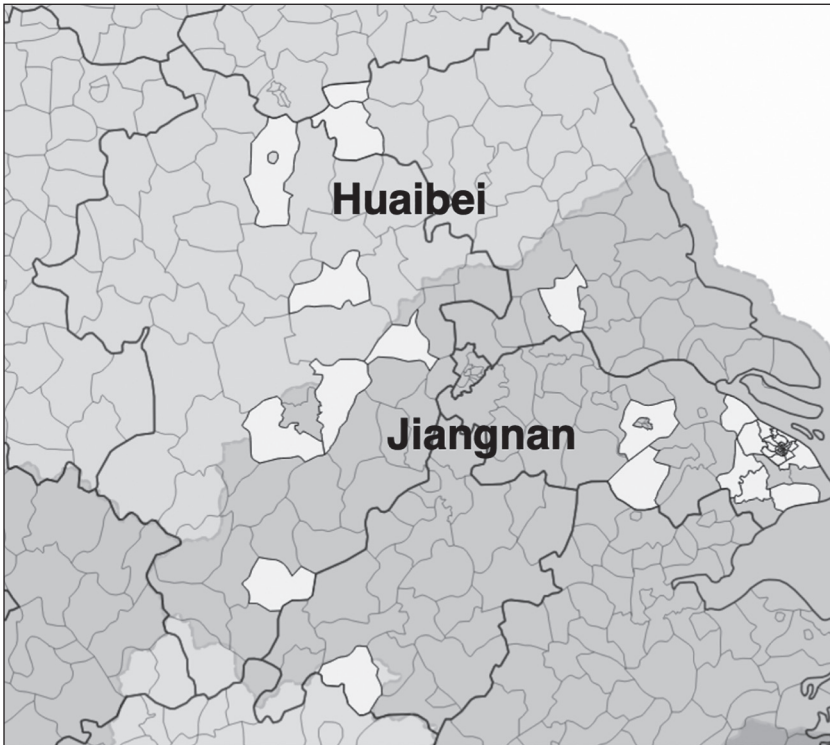
Fig. 6. The Mechanisms and Observable Implications of Moral Mobilization

Because Jiangnan and Huaibei both were under the jurisdiction of the East China Bureau, this case pairing holds macro-level political variables constant—most importantly central-level leadership, policy environment, and the timing of campaign implementation—while allowing for considerable variation in local socioeconomic context. County-level data shows that landholding inequality in Jiangnan was almost double that of Huaibei: Jiangnan’s ratio of landlord per capita landholdings to average per capita landholdings was 8.83 compared to Huaibei’s 4.76; while Jiangnan’s ratio of landlord per capita landholdings to poor peasant was 37.64 to Huaibei’s 22.14. Table 2 reveals that agricultural productivity—that is, grain output per *mu* of land—in Jiangnan was about double that of Huaibei, which reflects, in part, the superiority of the former region’s soil quality and irrigation infrastructure. Importantly, the regions differed in their prerevolutionary patterns of conflict: Jiangnan was a hotbed of rent-based resistance in China, while Huaibei was more notorious for its many antistate and antitax rebellions.

Throughout this chapter, I draw on data from archival documents (档案), internally published Party materials (内部资料), policy directives (指示), diaries (日记), and gazetteers (县志). These archived and internal Party documents come from central bureau-, provincial/regional-, prefecture-, county-, and township-level Party committees, work teams, and, on rare occasion, mass associations. The data cover a broad geographic range within the Jiangnan and Huaibei regions, as Map 3 illustrates. While the south is geographically overrepresented, my data on Fengyang County in the north is particularly extensive, making up for the lack of regional breadth with depth.

TABLE 2. Regional Descriptive Statistics for Jiangnan and Huaibei

Variable	Jiangnan Region	Huaibei Region
Central Bureau	East China	East China
Landholding Inequality	8.83	4.76
Agricultural Productivity	112.14 kg/mu	50.5 kg/mu
Major Crops	Rice; cotton	Wheat; sorghum
Predominant Social Structure	Lineages; high tenancy	Small landholders; low tenancy
Predominant Mode of Peasant Resistance	Antirent	Antitax



Map 3. County-Level Sources of Data from Huaibei and Jiangnan (Highlighted)

MOBILIZING VIOLENCE IN JIANGNAN AND HUAIBEI

Stage 1: Preparatory Work

The mass campaigns of the early 1950s began with extensive investigatory work of local conditions, both economic and social. Work teams and cadres took inventory of landholdings and investigated the political and social boundaries that defined community life to understand the potential obstacles to their mobilization work. Contrary to their expectations, officials operating in both Huaibei and Jiangnan discovered that they could rarely rely on preexisting class consciousness as the principal foundation for political struggle. Not only did locals not view themselves in terms of class categories, but they were afraid of challenging the status quo. In lieu of class hatred toward the landed elite, locals had significant reservations (顾虑) about the Party's longevity and the justness of confiscating and redistributing the property of local elites, and they were genuinely afraid of violent reprisal if they worked with the Communists. In both Jiangnan and Huaibei, class lines were unclear and the locals apathetic.

According to the East China Bureau leadership, out of all of the regions under its control, Jiangnan was home to the most “wily” (狡猾) landlords, whose methods of exploitation and oppression were also the most varied.⁶⁷ Despite these colorful claims, Party inspection teams sent to survey the region struggled to understand local economic relations using official class definitions. A Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee survey of pre-land reform economic conditions stated that the region's interdependence with urban and rural markets in southern Jiangsu made “making sense of [local] class relations extremely complicated” (搞成阶级关系十分复杂).⁶⁸ More shocking was the discovery that class consciousness was weak among Jiangnan villagers.⁶⁹ A local report bemoaned that “the peasants, having been under exploitative feudal rule for so long, have low political awareness (政治认识低落) and are culturally backward (文化落后).”⁷⁰ In Jiading County, which bordered Shanghai and where landlords had twenty times more land than poor peasants,⁷¹ a land reform cadre remarked that she had become an activist during the land reform campaign, not only because she was one of the few literate people in the village, but also because “other people weren't very [politically] active and their political awareness was low.”⁷² An investigative report from Wu County in southern Jiangsu found that “in the sur-

veyed areas [of the county], the peasants and the landlords do not know one another . . . [the peasants'] political consciousness is low.”⁷³

Villagers were not just unenthusiastic about class struggle: they were often scared of working with the Party. Cadres in Wu County reported that locals were frightened of the Party: “The masses were afraid that we had arrived to conscript soldiers and were too scared to come out and work.” They were also not convinced that the Chinese Civil War had truly ended: “[The masses] were unsure if the CCP could completely defeat the Nationalists and believed that the Nationalists were being helped by the Americans.”⁷⁴ An almost pervasive concern among locals was a fear of a “change in heaven” (变天)—that is, that the Communists would not last much longer than their predecessors. If the Party failed to keep in power, many locals feared that the Nationalists would return and massacre those who cooperated with the CCP. Early pre-land reform reports from Baoshan County, right outside of Shanghai, indicate that these fears were severe. Cadres were instructed to first eliminate fears of a “change in heaven” and build confidence in the Communists’ victory before engaging in further organizing work.⁷⁵ “The masses have long been under the Nationalists’ reactionary rule and are suspicious of our Party’s policies,” the Baoshan County Party Committee remarked. “The masses’ reservations are many . . . and there exists a relatively serious ‘change in heaven’ mentality.”⁷⁶

Cadre reports from the north mirror those from the south. The Communists discovered for themselves the febleness of class identity in Huaibei back in the early to middle 1940s during their protracted campaign of rent reduction, when both tenants and landlords resisted their efforts to reduce rents.⁷⁷ Regional inspection reports conducted after 1949 uncovered that class remained a weak cleavage. A summary report by the Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee reported that “some parts of the countryside, due to the dispersion of land, have few landlords and no ‘feudal forces’ (封建势力); [instead] the small peasant economy is predominant.”⁷⁸ Tan Qixiang, the famous Chinese historical geographer who served as a land reform work team official in Su County in northern Anhui, wrote in his diary about the lack of class consciousness among the peasants: “The work over the past several days was difficult; the masses’ hatred toward the landlords is not high, though they bitterly hate the local former officials (顽干) and vagrants (二流子).”⁷⁹ Cadres in northern Anhui were warned to take their time mobilizing locals to participate in class violence because “counterrevolutionary leaders had employed ‘backward feudal ways’ (封建落后的办法) to confuse some of the ‘backward’ masses.”⁸⁰

In the face of low class consciousness and ubiquitous fear, officials could have chosen to emphasize class, revenge, or moral transgressions to create new participation identities that they could use to mobilize mass participation. Committing to a class struggle approach, the Party could have drawn class boundaries based purely on economic definitions of class. Alternatively, it could have exploited revenge impulses and divided communities along pre-existing factional lines. Eschewing both class and revenge motives as the basis for new participation identities, the Party could have focused primarily on moral violations as a means of dividing communities into the oppressed and the oppressors. I suggest here that authorities in Jiangnan and Huaibei resolved to draw class boundaries, albeit roughly, on which they then grafted moral boundaries that set apart victims from transgressors. Class alone was insufficient as a participation identity; it was only through imbuing it with moral meaning that the Party was able to overcome locals' apathy toward landlords. To do so, they ordered the collection of materials on landlords' wrongdoing and convened face-to-face meetings with locals who would use these materials to provoke moral-emotional responses that could reorient the symbolic boundaries that divided local communities *before the formal imposition of economic class boundaries*. Through face-to-face mobilization, the Party explicitly sought to draw new moral boundaries between the landed elite and the rest of the community by discussing episodes of perceived moral transgression that had been collected during the investigation stage or that had been revealed in the course of these meetings.

Moral Boundary Work: Demarcating In-Groups and Out-Groups

Through their extensive accounting of landholdings and exhaustive investigation of local social relations, cadres gathered ammunition that they could use to separate out an out-group of "bad" landlords to juxtapose against the vulnerable and suffering masses. Waging a "war for sympathy," cadres unearthed examples of moral malfeasance by landed elites to provoke outrage against them and to cultivate sympathy for ordinary villagers they allegedly abused. This collection of incriminating materials on landlords and other authority figures occurred throughout the land reform campaign, though much of it was to be done in its earliest stages.

In Jiangnan, the Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee released a notice (通知) regarding the collection of personal information and other materials on the "historical [pre-1949] crimes and illegal saboteur behavior" of landlords in the region, with a particular focus on their "methods and

styles of feudal exploitation, tyrannical behavior, etc.”⁸¹ Indeed, it encouraged locals to report any information that could expose the landlords’ “shameless plots” (无耻阴谋). The Party was particularly concerned by the landed elites’ and intellectuals’ attempts to portray the rural power structure in a sympathetic light. It accused the landlord class in southern Jiangsu of actively “muddling” the class consciousness of the masses with “absurd arguments” (谬论) like “there is no feudalism in southern Jiangsu” (苏南无封建), and it aimed to counter these spurious claims through “the use of a massive amount of material on the crimes of the feudal system” (用大量的封建剥削制度的罪恶材料).⁸² The Regional Party Committee instructed cadres to focus their collection efforts on “evil tyrants,” especially those accused of having committed murder.⁸³ Cadres attempted to locate vivid, detailed stories of landlord abuse. In southern Anhui, Qimen County’s land reform work report highlighted an example of an abusive landlord who beat a peasant for not carrying his sedan chair and flipped a table of food and wine at another peasant’s daughter’s wedding.⁸⁴ These kinds of revelations of landlord wrongdoings, the Party wagered, would help break through villagers’ apathy.

Cadres in the north proceeded in a similar fashion. Fengyang County’s November 1949 summary work report, in a section entitled “How to Organize Key-Point Struggles,” spelled out the proper procedure for collecting materials on bandits and evil tyrants, a remarkably meticulous process of researching local grievances and channeling them into organized struggle sessions. In particular, it ordered cadres to figure out “the political situation in the entire village,” how sympathetic each village was to the Communist cause, and which “bandits and tyrants the masses hated” (群众对哪些匪霸仇恨), so as to use them as preliminary potential targets for class struggle.⁸⁵

The collection of these incriminating materials figured heavily into how the Party conducted moral boundary work to inculcate in the peasantry a new participation identity as the oppressed “masses” vis-à-vis the oppressive “landlord class.” At small face-to-face meetings known as “informal chats” (漫谈会; 座谈会) and “small groups” (小组), Party work team members, cadres, and villagers in Jiangnan reviewed collected materials and listened to locals’ grievances. These meetings were nominally for the purpose of propagandizing land reform policy, but they also involved a process of “emancipating the heart” (翻心): cadres used these meetings to “enlighten” (启发) the masses as to how their poverty was ultimately rooted in their exploitation by the landlord class; these efforts would then “advance and incite their

desire for revenge against the landlords” (进而激发其对地主的复仇心理).⁸⁶ In these meetings—which could last hours at a time over several days—cadres guided locals to dredge up old and recent grievances and to share them with the small group. This was a remarkably time-intensive process: working in Su County of northern Anhui, Tan Qixiang records in his journal that his land reform work team first met with the poor peasants and farmhands to listen to their grievances, then convened several other meetings, and returned to have “informal chats” with those who had grievances, staying with them until late at night. The work team, Tan remarks, was overwhelmed by the intensity of the work (应接不暇).⁸⁷

Through informal chats and small group meetings, the Party explicitly sought to draw a moral boundary between the landed elite and the rest of the community by discussing episodes of perceived moral transgression that had been collected during the investigation stage or that had been revealed in the course of these meetings. The Fengyang County committee instructed cadres to use them as opportunities to bring out preorganized materials on evil tyrants “to whip up the broad masses into a craze” (给广大群众造成热潮). One example taken from Lushan District noted that cadres had used cartoons to illustrate how an evil tyrant had brought thugs to beat a villager to death, which had made the masses particularly amenable to subjecting him to harsh political struggle.⁸⁸ In Chengbei Township of Fengyang County, the Party also had the masses “mull over” (酝酿) the incriminating materials it had collected on those landlords suspected of the “most heinous crimes” (罪大恶极).⁸⁹

In drawing moral boundaries, the Party sought to translate individual suffering or virtue into group suffering or virtue, and individual transgression into group transgression through “speaking bitterness” (诉苦)—that is, the public venting of one’s woes. Informal chats and small groups provided safe spaces for poor peasants and farmworkers—and middle peasants—to “speak bitterness” in focus group-like settings before their fellow villagers. Speaking bitterness collectivized suffering as a way of building in-group solidarity while simultaneously building hostility toward the landed elite. “Speaking bitterness is the fundamental method of organizing the masses to demolish the power and influence of the landlord class,” a leading official from the Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee declared. “[Its] objective is to inspire the class consciousness of the masses, reveal the crimes of the landlord class, and unite and organize the masses to consciously struggle against the landlord class.”⁹⁰

It is crucial to understand that cadres used individual instances of landlord malfeasance to establish hostility toward landlords *as a group*. In Jiangnan, a county Party committee emphasized that during speaking-bitterness sessions cadres were to clarify for villagers that “bitterness is *what the landlord class has given us,*” ensuring that not only did they realize who was to blame for their woes but that the woes of one were the woes of all.⁹¹ A cadre from a township in Baoshan County remarked on the efficacy of “using the landlords’ schemes and tricks to educate the peasants.”⁹² Elsewhere, in a township in Wu County, a landlord had tried to rip up the list of villagers’ names and class labels and bribe a deputy village head to give himself a less damning class label. After he was caught, his case and the public self-criticism and testimony of the deputy village head in question was used in small group meetings across the township as an example of landlord “wiliness” to kick-start speaking-bitterness sessions among the locals and to raise their “class consciousness.”⁹³ To be fair, cadres did engage in general class education that focused more on the “feudal” class as an inherently oppressive system. Small group meetings of the poorest members of the community would often include a discussion of issues and questions such as “how to be the master of one’s own fate (做主), how to emancipate oneself (翻身), who exploits whom (谁剥削谁), and who provides for whom (谁养活谁).”⁹⁴ Nevertheless, this kind of simple class analysis was conducted in conjunction with exhaustive efforts to find specific examples of transgressive behavior that could be used to conflate class with moral failings.

Moral boundary work not only leveraged outrage to create an out-group of class enemies, it simultaneously used commiseration to build in-group solidarity. Speaking bitterness in small groups and informal chats sought to generate in-group solidarity among “the masses” by eliciting villagers’ sympathy toward the suffering. Officials designated those who spoke suffering as “the aggrieved” (苦主)—literally, “masters of bitterness”—and guided and trained them to deliver their stories in the most effective way possible. Speaking bitterness, as Anagnost notes, was “not the spontaneous flow of pent-up sorrow but the careful reworking of perception and experience into the narrative frame of Marxist class struggle.”⁹⁵ Thus, successful speaking bitterness entailed exhuming one’s past suffering and conveying it in great detail and in context to an audience so that they themselves could feel suffering. In Huaibei, this contagion of sentiment appeared to succeed. Township cadres in Fengyang County reported that speaking bitterness succeeded to the extent that when “a single person spoke bitterness, everyone sympathized”

(一人诉苦，大家同情).⁹⁶ Elsewhere in Fengyang, a township's small group meeting had thirteen people speak to the group about their plight and how they lived on the brink of starvation without land or draft animals. Touting the success of this session, the report notes that "there were three people at the meeting who 'spoke bitterness' until they were in tears. Class consciousness, therefore, greatly increased."⁹⁷

Last, moral boundary work empowered this newly created in-group to take political power and exact justice from those who allegedly wronged them. Aside from providing a space for the expression of one's suffering, informal chats and small group meetings actively situated these grievances in a larger political context and sought to empower peasants to feel that they could act on the conviction that they, as victims, had the right to seek vengeance against their oppressors. It was standard practice for cadres leading these meetings to bring up fundamental questions about why the poor are poor and "who provides for whom (谁养活谁)?"⁹⁸ Through these guided discussions, cadres sought to empower villagers, to "establish among [the poor peasants and farmworkers] a mentality of being masters of their own fate (当家做主的思想)."⁹⁹ These meetings were also critical in helping peasants shed their fears about the Party's new moral framework. A report on Fangxiang Township in Jiangdu County, in analyzing the success of mobilization efforts in the various villages under its jurisdiction, attributed the noteworthy success of one village to its use of informal chats:

[The cadres working in the village] had a good grasp of proper propaganda work. For example, the poor and tenant farmers refused to join the Peasant Association *because they were still scared of a "change in heaven" (变天)*, of the return of the old central government, of being illiterate and being useless in the Peasant Association, etc. So once the leadership discovered these concerns, *they held informal chats (漫谈会) and different kinds of other meetings in order to explain and educate the peasants about the situation at hand.*¹⁰⁰

Another village in the same township, according to the report, had failed to mobilize the peasantry because "they convened meetings of the poor, farmworkers, and middle peasants without any objective in mind." Instead, the report recommended: "It should also be repeatedly stressed [in these meetings] how to be the master of one's own fate (做主), how to emancipate oneself (翻身), who exploits whom (谁剥削谁), and who provides for whom (谁养活谁); this is the only way to raise the consciousness of the poor and farm-

worker peasant class.”¹⁰¹ Repeated education, officials in Wu County reported, dispelled the poor peasants and farmworkers’ hesitations regarding land redistribution, as they could now speak of it “confidently with justice on their side” (理直气壮).¹⁰²

Cadres spent an extraordinary amount of attention and time to psychologically “breaking through” (打通) the mindsets of the individual villagers. There is limited evidence regarding the effectiveness of this slow, methodical process of moral boundary work, though, as will be discussed later, participation was more difficult to mobilize where this boundary work was absent. In one stunning example, cadres spent a month to sever the emotional bond that tied a farmworker to his landlord:

Ji Xiaocheng was a farmworker in Gao Aohan’s household and “was numbed by his landlord” (受了地主的麻痹) and thought that his landlord was guilty of no crime, but after a month of having his thinking straightened out (打通思想) and class education, he was brave enough to speak bitterness against his landlord and spoke until he broke down in tears; as a result, he no longer lives with his landlord.¹⁰³

While it is unclear whether Ji Xiaocheng’s landlord had actually wronged him, local cadres were determined to transform his understanding of his hitherto ambivalent relationship with his employer. Those who underwent this kind of moral boundary work during the preparatory stage of land reform spoke of it in markedly psychological terms. A local pastor in the suburbs of Shanghai described his experience in land reform as follows: “Two months of land reform ‘class’ (大课) have clarified (澄清) my thirty-years-old way of thinking and have made me capable of distinguishing between right and wrong (使我能辨别是非).”¹⁰⁴

Contrary to what a revenge-based argument might predict, cadres used commiseration and outrage to build collective identities, eschewing examples of transgression that were overly specific to a handful of feuding locals. As the People’s Liberation Army marched southward into Shanghai and the territories that would comprise the East China Bureau, central leaders commanded local cadres to intervene to prevent revenge-based violence. Mao himself ordered cadres to “forbid peasant organizations to enter the city to seize landlords and settle scores with them.”¹⁰⁵ At the county and village level, Party reports cautioned work teams to avoid becoming entangled in local factional and interpersonal conflict, as it would weaken the Party’s

control over the mobilization process. In the north, the Fengyang County Party Committee lamented that some struggle sessions had devolved into chaos, in some cases because “impure village cadres” had turned the struggle sessions into clan-based factional conflicts (宗派斗争).¹⁰⁶ In the south, the Baoshan County Party Committee reminded its cadres that it was their duty to be “impartial and not factional . . . and not to serve [merely] as the mouth-piece of the masses.”¹⁰⁷ Importantly, the Party sought participants whose “bitterness” represented a transgression that applied to the entire community—“the masses” (群众)—as opposed to petty interpersonal conflict. Official policy discouraged tapping into purely interpersonal or factional conflict precisely because these revenge-based accusations would not be inclusive enough to mobilize the community as a whole against the struggle target. Collective identities of “the masses” and “class enemies” could not cohere around indiscriminate violence that did not fit into a plausible narrative about class struggle.

STAGE 2: TARGET SELECTION

Central policy directed Party work teams and Peasant Associations to distribute class labels on the basis of landholdings and sources of income; however, the criteria for the selection of struggle targets—those who would be subjected to violent political struggle—were relatively unclear, and localities had considerable leeway in how they chose targets. This process of identification and prescription of punishment went one step further beyond the small group meetings, which attempted to situate grievances in a larger moral context and cultivate a shared identity among the poorest segments of society. This next stage attempted to use these newly moralized social boundaries to separate out the exploited masses and those who had committed real or perceived “crimes” (罪恶) against them—in essence, to reinforce the newly imposed symbolic boundary that divided oppressors from the oppressed.

One of the most obvious implications of a class-based explanation of collective violence is that communities would have targeted landlords exclusively, mainly according to their wealth. County-level data reveal that target selection was indeed selective: only a small proportion of those given bad class labels and an even smaller proportion of the overall population was subjected to collective violence. Looking across counties in the East China

Bureau, only about 9 percent of those labeled as landlords became struggle targets. This number is most likely a high estimate since it assumes that all struggle targets were labeled a landlord, which is simply not true.¹⁰⁸ Granular data separating struggle targets by class label are rare, and where these data do exist it is clear that a significant proportion of struggle targets were not formally labeled as landlords. For example, Fuqing County in Fujian Province reported that only 65 percent of its 495 struggle targets were landlords.¹⁰⁹ As the case studies of Baoshan and Fengyang in Chapter 5 indicate, a sizable proportion of struggle targets were not formally labeled as landlords.

Although villagers and work teams did assign class labels using economic criteria, they often added prefixes to class labels or even additional labels that described targets' perceived transgressions. Within the general category of "landlord" there was a distinction between "regular landlords" (一般地主) and "unlawful landlords" (不法地主). Unlawful landlords, according to official East China Bureau regulations, included anyone who engaged in any kind of behavior that "sabotaged" land reform (破坏土改)—for example, selling off or destroying one's property; killing livestock; spreading rumors; sowing discord or promoting factional conflict among the locals; or bribing, intimidating, or killing or harming others.¹¹⁰ As will be discussed later, unlawful landlords were more likely to become targets of political violence than those defined merely by their economic position. One of the most common prefixes was a term that the Communists borrowed from the peasantry: "evil tyrant" (恶霸). Evil tyrant was a general label used to describe local strongmen, many of whom were also landlords—and thus labeled "evil tyrant landlords" (恶霸地主)—because they had amassed land and power by serving as "entrepreneurial brokers" who collected taxes and maintained the public order for the Nationalist state or the Japanese.¹¹¹

Separating the Good from the Bad

The moral differentiation of landlords was explicitly outlined and encouraged in Party documents. In Jiangnan, the Songjiang Prefectural Party Committee cautioned that "power-holding landlords are not all evil tyrants because they have not held power for very long and *have not had enough time to commit all kinds of crimes* (胡作妄为)." The Committee emphasized instead that "the landlords and evil tyrants *who are hated bitterly by the masses are the main power-holders* but not [necessarily] the current power-holding clique (当

权派)。” The report continues: “[We] must proceed from *concrete situations, people, and facts*, especially the *masses’ demands* . . . and not from abstract concepts (抽象的概念).”¹¹² The core of the definition of terms like “landlord” and “evil tyrant,” therefore, was rooted more in the way the local population viewed these people and their past behaviors, than in the amount of power they currently held. The exhortation to focus on “concrete situations, people, and facts” instead of “abstract concepts” suggests that the Party wanted local cadres to flexibly adapt these definitions of class to local social realities.

The Party and local communities spared sympathetic figures from class struggle, regardless of class label, because landlords who lacked any clear transgressions—or who could not be framed as transgressive—were not amenable to moral theatrics. In northern Jiangsu, authorities instructed cadres to “sort out the bad elements from the average law-abiding landlord.”¹¹³ A report on land reform from Fengxian County to the Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee claimed that it implemented the policy of “striking correctly” (打得准) by differentially punishing targets according to their crimes; those who were “innocent” of any such crimes escaped any kind of punishment: “Those who were . . . spared were mainly small landlords, [and] orphaned or widowed landlords.”¹¹⁴ Authorities in Si County in Huaibei reported that they spared “enlightened landlords and landlords against whom there was little public indignation.”¹¹⁵ The Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee stated that “average landlords who have not committed major evil acts and are not hated by the people but perhaps may have evinced some sabotage behavior, if they actively apologized to the masses before or during the land reform movement, then they may be spared from struggle, though they should be urged to reform themselves through their labor.”¹¹⁶ In Jiangnan, southern Jiangsu officials observed that locals used the People’s Courts to punish “whomever is bad” (谁坏, 就送谁上人民法庭).¹¹⁷

Importantly, the CCP advocating perceived transgressions against local communities over political ones against the Party as a way of currying popular support. The Chuxian Prefectural Party Committee in northern Anhui recommended that local cadres focus on perceived crimes committed against the local community, not the Party, in their propaganda work: “*Harmful acts against the people* should be privileged over those against the Party,” it argued. “This is the only way we can gain the majority of *the masses’ sympathy* for our method of handling matters (只有这样才能争取大多数群众对我处理之同情).”¹¹⁸

Drawing a moral boundary to separate “good” from “bad” classes not only facilitated justifying and encouraging violence against those framed as evildoers, it also allowed room for those with bad class labels to express their loyalty to the Party and the masses without changing their actual class designation.¹¹⁹ The southern Jiangsu Party leadership advocated winning over the support of the majority of those labeled as landlords, while only “attacking a minority, crushing them one by one” (打击少数,各个击破) with a focus on “evil tyrants, large landlords and those ‘obstinate landlords’” (顽固地主) who resisted Party policy, while refraining from attacking “average landlords” (一般地主). Left-leaning landlords could even be used to oppose their “obstinate” counterparts.¹²⁰ In the Shanghai suburbs, officials were instructed to tell landlords: “[You have] three paths: if you sabotage, I will repress you; if you obey, I will be magnanimous; if you are ‘enlightened’ [fully embrace the Communist cause], I will take care of you. It is up to you to choose.”¹²¹ At times, the Party used explicitly moral language to suggest to those with bad class labels that there was still hope for them if they behaved well and, if they had been accused of something, changed their “wicked ways.” The Baoshan County Party Committee directed cadres to gather landlords and rich peasants to tell them, “Going along with Chiang Kai-shek to do *bad things* (做坏事) is a dead end. Your prospects are good if you *honestly follow the people* (老老实实跟着人民走) . . . abide by the law and *do good deeds to atone for your crimes* (立功赎罪).”¹²² This option to express loyalty, however, was only available to individuals with bad class labels whom the Party and the masses deemed not culpable for significant moral and political transgressions.

STAGE 3: STAGING MASS RALLIES

After imposing these boundaries and choosing targets for collective violence, the Party set about to galvanize the local community’s righteous indignation and participation in violence against selected offenders. Because class enemies were defined in terms of their moral turpitude, cadres could readily justify violent reprisal against them, especially by tapping into the public’s outrage. To do this, the CCP used struggle sessions and public sentencing to provoke the outrage of the local community against targets of violence. These well-orchestrated, highly theatrical public meetings

appealed directly to the moral sentiments of the local community who were expected to evaluate the behavior and character of those targeted for violence. The rest of this section reviews the major observable implications for a moral mobilization argument: (1) how cadres employed moral-emotional evidence and sequenced struggle targets to provoke and sustain outrage; (2) how outrage mobilized and escalated violence, while the lack of outrage demobilized villagers; and (3) how the severity of violence used was tailored, roughly, to the perceived gravity of the target's transgression.

Moral-Emotional Evidence, Sequencing, and the Elicitation of Sympathy and Outrage

Struggle sessions and public sentencings required an enormous amount of preparation. While these events were meant to be mass participatory affairs, the Party heavily managed and staged them like theatrical productions.¹²³ A 1949 report from Chuxian Prefecture on organizing public sentencing meetings for bandits and evil tyrants advised the following:

Prepare well before public sentencing sessions (公审会). Think through how to prepare verdicts (判决书), public notices (布告), verbal testimonies (口供), and the people's written accusations (状子). It's best to have both eyewitnesses and physical evidence. The meeting place should be well organized—that is, [decide] who will attend, to avoid accidents or anything else that might have ill-effects (以免意外或造成不良影响).¹²⁴

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

2. Carry out education:
 - i. Organize a meeting of reliable activists and some aggrieved households; conduct research about the bandits and tyrants; research everyone's grievances; discuss which aggrieved households were wronged by which bandits and tyrants and who will dare to struggle and who will not . . . and establish a reporting system.
 - ii. Organize a meeting of Party members, old and new activists, and

- aggrieved households, carry out antityrant education . . . decide who will lead the speaking-bitterness session . . . decide who will be the [struggle] targets. . . .
- iii. Explain the schedule for the struggle session . . . notify friends and neighbors and spare no effort to propagandize that a struggle session will be held.
 - iv. Hold a village-wide meeting of aggrieved households, [discuss] how to kick off the struggle session . . . compile a list [of participants], settle the order, each person will “speak bitterness” how many times, go through drills.¹²⁵

Just before the struggle session began, activists prepared the site and distributed tea, while the local militia stationed itself at the site to keep order.¹²⁶ The public delivery of personal stories of woe—a key component of these mass meetings—also required preparation. In Fenglin District of Fengyang County, accusers were organized into small groups and given training before struggle sessions, in which work team cadres individually gave the participants policy instructions and explained to them how to “speak bitterness.” The work team emphasized that they should provide concrete reasons and details and quickly get to the “bitter parts” (速出苦处) when relating their tales of personal woe before the crowd.¹²⁷ “Speaking bitterness cannot be used recklessly,” an official cautioned. Only after full preparations have been made can it be used, “at a proper time and against a proper target (一定的场合使用一定的对象).”¹²⁸

Because moral mobilization aimed to rouse up the indignation of “the masses” (群众) against moral transgressors, cadres were careful to ensure that those participating in the struggle sessions represented a broad spectrum of the local community in terms of age and gender. This was a difficult process, as the young tended to participate more readily than the old and men were more willing to participate than women. The Changhuai District Party Committee reported that in Dongwan Village of Fengyang County cadres struggled to simultaneously mobilize men and women, and they were able to mobilize young women more easily than older women. Despite these difficulties, the village managed to cobble together a somewhat diverse array of participants: sixty-six people—forty-one men, nineteen women, and six children—“spoke bitterness” against six landlords, four of whom were struggled against two to four times.¹²⁹

Many localities delineated outlines of procedures to collect persuasive

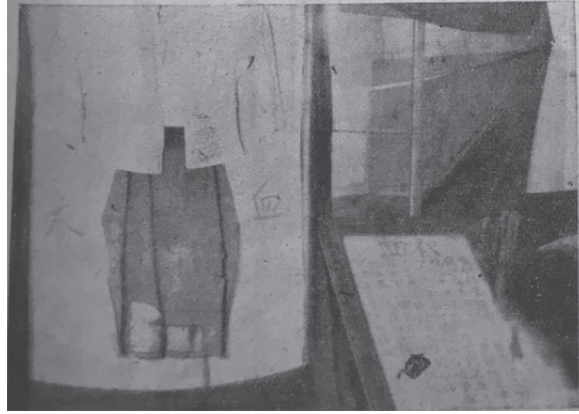
evidence of the “crimes” of struggle targets. Of course we cannot assess the veracity of this “evidence,” but the Party’s serious concern with investigating local conditions and finding truthful and persuasive evidence of wrongdoings against the community indicates its desire to use reasonable—or reasonable-sounding—claims of sufferings and injustice to mobilize moral outrage. Evidence against class enemies was supposed to be extremely detailed and rich; in fact, those who had plentiful evidence against them were often struggled against first. A Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee report emphasized that cadres and locals should collect extensive “eyewitness material” on landlords, including the time and location of the offense. “The more vivid, concrete, and detailed, the better (越生动具体详细越好),” the report continued. “Be sure not to have holes [in the evidence] or stray from reality (切忌空洞不符合实际).” The report even called for the careful photographic documentation of material evidence, such as bloody clothing, murder weapons, rent receipts, hidden wealth, granary placards, burned-down houses, organized riots, and so on, which was then to be sent to the county government for storage and inspection.¹³⁰

These materials would be used for dramatic effect at mass meetings. For example, in Youzhu Township in Jiangyin County, a father and mother riled up the crowd by presenting to them the bones of their son, who was slain by a spy.¹³¹ The importance and effectiveness of evidentiary materials at struggle sessions were such that a Chaohu Prefecture report instructed cadres not to recruit too many people to speak bitterness and rather to amass persuasive and moving materials to present at struggle sessions.¹³²

Particularly moving stories with vivid evidence were saved for use in public exhibitions after the land reform movement ended. An elderly woman in Baoxi Township, Chongming County, presented the bloody clothing of her son who had been killed by an evil tyrant landlord twelve years prior, leaving behind three orphaned children; in recounting the story she cried herself hoarse on stage, prompting others to break down sobbing, after which they subjected the man to ferocious struggle (做到变仇恨为力量).¹³³ The bloody clothing was then saved and used in a public exhibition, where the evidence and story could be shared with a wider audience (see Fig. 7).¹³⁴

Speaking-bitterness testimonials enraged the crowd against the transgressor but importantly also elicited sympathy for the accusers—the “aggrieved.” Work teams specifically tried to recruit women and the elderly to speak bitterness at struggle sessions because they believed they could better earn the sympathy of the masses. In Liyang County in southern Jiangsu,

Fig. 7. Bloody Clothing from Baoxi Township in Chongming County Used at a Public Exhibition on Land Reform. Zhong-gong Subei Qu Weiyuanhui Nongcun Gongzuo Weiyuanhui, ed. *Documents on Land Reform in Northern Jiangsu*. 1952.



cadres, in their collection of speaking-bitterness material, discovered that nearly two hundred local women had been raped by Japanese soldiers. They used these women's stories to "educate the broad masses" about the evils of the old feudal order, but, more importantly, to help locals "understand the roots of their own suffering" (使群众认识了自己受苦受罪的根源). From this, the Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee concluded that "in the struggle against feudal evil tyrants and landlords, women are the most powerful force in sparking the class consciousness of the masses" (在整个反封建恶霸, 地主的斗争中, 妇女是启发群众阶级觉悟的的最大动力).¹³⁵ These sympathetic figures helped create feelings of commiseration that cadres could shape into violent outrage. In Feidong County, the deft use of materials during a public sentencing of a counterrevolutionary made peasants sympathize with the accuser and call for "chopping off the head of this poisonous snake" (斩去这条毒蛇).¹³⁶

Cadres were meticulous in their sequencing of struggle targets according to the moral-emotional content of their alleged transgressions. One of the most powerful elements of moral mobilization was its ability to arouse outrage toward perceived moral transgressors, which could be harnessed to use violence against other targets who were accused of much milder, often political, offenses or against whom there was weak evidence. The rationale was that attacking the most hated local figures at the beginning of the campaign could mobilize popular enthusiasm for violence against subsequent targets. This recalls Goldberg et al.'s "intuitive prosecutor mindset" and the "spill-over effect" of outrage: when political actors mobilize outrage against a

clearly defined transgressor who is perceived to have escaped justice, these feelings of outrage persist to shape how participants judge subsequent, unrelated offenders, whom they are far more likely to punish harshly than if they were not outraged.¹³⁷

By first attacking targets who could be best portrayed as contemptible, officials harnessed and sustained the righteous rage of the crowd to use against several targets during a struggle session. “After increasing [class] awareness through speaking bitterness,” a southern Anhui report stated, “you may carry out struggle against the worst evil tyrant landlords (最坏的恶霸地主) when the broad masses demand it.”¹³⁸ In Huaibei, Fengyang County’s “Yaowan Township Land Reform Work Summary” instructed local cadres to “struggle against big ones first” (先斗大的).¹³⁹ In some cases this sequencing strategy was used spatially as well as temporally. Less than a month after the initiation of the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries in Chuansha County, right outside of Shanghai, Chengxiang Town held a massive public sentencing rally for four “bandits” who had been found guilty of the most heinous crimes and were most hated by the people (罪大恶极·民愤极大). Following this, each district in the county held public sentencing to subjugate “chief evildoers” (首恶分子).¹⁴⁰ If targets had both moral and political offenses, cadres emphasized the lurid accusations. A meeting in northern Anhui on experiences in mobilization argued that “heads of reactionary secret societies and undercover spies, if they are also evil tyrants, bandit leaders, or unlawful landlords, should be suppressed and handled as evil tyrants, bandits, or unlawful landlords, as this can more easily enlighten the masses’ class consciousness and secure the public’s sympathy.”¹⁴¹

During the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries in Fengyang County in Huaibei, the county kicked off the movement with a countywide public trial, attended by over ten thousand locals, that brought together forty of the “biggest criminals” in the county, whom the Party had primed to be “hated to the bone by the masses.” After the countywide trial, each district held its own trials, focusing mainly on “the most evil and criminal counterrevolutionaries” and discussing their crimes in small groups. To further emphasize the transgressiveness of these counterrevolutionaries, the districts even held “exhibitions” of counterrevolutionary crimes that, according to the local government, “eliminated the worries of the masses and increased their consciousness,” spurring them to cooperate more with the government in detaining bandits and informing on other counterrevolutionaries.¹⁴²

Significantly, the sequencing or pairing of perceived moral transgressors and those accused of “sabotaging land reform” (破坏土改) allowed cadres to mobilize outrage and encourage violence against *both* moral and political offenders, especially if they were being punished at the same struggle session. A report on land reform in Fengxian County in southern Jiangsu explained the rationale and effectiveness of this sequencing strategy:

At the beginning of the movement, [we] struggled against and suppressed counterrevolutionary bandits and agents (反革命匪特) who had been locked up for a year and the power-holding clique of evil tyrants in the entire county and/or district (全县全区性的恶霸当权派). Quickly taking care of this group of people was very effective in raising the fighting spirit of the masses (斗志). After the campaign was in full gear, the spearhead [of the campaign] was directed toward evil tyrants, power-holding landlords, and unlawful landlords. Former cadres at the township level and above were almost all struggled against.¹⁴³

Essentially, the Party put the “worst offenders” for whom there was the most “compelling” evidence to initiate a wave of mass violence. Countywide statistics on executions of land reform “criminals” from Baoshan County reveal that cadres organized the public executions of four “evil tyrant landlords” just before the official launch of the land reform campaign, after which an additional twenty-one “evil tyrants” were executed, along with eight spies, two counterrevolutionaries, and other assorted political offenders.¹⁴⁴ In Feixi County, which straddles the Huaibei-Jiangnan border in Anhui, the public execution of an evil tyrant spurred locals to participate more fervently in the land reform campaign: “[Following the execution], before finishing their meals, the masses went to attend the People’s Courts to sentence unlawful landlords.”¹⁴⁵ In an eyewitness account of a struggle session in Jiangdu County, situated on the periphery of the Jiangnan region, a former land reform official remarked that the organizers had paired moral transgressors with those who had merely resisted the land reform campaign:

The old man was seventy-eight; he was a local “evil tyrant landlord” (恶霸地主) who had hounded people to death (逼死过人). The young one was thirty-three; his crime was concealing his land deed and “preparing a counterattack” (准备反攻倒). Although I was young at the time and didn’t really understand the law, I always thought that killing people like this was too careless.

Especially that young landlord—it was indeed questionable if he should have been killed for his crime.¹⁴⁶

Although this land reform official morally opposed the use of violence against both targets *ex post*, this distinction was blurred—intentionally—during the struggle session itself. If the Party were solely concerned with using class identity as a means of mobilizing the masses, it either would have not worried about sequencing or pairing targets as such; if it were mainly concerned about class, it would have focused on struggling against the wealthiest members of the community first. This is simply not the case.¹⁴⁷

Mobilizing and Escalating Violence through Outrage

While the presentation of moral-emotional evidence helped provoke outrage and sympathy from the crowd, cadres' moral boundary work helped justify and legitimize the use of this violence by conferring to public denouncers the title of “the aggrieved” (苦主). As victims, these people were legitimized in “spontaneously” beating, if not killing, the actual victims of violence on stage next to them; and members of the audience were similarly justified in participating. While this contradicted official policy, which proscribed “reckless beatings and killings” (乱打乱杀)—the Party was concerned with losing control of the violence it mobilized—cadres were encouraged to be sympathetic, and often were naturally sympathetic, to the perpetrators of this uncontrolled violence. A directive on land reform mass mobilization recommended not restraining villagers: “When some peasants in the course of struggle are agitated by *righteous indignation* (义愤) and spontaneously attack landlords, we do not right then and there pour cold water [on them], which would hurt the masses' mood.”¹⁴⁸ A Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee land reform report cites two examples of “spontaneous” violence induced by the morally charged atmosphere of struggle sessions and public sentencings:

At the public sentencing of landlord XX in Suining County, an old grandma beat a landlord twice with her cane while sobbing and speaking bitterness [against him], because her family fell apart after her son was killed. In XX Township of Pisui County, the little sister of a village head spontaneously slapped a landlord who raped her and called him an animal.¹⁴⁹

The report also mentions instances of people hitting struggle targets in the face with their shoes and even organizing groups to beat people up (打人团). Yet the regional Party committee attributed these instances of violence to the understandable outrage of those who had been wronged by these struggle targets; they suggested cadres tolerate and sympathize with this violent behavior, which they claimed was also widely supported by the spectating crowds.¹⁵⁰ A report from Anhui similarly argued that the excesses of violence during struggle sessions came from a place of righteous indignation and that in these instances peasants did indeed beat landlords and force them to crawl and kneel at struggle sessions; however, it excused this behavior because it was “not very vicious” (打得不狠) and because local landlords had continued to resist the land reform campaign.¹⁵¹

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

When a particularly odious individual was up for judgment, well-orchestrated moral theatrics easily roused the crowd to anger and demands for violent retribution, usually execution. During the public sentencing of evil tyrant and landlord Chen XX in Huaining County in southwestern Anhui, an old couple entered the stage, sobbing, to tell the crowd their story of how Chen had beaten their son to death while attempting to settle a debt owed to him, hounded their daughter-in-law to death, and rendered them destitute, causing their newly born grandson to die of starvation. The crowd of over two thousand people was so enraged by the couple’s story that they began to yell, “Down with the evil tyrant landlord—a blood debt must be repaid in blood” (打倒恶霸地主, 血债要用血来还).¹⁵² In Qingpu County, there was an episode of extreme violence where, at the beginning of a struggle session, the crowd flew into such a fury that they beat to death fifteen landlords. The county Party secretary put a stop to the violence and called on other districts to prevent violence from spiraling out of control.¹⁵³ The Party leadership blamed the incident on locals’ extreme hatred of the people being struggled against.¹⁵⁴ Although the leadership labeled this as “class hatred,” those killed had apparently worked with the Japanese to levy grain and were responsible for countless deaths under Nationalist rule:

Because of the numerous “blood debts” (血债) in this region, class hatred burned like fire; *once triggered, it was impossible to hold back*; on top of this were the *heinous crimes* of the landlords, local tyrants, and counterrevolutionaries, who *refused to lower their heads before the masses and admit their errors*, which increased the *unbearable fury of the masses*.¹⁵⁵

The severity of the alleged offenses may explain why locals were so eager to beat and kill, though it is important to note that this outrage was mobilized: “once triggered it was impossible to hold back.”¹⁵⁶ At a struggle session (斗争大会) in Shenshe Township of Jiangyin County, it was reported that “over fifty people had wanted to denounce the former district head and ‘evil tyrant’ (恶霸), Mr. You, but because they had started beating him as soon as the session began, they had already beaten him to death after only two people had finished making their accusations against him.” Losing an opportunity to act on their outrage did not necessarily stop villagers from expressing it. Elsewhere in the same county, an “evil tyrant” who was slated for political struggle escaped custody and hanged himself, fearing his punishment at the hands of fellow villagers. When the locals heard of this the next day, they found his body and cut it apart with knives.¹⁵⁷

Work teams appear to have mobilized people to attend struggle sessions that they believed would appeal to them on some personal level, which could more easily spark outrage in the audience. Five hundred people showed up to a struggle session of a “vagrant woman” accused of being “morally loose,” sowing discord between husbands and wives, and selling several women; two-thirds of the attendees were women. The document noted that the attendees were “*unusually outraged*” by the woman’s behavior and that the struggle experience was especially “moving” for the female attendees.¹⁵⁸ In Fengyang County, struggle sessions were organized at different levels—district, township, or village—according to the gravity of the targets’ crimes and the “scope of their influence” (影响范围). Cadres adjusted the scale of their struggle sessions to accord with the size of the community they were deemed to have wronged, the idea being that the audience at the struggle session would have been personally affected by the offenders’ alleged misdeeds.¹⁵⁹

Still, due to the many moral-emotional barriers to using physical violence,¹⁶⁰ there would often be the issue of who would throw the first punch. As Randall Collins notes in his analysis of the microfoundations of violence, participants need to overcome the “tension and fear” inherent in a violent

confrontation, which means few individuals will actually engage in the physical act of violence itself once they are confronted with their victim, despite having possibly aided in the entire process leading up to the violent act.¹⁶¹ For the Party, the mobilization of collective violence was about politicizing the peasantry and raising their “class awareness”; therefore, Party work teams and cadres were technically not allowed to hit or kill targets because it negated the point of mass-mobilizing participation in collective violence. “Of course, do not artificially manufacture struggle,” a Party report from Baoshan County cautioned. “Otherwise, you will inevitably be ‘acting on behalf of others’ (代替包办), which cannot mobilize the masses.”¹⁶² To resolve this issue, cadres and activists tried to rile up the crowd or call on accusers to initiate physical violence.¹⁶³ For example, in Jiading County’s Beiyong Township, during a public sentencing:

A village cadre yelled from within the crowd, “Do you want to punch him [the struggle target] in the mouth?”

“Yes!” the crowd responded.

“How many times?” the cadre asked.

“Two!”

“Who should do it?”

“The accusers!”

But the accusers said that they had never hit someone before and refused to do so, yet the cadre continued yelling “Hit him!” so they did.¹⁶⁴

Evidently, in this instance, peer pressure from the crowd and the cadre’s continual prodding pushed the accusers to use physical violence;¹⁶⁵ however, the emotionally charged environment that officials created at these rallies primed participants to accept and use physical violence in the absence of additional pressure. It appears that in many instances it was precisely cadres and activists who goaded the enraged crowd to take the final step toward physical violence.

The Logic of Moral Retributivism in Collective Violence

A major observable implication of a moral mobilization argument is that the violence it mobilizes should follow a distinctly retributivist logic—that is, the severity of collective violence used by locals should correlate with the

degree of moral outrage felt toward a target. Thus, we should expect more lethal and brutal violence toward individuals who were the subject of particularly rousing moral theatrics. The subjective perception of the gravity of the original offense matters more than objective reality. As Baumeister argues, there is a “magnitude gap” in which victims tend to perceive transgressions in far more severe terms than their perpetrators; the severity of retaliatory violence often exceeds the severity of the transgression.¹⁶⁶ Thus, I expect that communities will reserve lethal or unusually severe violence and torture for those whom they *perceive* to be “guilty of the most heinous crimes” (罪大恶极) or possess “blood debts” (血债),¹⁶⁷ while they will use minor and nonlethal violence against those perceived to be culpable of lesser transgressions. This proposition contrasts with two major alternatives. Struggle targets could have received punishments proportional to their class status or economic power or the degree of political threat they posed to the Party. Another possibility is that violence was meted out indiscriminately, without regard to the identity of the struggle target.

The violence used during struggle sessions and public sentencings followed a clear logic of moral retributivism—that is, the punishment was to fit the perceived severity of the crime. Like their imperial predecessors, the Party differentially treated political threats (分别对待), promising leniency to followers who confessed and executing only the most important local power-holders or bandit and sectarian group leaders.¹⁶⁸ A Xinhua editorial by East China Bureau leader Rao Shushi spelled out the bureau’s commitment to selective punishment:

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

[landlords who early on joined the Communist cause], they should be treated with consideration.¹⁶⁹

Local governments in Anhui and Jiangsu released similar policy statements. In northern Jiangsu, landlords guilty of relatively serious crimes (罪恶较大) were to be sentenced through the People's Courts—where they would possibly be publicly executed—while face-to-face struggle sessions were deemed more appropriate for landlords who had committed relatively light crimes.¹⁷⁰ In public sentencings, where cadres deliberated on and set a sentence beforehand, they attempted to tailor punishments to the perceived gravity of the offense. For example, in Feixi County, it was reported that “according to the demands of the masses, these unlawful landlords and bandit tyrants were arrested and sentenced, with those guilty of the most heinous crimes (罪大恶极) sentenced to death; we believe that this was as it should be and necessary (应该的和必要的).”¹⁷¹

Available statistics on the distribution of violence indicate that the severity of violence varied according to the identity of the struggle targets, suggesting that the Party was concerned with reserving lethal violence for those deemed most “deserving” of it. Struggle sessions and public sentencings meted out violence that matched the perceived gravity and nature of the crime. For example, in Jiangyin County, two “henchmen” of landlords in Jiangyin County were forced to bark, crawl around, and gnaw on bones like dogs, a form of public humiliation that reflected their status as “lapdogs” (走狗) of local power-holders.¹⁷² A report on the punishment of unlawful landlords and counterrevolutionaries from Gaoqiao Township of Jiangdu County indicates that two counterrevolutionaries and several landlords and their henchmen—dubbed “the landlords’ claws and fangs” (地主爪牙)—were struggled against, but only the former township head (乡长) and one other “unlawful” landlord were actually executed.¹⁷³ Although the report does not provide any information regarding the accusations against them, it is likely that the township head, due to his holding an official position, was a power holder accused of presiding over rampant corruption and abuse. Tellingly, despite having apprehended around a dozen landlords, the community singled him and one other out for execution.¹⁷⁴ Perceived transgression, not class identity per se, majorly influenced the severity of violence a target would endure during the land reform campaign.

Aggregate data from Huaibei suggest this may have been a general pattern. According to statistics on types of punishment for struggle targets in

northern Anhui, unlawful landlords were treated much more leniently than evil tyrants. Only about 1.7 percent of unlawful landlord struggled against were executed, the majority being put under house arrest, while about 17 percent of evil tyrants were executed. Bandits and counterrevolutionaries, whom the Party was particularly concerned about eliminating, were executed in even larger proportions: about 25 percent of bandits and 24 percent of counterrevolutionaries struggled against were executed.¹⁷⁵ This is particularly important because evil tyrants, bandits, and counterrevolutionaries—without any further specification—could refer to someone of any class background, while unlawful landlords referred exclusively to landlords who resisted the campaign. The perceived severity and type of transgression—moral or political—mattered far more than class label in determining the severity of one’s punishment. Preliminary statistics reported by the Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee show a similar pattern. Though not disaggregated by group, nearly half of all executions were “evil tyrant landlords” and former officials, 40 percent were bandits and “secret agents” (特务), and the remainder were unspecified.¹⁷⁶

LOSING THE WAR FOR SYMPATHY: WHEN MORAL MOBILIZATION FAILS

Was moral mobilization really necessary for the Party-state’s successful mobilization of mass violence? The preceding analysis illustrates that cadres invested significant resources in an elaborate process to impugn the moral character of local elites; however, it has not demonstrated definitively that moral mobilization *caused* violence. Given the infeasibility of using experimental or quasi-experimental methods due to the sparsity of quantitative data and the temporal remoteness of the subject matter, the best approach to address these concerns is to look at negative cases where mobilization faltered and locals were loathe to cooperate with the Party. As Julia Strauss has noted, cadres had strong incentives to elide or suppress evidence of failed mobilization in their reports that would be read by their superiors;¹⁷⁷ accordingly, most of these examples of failure come from inspection reports carried out by working groups and committees that were not based in the locality under investigation.

I find that cadres struggled to mobilize violence where they could not exclude the local elite from the community’s “span of sympathy.” The pre-

cise reasons for this failure varied: cadres were not adept at carrying out moral boundary work and moral theatrics, lacked suitable targets whom they could easily reframe as villains, or experienced significant backlash from local elites who sought to save themselves using the Party-state's mobilization strategy against them by appealing to villagers' sympathy. The rest of this section divides failed mobilization into instances of failed boundary work and failed moral theatrics.

Failed Boundary Work

The mobilization of collective violence struggled in the absence of moral boundary work. In face-to-face meetings and propaganda work, inspectors from southern Jiangsu's rural committee complained that township cadres in Taicang County "haven't been trained to be patient with the locals."¹⁷⁸ The report also chastised cadres for failing to hold small group meetings and for the low attendance rates at the ones that they did hold. Notably, in one village in the same Township, only 58 percent of Peasant Association members had received any propaganda education.¹⁷⁹ Having not undergone moral boundary work, locals questioned the justness of land reform and its use of violence: "The landlords' land is passed down from their ancestors. Now you've divided their land and want [us] to struggle against them; frankly, it's just too much."¹⁸⁰ In an investigative report on eighteen townships across northern Anhui, inspectors from the regional Party's rural committee found that in some localities where mobilization work was poor, cadres had failed to raise class consciousness to the extent that locals widely sympathized with or feared struggling against landlords.¹⁸¹

Cadre corruption or inactivity was often at the root of poor or nonexistent boundary work. Dacheng Township in Feidong County of northern Anhui was labeled a "third type" (第三类) township because of the poor state of its mobilization work. Similar to its failed counterparts in southern and northern Jiangsu, the region's land committee blamed this failure on the inexperience and "impure" (不纯) backgrounds of the cadres. Despite the existence of fifty landlords in and around the township, none had been subjected to political struggle; in the meantime, the landlords had counterorganized and intimidated locals who "did not dare to speak" (不敢言) against them. Unlike the other cases, however, Dacheng's failure was reportedly rooted in the corruption and inactivity of local cadres: they took gifts and bribes from landlords and apparently conducted little mobilization work.

Six of the seven Peasant Associations were headed by vagrants or decommissioned soldiers who used the campaign to attack ordinary peasants. The inspection team's method of overcoming these problems and mobilizing violence is revealing. Aside from purging negligent and corrupt cadres, they quickly set to conducting moral boundary work with the locals. They brought together poor villagers and farmworkers for propaganda work and sent cadres to visit peasants' homes and collect their stories of suffering (访苦). They then used small group meetings to bring together peasants to share their grievances. After apprehending four landlords who were accused of "the most heinous crimes" (罪大恶极) and five cadres who had colluded with them, locals held a public sentencing in which over fifty aggrieved villagers spoke bitterness against the struggle targets, culminating in the execution of two "evil tyrants."¹⁸²

Failed Moral Theatrics

Moral theatrics could backfire and impede mobilization if cadres did not frame targets as morally transgressive or were unable to find individuals they could plausibly demonize. During a struggle session against a landlord accused of hiding grain, a member of the land reform work team went on stage and hit the landlord for refusing to admit his guilt. In response, villagers at the meeting called out, "You can't beat him! He's a *good landlord* who rose out of poverty! (不能打, 他原来是苦出来的好地主)."¹⁸³ A regional Party committee report criticized township cadres in Taicang County for their "crude" and "superficial" implementation of struggle sessions. It blamed cadres for carrying out reckless and extreme violence against seemingly random and inappropriate—that is, sympathetic—targets, which alienated and demobilized villagers. The report cited the following incident as one of the most egregious examples:

Women ran away in tears when they saw a female landlord *being unjustly struggled against*. One of them said, "Landlord Cao was *very friendly* to people and barely received anything in rent; to struggle against her was *really wrong* (真作孽)."¹⁸⁴

Cadres had also held struggle sessions against a seventeen-year-old student and son of a landlord, whom they stripped naked and forced to kneel on rocks while yelling, "Down with landlord Cao XX!" While some locals did

attend and call for his violent punishment, many others were disturbed that a student was chosen as a target. Villagers were also concerned about struggling against landlords whose behavior was not particularly egregious. In Xiaqiao Township, cadres avoided tackling powerful elites and instead struggled against a landlord “who lacked many big crimes,” which caused the locals to complain that they were “struggling against the small fish instead of the big fish” (大鱼不斗斗小鱼).¹⁸⁵

A report on problems with the conduct of People’s Courts alleged that cadres were targeting people inaccurately, focusing on sympathetic figures and sparing more ignoble ones, which was inhibiting the mobilization of collective violence. It offers two examples of failed moral theatrics in Songjiang County. In the first instance, cadres had tried to sentence an unlawful landlord, Zhu XX, even though the villagers all knew that he was always under the thumb of his domineering mother, whose “crimes” were greater than his. Zhu XX, in contrast to his mother, was known as an “honest” (老实) fellow, and so only one person spoke against him at his trial; meanwhile, his mother was never apprehended. In the second case, authorities were unable to apprehend an evil tyrant, but they were able to arrest his two wives. The masses thought that the evil tyrant bullied his first wife, who was an honest person, and that it was unfair that she was brought to the People’s Court along with the second wife. In all of these cases, the report concludes, some of the villagers sympathized with the accused.¹⁸⁶

Strikingly, local elites could countermobilize against the cadres’ efforts to paint them as villains by presenting themselves as innocent and vulnerable to gain villagers’—and cadres’—sympathy. One such tactic was to appear particularly pitiful or compliant during struggle sessions to gain the community’s sympathy. A *People’s Daily* editorial accused critics of violent land reform for their gullibility at being duped by the “bitter and sad faces” (苦相, 可怜相) some landlords wore when they were being struggled against.¹⁸⁷ In Wuxi, one individual, having just been labeled a landlord, flew into crying fit and threatened to jump into the river with their child and commit suicide. During a struggle session, a former township head guilty of many “evil deeds” readily admitted to all of these accusations as a way of defusing the crowd’s anger.¹⁸⁸ Another common tactic by landed elites was “to pretend to be poor” (装穷) or even go begging for food. In Danyang County, over forty landlords went out together on the same day to beg for food and curry sympathy from villagers.¹⁸⁹ Local elites’ appeals to sympathy could even cause cadres to hesitate labeling them as class enemies. In a revealing incident

from a village in Fengyang County in northern Anhui, one cadre did not believe that the person whose land he was instructed to confiscate was a landlord because of her personal disposition:

When confiscating landlord XX's assets, she cried and yelled and kowtowed to the cadres. Group Leader Tang Dejun then said, "This [person] does not resemble a landlord." Nobody said a word. After discussing things with the masses and doing additional research [it was determined that she] was a landlord after all, and they went back to confiscate [her assets].¹⁹⁰

Here, the landlord's surprising subservience made this group leader doubt that she was even a landlord. This was indicative of a more general pattern. Landlords who were able to acquire pity from cadres or villagers could earn side favors. In northern Jiangsu, some cadres felt pity for landlords who had been struggled against and gave them some extra land when redistributing land; or, in one case, to help people given the damning class label of "landlord" find spouses.¹⁹¹

The need to eliminate sympathy for struggle targets was a major reason why the CCP was averse to the use of torture during struggle sessions, as it could backfire and taint the Party-state's righteous image. A report on problems during land reform in Anhui called for the immediate rectification of reckless beatings because they could cause the Party-state to lose "societal sympathy" (失掉社会同情).¹⁹² For example, during a struggle session against Sun XX, a notorious evil tyrant accused of murdering eleven people, the presiding cadre kept tightening the rope binding Sun because he refused to admit to his misdeeds. Once he started screaming, some villagers in the attendance began to pity and sympathize with him.¹⁹³

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

I have argued here that the Party used moral appeals rooted in a narrative of retributive justice to reframe certain members of the landed elite as evildoers deserving of violent punishment. Although moral mobilization used pre-existing social boundaries as its basis, its significance lay in its ability to change the norms of behavior associated with these boundaries—that is, how individuals defined by these group boundaries should be viewed and treated. Where once villagers sympathized with, feared, resented, or perhaps felt apa-

thetic toward certain locals who owned more land or possessed formal or informal power in the community, under the Party's guidance they began to see themselves as both victims and judges of these individuals' moral degeneracy. By excluding this out-group from the community's span of sympathy and placing ordinary villagers in this position to judge their character, the Party empowered locals to carry out rough justice, something that they might otherwise not have viewed as necessary or proper.

CHAPTER 4

Coercive Control and Mass Mobilized Violence

If you do not kill the evil tyrants, the Peasant Associations will not form and the peasants will not dare to redistribute the land. If you do not kill key secret agents, then sabotage and assassinations will appear one after another. Thus, the people will be able to emancipate themselves and consolidate their political power only if we adopt a policy of resolute suppression toward key bandit leaders, evil tyrants, and secret agents.

—LETTER FROM MAO ZEDONG TO HUANG YANPEI, 1951¹

Mao was keenly aware that successful land reform mobilization first required eliminating the coercive capacity of local opposition forces, as his letter to Huang Yanpei above demonstrates. Without a guarantee that the CCP was there to stay, that peasants and land reform officials would be safe from retaliatory violence, moral mobilization was bound to fail. The principal aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the preconditions for successful moral mobilization and to eliminate major alternative explanations for the mobilization of collective violence. I argue that local variation in the extent of mobilized violence turned on the degree of coercive control in a county—that is, where the People’s Liberation Army had succeeded in eliminating armed insurgents. In areas with coercive control, local authorities could provide a safe and stable political environment for mass mobilization, wherein mobilizers could operate openly and freely and villagers felt less intimidated by the prospect of retaliatory violence for cooperating with the new regime. Using a nested analysis design,² I conduct a large-N analysis of violence data from an original hand-coded data set of 250 counties in the East China Bureau along with three county case studies.³ I use the large-N analysis to show that coercive control better explains variation in collective violence during the land reform campaign than socioeconomic variables, presence of class ene-

mies, or history of violent conflict. To demonstrate that moral mobilization was the process behind the mobilization of collective violence where coercive control was high, I use county case studies from the data set to illustrate how counties used their control and resources to carry out moral mobilization, while those that lacked this control failed to portray the landed elite as morally retrograde, dampening mobilization efforts.

CASE SELECTION AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Whereas the timing of land reform is almost perfectly collinear with geographic location and resource endowments in most parts of China, the East China Bureau offers an invaluable opportunity to analyze localities from significantly different regional political economies that implemented land reform simultaneously under the same policy guidelines. Because the Communists had a more stable base in northern China, many northern localities underwent land reform in the civil war period, which operated under the “May Fourth Directive” (五四指示), a relatively radical land reform policy that tolerated a wider scope of land confiscation and violence. Small family farming, not landlordism, predominated in these localities, and recurrent natural disasters kept the region poor.⁴ The confluence of socioeconomic factors and radical land reform policy in northern China before 1949 frustrates attempts to tease apart the relative importance of landholding inequality, regional wealth, and policy orientation. While other bureaus that carried out land reform after 1949 were squarely situated within the north, south, or the ethnically diverse west, the East China Bureau contained both northern and southern localities. Led by Rao Shushi, the bureau sent similar policy directives regarding land reform to the localities under its jurisdiction and ordered them to implement the campaign around the same time, which controls for concerns about differences in central-level leadership attitudes toward mass mobilizing violence and the possible effects of early versus late land reform implementation.

The large-N analysis uses the county as the unit of analysis, while the case studies focus on townships. County governments organized, trained, and dispatched work teams (工作队) to townships (乡) and villages in the surrounding countryside, and county Party committees were the lowest-level political entity that received and modified policy decisions from the East China Bureau and regional Party committees. Most of these county-level

data come from county gazetteers (县志); however, I also used separately published issue-specific county gazetteers—land gazetteers (土地管理志), agricultural gazetteers (农业志), and so on—as well as archival and internally published sources to supplement missing data.⁵ Because of the low number of overall counties in this region, I collected data for all counties during the land reform campaign (1950–52) that had a published gazetteer. Since the State Council in 1980 called for all provinces and counties to publish gazetteers, there were only a few counties in this region that, for unknown reasons, did not publish a gazetteer.⁶

Nevertheless, in most of Anhui and Jiangsu the land reform campaign was carried out at the township level, with villages in the same township often participating in political struggle together.⁷ Thus when looking at the process of mobilization I shift the analysis downward to the township level. I analyze townships in three counties that varied in terms of coercive control: a county that lacked control and failed to mobilize much violence (Fengyang County); a county that possessed control and plentiful organizational resources that implemented moral mobilization to foment violence (Wuxi County); and a county that initially lacked control but was able to mobilize violence once it was able to wrest control away from insurgents (Huaining County).

THE DYNAMICS OF COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE IN EAST CHINA'S LAND REFORM CAMPAIGN

On the heels of the Chinese Communist victory in 1949, cadres across the East China Bureau faced the formidable task of implementing the land reform campaign and mobilizing the masses to participate in violent political struggle.⁸ In the winter of 1950, the East China Bureau issued a seemingly paradoxical policy directive called “going all in to mobilize the masses with leadership” (有领导的放手发动群众) that exhorted cadres to shift from their ongoing preparatory work to the vigorous mobilization of violent political struggle in the winter of 1950. This strategy contained conflicting demands to mobilize the masses to identify and struggle against class enemies but also to prevent them from indiscriminately attacking others once mobilized.

Local governments, however, were unequally prepared to manage violent mass mobilization, as evidenced by the great deal of variation in the amount of violence mobilized in different parts of the East China Bureau.

Unlike the Chinese Civil War period—when the CCP strategically proscribed violent political struggle in contested military zones with weak Party support, knowing that these areas would probably fail to implement struggle-based land reform properly—localities did not have the luxury of opting out of mobilization after 1949. Instead, the amount of collective violence mobilized in a locality hinged on local governments' degree of coercive control.

Coercive control was fundamental to the successful promotion of the moral mobilization of violence for two reasons. First, control allowed the local government to credibly commit to preventing retaliatory violence. Since moral mobilization was a public and participatory form of political violence, those who wished to “speak bitterness” (诉苦) on stage against struggle targets were putting themselves at tremendous risk. What if the struggle target survived the struggle session and sought revenge later? Even if the struggle target were indeed executed, what if the relatives, friends, or hired thugs of the target desired to avenge his or her death? Community surveillance by local militias and civilians helped maintain order and ensured that struggle targets did not run away or attempt to retaliate against their targets; however, this defense work was ineffective or downright impossible in areas where armed opposition was rampant. As Kalyvas argues, civilians will only denounce others where they “perceive the political actor as able to protect them from retaliation.”⁹ Fear of retaliation also deterred locals from redistributing land or participating in struggle sessions. Indeed, the East China Bureau's *Land Reform Handbook* underscored the primacy of establishing coercive control and consolidating political authority at the grass roots in preparing for land reform work.¹⁰ A lower risk of retaliatory violence in areas firmly under state control had significant emotional benefits. As Collins argues, outnumbering the target of violence and reducing the probability of retaliation eases the “confrontational tension” that prevents many participants from using violence.¹¹ This tension was pervasive in the early 1950s, when many locals doubted the longevity of the new Party-state. Even the mere perception of political weakness frightened locals and complicated the Party's mobilization efforts, leading many to fear a “change in heaven” (变天)—that is, the collapse of the Communist regime and the return of the Nationalists.¹²

Second, the preparatory work for moral mobilization required a secure and stable political environment. Because of the extensive process of boundary work needed to set the stage for the mobilization of mass participation in violence, cadres needed to be able to work openly with little interference or

opposition from remnant hostile forces—that is, bandits, decommissioned soldiers, Nationalist spies and saboteurs, and so on. In areas with weak coercive control, local officials faced a situation similar to that of irregular war—that is, a confrontation involving a weak group of insurgents who must rely on guerrilla-style tactics to challenge a militarily superior state.¹³ Armed opposition groups sabotaged infrastructure, kidnapped or killed officials, and burned down government buildings. In Tongling County in southern Anhui, guerrilla groups comprised of former Nationalist officials, vagrants, and bandits kidnapped and beat up village cadres; during the county’s land reform campaign, these and other opposition groups worked with “unlawful landlords” to sabotage cadre work, slaughter livestock, “manipulate” (蛊惑) the masses, and bribe cadres.¹⁴ Elsewhere, in Fengxian County in southern Jiangsu, a resistance group calling itself the Central Assassination Party (中央暗杀党), allegedly organized by Nationalist agents, mobilized over eighteen hundred people to storm the township’s Peasant Association and destroy the land reform work team’s office.¹⁵

Coercive control provided the local government with the necessary opportunity to mobilize violence. This logic contradicts Kalyvas’s assertion that there is a curvilinear relationship between coercive control and the intensity of (homicidal) violence, in which political actors are most likely to use selective violence to eliminate targets in areas with firm though not complete military control.¹⁶ While this logic certainly makes sense in a civil war context, where the point of selective violence is to eliminate political threats and deter defection, a new revolutionary state uses violence to consolidate its political power and legitimacy throughout its territory, regardless of the extent of its coercive control. Along with the nearly unanimous moral conviction in the correctness of violent land reform—only Liu Shaoqi and a minority of other leaders believed in nonviolent economic land reform—the Party implemented selective violence wherever it had the opportunity to do so. And violent political struggle through moral mobilization, as it turned out, was only possible where the local government enjoyed strong coercive control.

CONTAINING THE MASSES: THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL PARTY LEADERSHIP

The Party was also concerned about controlling the scope of violence once mobilized: uncontrolled violence was politically counterproductive for the

Party because failing to selectively punish perceived enemies of the community undermined efforts to build solidarity between the Party and the local community.¹⁷ Despite the immense pressure placed on grassroots cadres to carry out “fierce” class struggle, the Party resolutely proscribed “reckless beating and killing” (乱打乱杀) and instructed cadres to take precautions to maintain order during struggle sessions. “Place those who are likely to be beaten near cadres in order to prevent [reckless beating and killing],” a Fengyang report cautioned. “It is better than pulling them away once the beating begins” (比打起来再拉好).¹⁸ Violence, though necessary to the cause, was not to be meted out recklessly.

The East China Bureau stated that localities should follow official guidelines for handling “evil tyrants” in order to “differentiate between, isolate, and crush the enemy, one by one, and to avoid expanding the definitional scope of ‘evil tyrant’ to include their henchmen or ordinary landlords, which would excessively broaden the scope of attack (以致打击面过广).”¹⁹ Rao Shushi, the head of the East China Bureau, explained that one of the “important links” (重要环节) in the bureau’s implementation of the land reform campaign was the unification of the masses in “building the broadest united front against feudalism in the countryside” (建立农村中最广泛的反封建的统一战线); such a strategy necessitated the careful management of the campaign’s “scope of attack” (打击面).²⁰ “Because the attack targets are mainly landlords and evil tyrants,” a Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee report read, “[the extent of attack] should not be stretched too far to avoid disrupting class ranks, generating unified resistance, and isolating ourselves.”²¹

Striking the balance between mobilizing and controlling the masses, however, was significantly more complicated. The Southern Jiangsu Regional Committee suggested that Party training should emphasize overcoming the fear of making mistakes and feeling restrained in mobilizing struggle as well as avoiding a *laissez-faire* (放任自流) approach. The directive used the following example to illustrate this approach:

When some peasants in the course of struggle are agitated by righteous indignation and spontaneously attack landlords, we do not pour cold water [on them] (当场泼冷水) right then and there, which would hurt the masses’ mood, but before and after [the struggle session] we should start from the personal interests of the peasants to patiently educate them.²²

A southern Jiangsu land reform report detailed this evolving, dynamic process of violent mobilization:

Once mobilization is underway, one must promptly discover and rectify deviations; once the high tide is unleashed, one must pay attention to and grasp the scope of attack (注意掌握打击面); the high tide should not drag on for too long, or else it will easily result in searching for [new] struggle targets and going beyond the boundaries of attack, expanding to struggle against all “puppet” *baojia* heads (伪保甲长) and henchmen (狗腿子), which will create chaos.²³

Officials on the Chuxian Prefectural Party Committee, in northern Anhui, called for strict discipline in the implementation of land reform and urged cadres to communicate this need for control to the peasants: “Through various meetings convey the anti-local tyrant stance of land reform and announce that there will not be random seizures, beatings, and pursuit of movable property, nor will there be complete confiscation (宣布不乱捉,乱打,乱追浮财不扫地出门); instead talk things over and reason (评理讲法) [and] hold disciplined struggles (有纪律的斗争).”²⁴ A 1951 report from southern Jiangsu emphasized the difficult trade-off that local cadres had to manage: “[Cadres’] lives are very hard. . . . They have a hard time preventing random beatings and killings, yet the responsibility falls on their shoulders; if they are too lenient to the landlords, they fear the peasants will be resentful, while if they are too harsh, their superiors will criticize them.”²⁵ Indeed, superiors often had to encourage grassroots leaders to overcome any reservations they had about using struggle-based land reform. A land reform report from the Shanghai suburbs noted: “In the beginning, because our leadership did not know enough, there existed among the cadres many reservations and a fear of getting in trouble, and [they] would not dare to use a ‘mentality of struggle’ (斗争主义思想). After their superiors pointed this out and [the cadres] received practical work education, this problem was quickly resolved.”²⁶

Controlling violence required strong Party leadership. The Party faced threats from both vengeful locals and non-Party or poorly trained cadres. Kalyvas has noted that revenge-based violence tends to be pervasive during episodes of political violence.²⁷ The Party was keenly aware of the danger of the masses “overheating” (过火) and often took precautions to prevent strug-

gle sessions from breaking out into wanton violence. Yet the Party also needed to deal with the danger of untrained or reckless cadres, especially those who were not Party members.²⁸ Localities with few Party members had no choice but to rely more heavily on local activists (积极分子) and non-Party cadres to carry out the campaign. It is plausible that these activists and non-Party member cadres, many of whom aspired to join the Party, were susceptible to using violence to display the depth of their political conviction, a phenomenon Yang Dali has termed “the politics of loyalty compensation.”²⁹ More important, though, was that untrained or poorly trained cadres, regardless of their Party membership, could easily conflate the use of violence with proper mobilization. A notice from the Baoshan County Party Committee complained, “In some places, cadres think that killing for the sake of killing (为杀而杀) and struggling for the sake of struggling (为斗而斗) are good things; these deviations must be corrected and stopped.” This appears to have had less to do with issues of displaying loyalty through “leftism” than with vague and conflicting policy directives that required a great deal of training and experience to understand. In this sense, adequate Party leadership was indispensable for properly training cadres, ensuring cadre discipline, and conveying Party directives to the grass roots.

Without good Party leadership, cadres struggled to contain revenge-based violence or resorted to violence themselves. In Qingpu County, right outside of Shanghai, cadres had established military control over its territory by the end of 1949, with the antibandit campaign ending the following year. But without adequate Party personnel and training, violence here broke down into chaos. In a high-profile incident, seventeen people were beaten to death within a matter of days. While observers attributed this outbreak of violence to the justified outrage of the masses, they also criticized local cadres for losing control of the campaign: “Local cadres, who were unable to grasp the details of the situation beforehand . . . were unable to prepare in advance to prevent the occurrence of these deviations.”³⁰ Du Runsheng, commenting on the frequency of beatings and floggings in the Central South Bureau’s land reform campaign, enumerated the many ways in which poor or nonexistent leadership resulted in reckless violence:

Some [beatings and floggings] were the revenge of the masses; [that is], in the past these people were persecuted by the evil tyrants and after speaking bitterness they became extremely furious and flogged them. Some were because of a minority of rash cadres who couldn’t put up with the landlords’ sly deni-

als and were not good at collectively strategizing and executing policy to bring the landlords to heel; therefore, [they] adopted this incorrect method. Some were because the locality lacked leadership, and the people freely interpreted [policy] and acted on their own. Some were because of dissidents who seized the opportunity to cause trouble and sabotage policy. Some were secretly encouraged by cadres, and some have been secret floggings and beatings backed by cadre support. The situations are different, but the dangers are the same: [this behavior] harms the full mobilization of the masses and strays from the majority.³¹

The Party believed that the solution to this problem was policy education and training of both the masses and cadres. “In some places that in the past experienced reckless beatings and killings,” a *Changjiang Daily* editorial argued, “it was precisely because [the leadership] had not done all it could do to convey [our] policy to the masses.”³²

Yet it was precisely the need to recruit Party members en masse in the newly conquered territories of the south after 1949 that frustrated the Party’s efforts to contain leftist radicalism. Party committees operating in areas with lower densities of Party members had to rapidly vet more activists and cadres than in areas with established Party bases. Since activists in particular were crucial to organizing struggle sessions, finding villagers to speak bitterness, or themselves speaking bitterness on stage, it was inevitable that non-Party members would play a significant role in mass-mobilizing violence where the Party was least present. Moreover, these activists and non-Party cadres may have felt that mobilizing more violence would accelerate their careers, despite the aforementioned higher-level directives discouraging the use of violence as a barometer for mobilization success.

VARIABLE MEASUREMENT

To reiterate, I argue that the extent of local authorities’ coercive control determined the extent to which they mobilized collective violence in the early 1950s. In the absence of coercive control, localities struggled to mobilize violence because of interference and intimidation by local armed opposition groups. I operationalize *collective violence* using as the number of “struggle targets” (斗争对象) subjected to collective violence in a county.³³ Cadres organized violence against struggle targets at public struggle sessions,

held on stage or in a large open space, during which struggle targets were denounced, heckled, often beaten, and sometimes tortured and killed. Unlike state arrests, executions, or disappearances, struggle targets clearly indicate participatory violence, in which locals partook in or at least witnessed group violence. Moreover, as a measure of violence, the number of struggle targets is preferable to the number of executions because the latter tends to be less systematically and less accurately reported. Official execution data do not necessarily include “reckless killings” (乱杀)—that is, killings that occurred in the heat of a struggle session or public sentencing at the hands of the outraged masses. Struggle targets, however, almost always endured some degree of violence, as most were bound, beaten, and humiliated on stage and received some amount of corporal punishment; many were killed as well, with or without official approval. If anything, the number of struggle targets is a conservative measure of violence because the prospect of political struggle and the traumatic experience of being struggled against caused countless people to commit suicide. Suicide deaths were rarely, if ever, reported in summaries of land reform violence. Considering these data constraints and biases, I believe the number of struggle targets is by far the best existing measure of political violence during land reform.

Measuring the Principal Explanatory Variable: Coercive Control

Coercive control refers to whether a locality was threatened by ongoing armed resistance *during the land reform campaign*. While the stability of coercive control tends to come out clearly in archival data, it is difficult to quantify in the absence of extensive archival data for all localities. Because local insurgent opposition severely dampened the local government’s efforts at mobilizing popular participation in land reform, I measure coercive control according to the timing of the PLA’s “antibandit” (剿匪) operations relative to the land reform campaign. All localities began antibandit operations shortly after the PLA’s arrival—1949 for most of the localities in this data set—however, some localities finished eliminating insurgents within months, while others continued fighting them up until the mid-1950s. I coded localities as having secure coercive control where antibandit operations ended before the initiation of the land reform campaign and where there was no evidence of armed opposition during the campaign. Where the exact date of the end of antibandit operations is missing, I refer to the gazet-

teer's chronology (大事记) for evidence of armed opposition to land reform; if armed resistance occurred during the land reform campaign, I coded the locality as lacking control.

Alternative Arguments: Class Conflict, Material Incentives, Party Density, and Violent Histories

I account for four major alternative arguments: class conflict, material incentives, Party density, and historical patterns of violence. A prevalent explanation for identity-based mobilization is preexisting social cleavages; that is, mobilizers can more readily mobilize people where there are strong feelings of "relative deprivation" or long histories of identity-related conflict.³⁴ Since the CCP was ostensibly mobilizing on the basis of class, one might expect more class conflict where landholding inequality was more pronounced. In the absence of sufficient information to calculate Gini coefficients for county landholding patterns, I use three measures of landholding inequality: the percentage of county land owned by those labeled as landlords; the ratio of landlord per capita landholdings and poor peasant per capita landholdings; and the ratio of landlord per capita landholdings and overall average per capita landholdings.

Olson's classic formulation of the collective action problem argues that selective, usually material, incentives are crucial to mobilization. If selective material incentives drove violent mass mobilization, we would expect to find more collective violence in wealthier areas that had more resources that they could use as selective rewards for participating in collective violence. Struggle targets usually had their possessions confiscated and redistributed—the "fruits of struggle" (斗争果实)—and cadres sometimes would give denouncers the first pick of confiscated assets, though this was not sanctioned by official policy. If cadres were heavily relying on selectively redistributing the possessions of struggle targets, this would have been most feasible in areas with a higher level of wealth. Because GDP measures did not exist for early 1950s China, I use grain yields—amount of grain produced per *mu*³⁵ of land—as an overall measure of agricultural development. This measure captures soil quality, agricultural inputs, and labor skill; even though many localities before 1949 produced cash crops for sideline industries and traded for grain, this measure captures the overall productivity of the land in a region.³⁶

As discussed earlier, activists and non-Party cadres played a larger role in mobilizing violence and had less oversight where Party density was low. Aspiring to join the Party, these activists and cadres may have pushed for more violence in an effort to demonstrate their revolutionary credentials and competence at mobilization.³⁷

Last, I consider the role of historical patterns of violence; the CCP may have succeeded best at mobilizing in areas that frequently broke out into intercommunal violence or endured significant violence that generated strong feelings of nationalism. Places that were known to have a history of intercommunal strife may simply be more predisposed to violent mobilization because of abiding violent sentiment toward one's neighbors. To account for pre-1949 intercommunal violence, I include a dummy variable that indicates whether a county recorded one or more armed battles between communities (械斗) in the chronology of its gazetteer between 1900 and 1949. Violence by outsiders may have also facilitated violent mobilization by forming strong in-group identities. Chalmers Johnson famously argued that the CCP succeeded in mobilizing the peasantry before 1949 by tapping into the anti-Japanese nationalist sentiment provoked by the violence of the Japanese occupation.³⁸ To account for the possibility that the CCP could mobilize more violence where the Japanese occupation was more brutal, I coded localities according to their experience under Japanese occupation. I distinguish between counties that experienced indiscriminate violence under the "mopping-up" campaigns or other forms of wartime atrocities and those that have no record of Japanese occupation or wartime violence and atrocities.³⁹

Other Controls

Additional controls include Party density, the percentage of households labeled as landlords, whether a county had successfully carried out land reform before the revolution, and county population. As the discussion of the Party's role in the mobilization process indicates, the Party often played a countervailing role in violent mobilization, preventing the endless expansion of collective violence. I measure the Party's presence in a county using the number of Party members per one thousand people in 1949. Because Party members were recruited heavily during the mass campaigns of the early 1950s, using Party data beyond 1949 or 1950 is not an accurate measure of the existing capacity of the Party during the land reform campaign. I treat

coercive control and Party density as independent forces of mobilization and containment, respectively. I do this because coercive control and Party density were in fact not collinear: some regions had high densities of Party members yet were mired in ongoing warfare with local bandits, remnant Nationalist groups, and newly formed resistance groups, and vice versa.

The percentage of households labeled as landlords in a county during land reform controls for the possibility that there was more violence in areas that simply had more landlords; that is, more potential targets would probably result in more violence. I add a dummy variable for pre-1949 land reform because the Party mobilized land reform in some parts of Huaibei during the civil war, and these areas may have experienced less violence than other localities for two reasons. The problem of reckless violence during civil war-era land reform may have made cadres working in these localities more sensitive to controlling violence. Regional authorities reminded local cadres of the problem of “leftist deviations” during the civil war-era campaign and cautioned them to avoid repeating these mistakes. A 1950 directive from the Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, whose jurisdiction had conducted a considerable amount of land reform work before 1949, instructed: “Do not repeat some of the ‘experiences’ of pre-1949 LR in northern Jiangsu, such as ‘payback any injustice or animosity you have’ (有冤报冤·有仇报仇) etc., [for] that will create an environment where every landlord has a blood debt and everyone needs to be punished and have their accounts settled.”⁴⁰ Aside from these warnings, deaths due to this reckless violence may have reduced the number of potential struggle targets for post-1949 land reform. County gazetteers indicate whether a county carried out land reform before 1949. I code counties that completed land reform across its entire territory or a significant portion of its territory before 1949 as early land reform implementers. I do not include counties where the Nationalist invasion of Huaibei forced cadres to abort land reform or prevented land reform from being carried out in a substantial amount of its territory.

To control for the importance of other communal identities, I include a measure of lineage strength. In his analysis of communal violence during the Cultural Revolution, Su argues that lineages played a major role in escalating violence, as interlineage conflict became the basis for political violence; he extends this logic to the land reform period as well. I operationalize lineage strength as the percentage of land in the hand of corporate entities, which the CCP recorded as “public land” (公地). Public land is a crude measure of lineage land because it includes land owned by temples and schools,

in addition to land owned by lineages. The clear north-south variation—21.87 percent of total land classified as public land in the south versus 2.88 percent in the north—maps onto known regional patterns in lineage size and strength, suggesting that the measure has *prima facie* validity.

I use a natural logarithmic transformation of struggle targets per capita, the ratio-based measures of landholding inequality, agricultural productivity, and Party density because of the severe skewness of these variables. Table r8 in Appendix A provides descriptive statistics for all the variables used in this analysis.

MODEL ESTIMATION AND RESULTS

I estimate the effect of coercive control on levels of political violence using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Table 3 presents standardized coefficients for predictors of land reform violence. The results across all three models support the proposition that coercive control, not socioeconomic inequality, facilitated the mobilization of collective violence against “class enemies.” Coercive control has large positive correlation with collective violence significant at the $p < .01$ level in all models. All three measures of landholding inequality were not significantly correlated with collective violence. Agricultural development, however, has a strong, significant correlation with violence. This supports the idea that areas with more development may have had more goods to redistribute, which may have provided a stronger material incentive to participate in land reform violence.

These results do not provide strong support for the intercommunal conflict or revenge hypotheses. Intercommunal conflict and lineage strength have small and insignificant correlations with land reform violence. Moreover, Japanese occupation has an insignificant though negative correlation with land reform violence, which contradicts the expectation from a revenge argument that individuals would use the land reform campaign to get back at people who collaborated with the Japanese.

The percentage size of households labeled as landlords correlates positively with land reform violence, though this correlation is barely significant in only one model. Having experienced a land reform campaign before 1949 does not appear to have had a significant effect on post-1949 land reform violence.

TABLE 3. Standardized OLS Coefficients for Determinants of the Number of Struggle Targets in a County during Land Reform

Variable	Outcome: Struggle Targets per 1,000 (logged)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Coercive Control	0.44*** (0.14)	0.48*** (0.14)	0.47*** (0.14)
Landlord: Average Landholding Inequality (logged)	0.04 (0.13)		
Landlord: Poor Peasant Landholding Inequality (logged)		-0.01 (0.08)	
Landlord Land (%)			-0.00 (0.01)
Lineage Strength	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Party Density (logged)	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.07)
Agricultural Productivity (logged)	0.45** (0.19)	0.47*** (0.17)	0.46*** (0.17)
Landlord Households (%)	0.12 (0.08)	0.10 (0.06)	0.11* (0.06)
Pre-49 Land Reform	0.23 (0.16)	0.24 (0.16)	0.27 (0.17)
History of Intercommunal Conflict	0.04 (0.14)	0.05 (0.13)	0.01 (0.15)
Japanese Occupation	-0.37 (0.24)	-0.40 (0.27)	-0.31 (0.32)

N = 250. Missing data multiply imputed (*m* = 50) using the R package *Amelia*. See Honaker, James, Gary King, and Matthew Blackwell. "Amelia II: A Program for Missing Data." *Journal of Statistical Software* 45, no. 7 (2011): 1-47. * *p* < .1; ** *p* < .05; *** *p* < .01.

CASE STUDIES: CHAOS AND CONTROL IN FENGYANG, WUXI, AND HUAINING COUNTIES

The results from the large-*N* analysis reveal that coercive control was a crucial precondition for successful mobilization. In line with theoretical expectations that the Party did not rely on social cleavages and selective economic incentives to mobilize participation in collective violence, landholding inequality and agricultural development do not significantly correlate with violence. To demonstrate how coercive control laid the groundwork for moral mobilization, I illustrate the success or failure of mobilization in three

case studies of counties that varied in levels of coercive control. In the third case study, I address endogeneity concerns between control and mobilization—that is, that the Party-state used mass mobilized violence to establish coercive control—with an across-time case study of a locality that initially lacked coercive control and failed to mass-mobilize collective violence until higher levels of government intervened to establish control, after which it was able to implement moral mobilization and mobilize the masses.

The counties of Fengyang, Wuxi, and Huaining provide an illuminating contrast of localities that lacked or secured coercive control before mobilizing collective violence (see Table 4). Authorities in Fengyang struggled to mobilize collective violence because of their inability to eliminate lingering insurgent groups who harassed locals and attacked Party-state officials during the land reform campaign. Wuxi, in stark contrast to Fengyang, was under firm state control and carried out moral mobilization in a stable political environment, mobilizing more than twice as much violence. Huaining is an interesting contrast to Fengyang and Wuxi in that it began with contested coercive control and mobilized a tremendous amount of collective violence *after* establishing control. Nested analysis designs allow more freedom in comparing cases because the large-N analysis weakens alternative arguments that usually necessitate a “most similar” case study design.⁴¹ Since the preceding analysis suggests that inequality and patterns of class labeling do not strongly predict violence outcomes, these cases need not match closely on these variables. Still, these cases match on major political variables, such as central-level jurisdiction (East China Bureau) and experience of atrocities under Japanese occupation; and I compare their levels of violence by indexing for population.

CHAOS AND FAILED MOBILIZATION IN FENGYANG

Fengyang County in Northern Anhui exemplifies how the lack of coercive control could stall mobilization. Fengyang experienced a relatively low amount of violence during its land reform campaign. The county struggled against 463 people over the course of the campaign (approximately 1.39 per 1,000 residents, well below the sample mean of 2.75); of these 463 targets, only 45 were executed.⁴² Despite its relatively high density of Party members who could carefully manage the land reform campaign, its lack of coercive

TABLE 4. Summary Statistics for Fengyang, Huaining, and Wuxi Counties, East China Bureau

	Central Bureau	Landholding Inequality	Grain Output per Mu	Bad Class Labels (%)	Japanese Occupation	Coercive Control	Struggle Targets per 1,000
Fengyang	East China Bureau	4.48	40.08	7.01	Yes	Contested	1.39
Huaining	East China Bureau	3.05	93.59	5.97	Yes	Contested to strong	4.07
Wuxi	East China Bureau	8.45	NA	3.64	Yes	Strong	3.03

control severely hindered its ability to mobilize violence. An alarming report from the Fengyang County Public Security Office stated that in 1950 the secret society Yi Guandao had joined forces with landlords, local tyrants, and “backbone” elements of counterrevolutionary parties to organize underground armed outfits, such as the Ninth Route Army (九路军) and the Southeastern People’s Anti-CCP National Salvation Army (东南人民反共救国军), to carry out violent raids on county government offices and kill cadres. Aside from these underground groups, the report noted that there were fifty-one bandit groups strewn across the county’s mountainous regions and along its railways, many of which were sabotaging the county’s transportation infrastructure.⁴³ Chuxian Prefecture reported that bandits and spies in Fengyang, and its neighbor Jiashan, were mobilizing armed uprisings and even leading commoners to rob state granaries.⁴⁴

The political chaos in Fengyang greatly disrupted the Party’s mobilization of violence in the early 1950s. The Fengyang Party Committee openly worried about the high possibility of retaliatory violence by bandits and other targeted groups against cadres and civilian participants alike: “[The bandits] have blocked the launching of mass movements. This will be a bloody struggle, not only for our cadres but also for our victims’ families and activists.”⁴⁵ And indeed it was. Groups opposed to the CCP terrorized locals precisely at times when struggle sessions were scheduled to convene. A regional Party committee reported the effects of these acts of premeditated terror on the local population’s behavior at struggle sessions: “Struggle sessions in many places exhibit a tendency to be tense at times and relaxed at

other times (时紧时松); when the bandits run rampant, they [the villagers] become noticeably flustered and nervous (显得仓皇焦急), but then act as if everything is fine (万事大吉) once the bandits go into hiding.”⁴⁶

In the absence of sufficient mobilization, violence was not severe even where struggle sessions were organized, as cadres were unable to carry out moral boundary work to reshape locals’ perceptions of the landed elite. A 1951 report from Fengyang County’s Fenglin District reviews the outcome of thirty-eight struggle sessions against sixty struggle targets, mainly landlords and unlawful landlords accused of spreading rumors, bullying the people in the past, destroying agricultural implements, dispersing their food, and otherwise sabotaging land reform. Their struggle sessions, however, did not go according to plan. During one struggle session, when the aggrieved parties were on stage speaking bitterness against the landlords, the crowds below began to laugh (下面的群众却大笑起来). The report lamented that “hatred toward the landlords was not sufficiently strong” (对地主的仇恨性不够强). In another struggle session in Chengdong Township, the landlords themselves did not take the struggle session seriously and went to lie down and bask in the sun before returning to the stage to be struggled against.⁴⁷ While the lack of mobilization is in and of itself notable, what is more striking is the open defiance of struggle targets against what they clearly perceived to be a weak and ineffectual regime that could not deliver on its promise to foment violence in the name of the people.

MOBILIZATION UNDER CONTROL IN WUXI

Wuxi County, in stark contrast to Fengyang, stood as an exemplary case of successful moral mobilization. It was one of the first counties to select a township to serve as a “classic experimental” site for land reform, due to its proximity to the city of Wuxi, home to the headquarters of the Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, and the committee’s direct oversight of the county’s governance. Aside from enjoying firm state control, the selected township, Fangqian Township, received significant resources from the regional, district, and county Party committees; authorities hoped that the results of land reform work here could serve as a template for other townships in Wuxi and elsewhere in southern Jiangsu.⁴⁸ This also meant that Wuxi’s land reform cadres received early and extensive training under the guidance of the regional Party committee’s work team; as part of their exper-

imental work, the work teams dispatched personnel to surrounding townships and villages. An extensive report from Fangqian Township shows that the land reform work team there had a clear understanding of the obstacles facing them and patiently carried out moral mobilization over a month and a half to redefine social relations in the township and rouse the peasants to participate in collective violence.

The work team at Fangqian initially reported numerous formidable obstacles to mobilization. They claimed that the “crafty feudal mode of rule” in the area had “muddled the class consciousness of the masses” (糊涂了一般群众的阶级意识); locals had many reservations (顾虑很多) about participating in the campaign; and they did not question the socioeconomic status quo. Moreover, nearly all villagers rented or rented out land, which made a simple class-based analysis of exploitation infeasible.⁴⁹ To deal with these obstacles, cadres set out to carry out moral boundary work through visits, small groups, and informal chats. After convening the villagers, cadres explained the “justness and necessity” of land reform and criticized those who were apathetic or wanted to free ride. The work team then set about to organizing speaking-bitterness sessions to break through the locals’ “simplistic” (单纯) economic mode of thinking—that is, being solely concerned with the economic rewards of land reform. In carry out boundary work, they emphasized that “[we] label landlords to *clarify who the enemy is*, and [we] assess labels to *help the peasants recognize themselves*.”⁵⁰

When organizing collective violence, they noted that many villagers felt indifferent toward most of the landlords, and most preexisting resentment was toward local officials who had a more direct, and negative, relationship with locals. There were, however, a minority of landlords who could plausibly be reframed as evildoers, and it was precisely these landlords who were chosen as struggle targets to kick off the campaign. In an open-air space, the peasants attended a struggle session of the most hated landlords; despite the rain the crowd stayed for two hours.

FROM CHAOS TO CONTROL IN HUAINING

What if state control was endogenous to mass mobilized violence? Perhaps localities established control *through* mobilizing the masses, which would imply that control was not a prerequisite for successful mass mobilization. I exploit cross-time variation in coercive control in Huaining County—

particularly in Tongfu Township—to show collective violence occurred *after* authorities wrested control from local insurgents to implement moral mobilization.

Situated in southwestern Anhui on the northern bank of the Yangzi River, communities in Huaining suffered from insurgent attacks right up to the eve of land reform in late 1950. Lineage power appears to have been particularly strong in Huaining—countywide statistics indicate that lineages controlled about 15 percent of the land. Local elites used their lineage ties and their connections to the Big Swords (大刀会), bandit groups, and even Nationalist operatives to intimidate locals, kill livestock, and destroy property. Local authorities, however, eliminated this resistance before the countywide mobilization of the campaign in November. Communities carried out 692 struggle sessions against 2,329 evil tyrants, bandit leaders, secret society heads, secret agents, and unlawful landlords, sentencing 512 of them to life imprisonment or execution; on a per capita basis this level of violence was significantly higher than the regional average for Jiangnan.⁵¹

In the case of Tongfu Township, it is clear that violent mobilization hinged on the switch from chaos to control. In Tongfu, elites murdered township officials, strangling the leader of the township Peasant Association in the middle of the night; and they bribed local officials to infiltrate mass associations and prevent the mobilization of class struggle, using these groups to beat up and imprison poor peasants.⁵² This situation changed once the Party committee dispatched a land reform work team to retake power from the local resistance. Locals had been nervous about participating in the campaign because of the retaliatory violence already used against them. To rectify this, the work team reformed the local Peasant Association, cleansed the ranks of corrupt cadres, and arrested the “evil tyrant” ringleaders who had taken power. These evil tyrants were two brothers, a pair of “evil gentry” who had formerly collaborated with the Nationalists to carry out “antibandit” operations. They were known to extort money and steal property from villagers, with one of them having stolen a poor peasant’s wife, and, most notably, had killed a local couple’s eldest son. The work team held a community-wide meeting to announce that they had apprehended the evil tyrants, articulated the state’s policy of leniency toward those who left the Big Swords society, to which many villagers belonged, and encouraged villagers to join the Peasant Association. Despite these assurances, few people said anything at the meeting. Wang Yiwen, one of the original accusers who helped the work team expose the web of corruption spun by the evil

tyrants, said that he was afraid that he'd be the first to get killed once the Nationalists came back.

Simply reestablishing coercive control was not sufficient to mobilize locals: while there were still doubts about the credibility of the Party's retaking of power, there were also feelings of apathy to overcome. When Wang Yiwen first went to look for people to accuse the evil tyrants at the first Peasant Association meeting, he came back dismayed because the handful of people he could find who would say anything merely said, "What's past is past" (过去的事情算了). The work team resorted to a strategy of finding, inducing, and linking up grievances (访苦, 引苦, 串苦). After the Peasant Association meeting, the work team and the small handful of the aggrieved worked together to think of ways to recruit more people to share their grievances with the community. They had each aggrieved person go out to recruit two more people to help the locals break through their anxieties. In just two days, they went from five to over thirty accusers and increased the ranks of the Peasant Association to over 110. They also worked to use these stories of wrongdoing to mobilize other villagers to come to the impending struggle session. After Wang Yibao's second son died of illness, cadres mobilized locals and sent representatives to console him but also to "encourage his hatred" (鼓动王挺高仇恨心), since his first son had been murdered by one of the evil tyrants and had not yet been avenged. They then used this same story to educate the entire community, to "take the hatred of one and turn it into class hatred (把个人仇恨, 变为阶级仇恨)."

With these moral boundaries set, it was time to activate them at the struggle session through moral theatrics. Before the struggle session, it was decided that those with "big grievances would speak first" (大苦先诉) and that the evil tyrants would be forced to wear mourning clothing and carry the spirit tablet of Wang Yibao's deceased son (决定要恶霸披麻戴孝捧灵牌子). Over four hundred villagers showed up to the struggle session. The two evil tyrants were paraded out, along with Wang Yibao and his wife, and their deceased son, in funeral attire, holding the deceased son's spirit tablet (突进人堆, 小孩子戴孝披麻, 捧灵牌, 进会场). The accusers quickly became riled up and tore at the struggle targets' clothing, demanding they kneel and hold up the spirit tablet. Wang Yibao and his wife spoke bitterness, crying and cursing themselves hoarse; the audience fell into a mournful silence. In total, twenty-eight people denounced the struggle targets. Multiple times the masses demanded to beat him to death on the spot; one of the aggrieved wanted to toss them into the river. By the end, the crowd

agreed on shooting him. At the struggle session, they were sent to the People's Court for sentencing.

The success of this initial struggle session facilitated further mobilization. Township cadres met to discuss holding three struggle sessions over three days, with each village participating. Locals had been so agitated by the previous struggle sessions that by the third it was discovered that many of them had snuck knives and awls in with them so they could slash the struggle targets. The militia monitored the crowd and prepared itself to pull people away to keep struggle targets from being beaten to death on the spot, thereby prematurely ending the struggle session. After this short string of struggle sessions, the township Peasant Association convened the community to summarize the content of the struggle sessions and then discussed other policy matters, such as distributing class labels, organizing leadership for further mobilization—that is, military conscription, production, and so on.⁵³

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Many accounts of state-mobilized violence argue that mass violence is most likely where the state is absent. Timothy Snyder, in his exploration of mass violence on the German-Soviet borderlands during World War II, concludes that the greatest amount of violence occurred not in areas with direct state mobilization but rather in “zones of statelessness,” where locals could embark on murderous rampages against their Jewish populations.⁵⁴ Similarly, Su Yang asserts that locals in relatively remote areas killed far more people during the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁵ Once political elites initiate a campaign of violence, the political periphery becomes the front line of slaughter.

I argue the opposite: the mobilization of collective violence requires the state to possess a coercive monopoly. While the local population and careerist officials may try to expand the boundaries of violence once mobilized, I find that the state's elimination of the coercive capacity of its local competitors is a necessary first step. This process of state-mobilized violence does not appear to be a function of landholding inequality or political variables, like past patterns of violence, that figure heavily in scholarly accounts of civil war violence and genocide. Economic development, however, does appear to have mattered for overall levels of land reform violence, as areas that were wealthier experienced more collective violence.

Despite the lack of strong quantitative support for class conflict and historical violence arguments, cadres did tailor their moral mobilization to the local political economy, focusing on the social relations and norms that characterized interactions between elites and villagers. Socioeconomic conditions, naturally, influenced the kinds of local elites who predominated in a locality and whom the CCP targeted in its mobilization work. As I argue in the following chapter, if a local government's degree of control determined the *intensity* of violence at the grass roots, local social relations determined its *content*—that is, the kinds of social relationships that cadres used in their moral boundary work and the fodder they used in organizing moral theatrics.

PART III

Collective Identities and State Authority

CHAPTER 5

Constructing Class Enemies in Huaibei and Jiangnan

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

—MAO ZEDONG, “ANALYSIS OF THE CLASSES IN CHINESE SOCIETY”¹

In confronting local elites and mobilizing violence against them, the Chinese Party-state needed to mobilize across a wide variety of regional political economies. In many northern localities, village heads and strongmen ruled over a relatively equal and poor stratum of small landholders, whereas traditional landlords and lineages held political power in many parts of the south. How did the Party-state socially construct and mass-mobilize violence against an out-group of “landlords” in these areas that differed so greatly in terms of their landholding inequality, economic development, and state-society relations? Who fell victim to violence in these different areas?

This chapter looks at how a state can leverage moral norms to erode and restructure traditional state-society relations. In contrast to accounts that assume that states inherit state-society relations that facilitate or inhibit the expansion of state authority,² I illustrate how a state can exploit the norms that undergird these relations to break them apart. I show that the Chinese Party-state leveraged norms of care and fairness to reframe landed elites as fundamentally evil and selected the most egregious violators of these norms for violent struggle; however, these norms more readily applied in some areas than others. That is, regional differences in state-society relations, largely a function of regional political economy, determined the kinds of norms that cadres used to select struggle targets.

This argument is twofold. First, the economic boundary work that imposed class labels on communities was a process separate from the moral

boundary work that determined who would be struggled against. In distributing class labels, cadres were mainly concerned with ensuring that they could confiscate an adequate amount of property to redistribute to the landless and land-poor peasants. The constraints of land availability in different regions, however, frustrated this process and led, paradoxically, to the overlabeling of the population as “bad classes”—that is, landlords and rich peasants—in poorer, more equal regions where cadres needed to expropriate more households in order to raise enough resources for redistribution. Second, these regional differences in class labeling do not explain regional variation in the selection of targets of violence: localities that labeled more of their population as landlords did not necessarily struggle against more landlords than areas that labeled a smaller proportion of their population as landlords. Instead, local variation in the social relations that characterized prerevolutionary society better explains differences in the selection of struggle targets. Localities where landlordism was not central to social life struggled against fewer landlords than those where landlord-tenant relationships predominated. Moreover, these struggle targets, landlord and nonlandlord, were accused of morally retrograde behavior related to the normative framework that characterized these predominant social relations—for example, the political and economic hierarchies that defined elites and nonelites. Where landlord-tenant ties were more prevalent, norms of propriety regarding fairness and cheating were far more commonly invoked than in areas where tenancy rates were low. In localities where state-community ties were more important, participants more readily appealed to norms of benevolence regarding cruelty and betrayal of the community.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. I first use an analysis of the county gazetteer data set to demonstrate that economic variables best predict the delineation of economic boundaries in land reform. I then use a comparative case analysis of two counties from Huaibei in the north and Jiangnan in the south to show how moral boundary work guided the selection of struggle targets. A comparison of Fengyang County in Huaibei and Baoshan County in Jiangnan reveals a perplexing pattern of boundary work and collective violence: even though Fengyang labeled nearly twice as many households as landlords, the majority of people struggled against were not landlords; conversely, Baoshan struggled almost exclusively against landlords despite giving bad class labels to a much smaller proportion of its population. The root of this difference, I show, lay in the norms that cadres and

communities used to select targets. In Huaibei, I argue, norms of benevolence were key, while I argue for the centrality of norms of propriety in the selection of struggle targets in Jiangnan. Last, in both counties the severity of violence correlated with moral boundaries that separated people on the basis of shared perceptions of their behavior and character. Throughout the chapter, I draw on archival material, internal Party documents, and oral histories regarding the land reform campaign, though I also use some material from the concurrent Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries and the preceding antibandit, antityrant campaign.

ECONOMIC BOUNDARY WORK

The class-labeling stage of land reform drew economic boundaries that determined whose property would be expropriated and who would receive property, and in what amounts. These class labels were also, in part, the basis for selecting people to subject to political struggle, but this economic boundary work was its own distinct process grounded more in concerns about property redistribution than mobilizing class violence. That is, even though work teams pushed communities to struggle against targets who were formally labeled as landlords, the Party wanted to keep economic boundary work separate from political and moral considerations. County gazetteer data and Party documents suggest that, on the whole, economic factors—for example, inequality and regional differences in landholding structure—drove the distribution of class labels and the Party worked to ensure that the proportion of the population labeled as landlords did not exceed the 3 to 4 percent target set by the Party.

Even in theory, the labeling of landlords included noneconomic considerations. Mao's analysis of landlordism mixed economic, political, and moral criteria. In his 1933 "How to Differentiate the Classes in the Rural Areas" (怎样分析农村阶级), Mao's definition of the "landlord" (地主) begins with a standard Marxist economic description:

A landlord is a person who owns land, does not engage in labour himself, or does so only to a very small extent, and lives by exploiting the peasants. The collection of land rent is his main form of exploitation; in addition, he may lend money, hire labour, or engage in industry or commerce. But his exaction of land rent from the peasants is his principal form of exploitation.³

The remaining criteria, however, blend the economic with the political and the moral:

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

Warlords, officials, local tyrants and evil gentry are political representatives and exceptionally ruthless members of the landlord class. Minor local tyrants and evil gentry are also very often to be found among the rich peasants.

Persons who assist landlords in collecting rent and managing property, who depend on landlord exploitation of the peasants as their main source of income and are better off than the average middle peasant shall be put in the same category as landlords.⁴

Those included in these landlord-affiliated categories were still supposed to be “better off than the average middle peasant,” but their inclusion rests squarely on the nefariousness of their behavior. The bankrupt landlord retains his or her class label because he or she continues to “swindle[] and rob[] others”; political elites are landlords because they are the “ruthless” mouthpieces of the landlord class; rent collectors and property managers are accessories to landlord exploitation and therefore deserve to be categorized together with them. The inclusion of rent collectors and property managers in the definition of landlords is particularly striking because, out of all of these affiliated groups, these agents were by no means wealthy and perhaps would have been classified as poor or middle peasants had they not worked for landlords. Curiously, these noneconomic criteria are absent from Mao’s discussion of the nonlandlords classes—that is, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants, farmworkers—whom he defines strictly according to the amount of their income they derive from rent, whether they hire labor or sell their own, and how much land they own and rent.⁵

The moderate stance of the 1950 Agrarian Reform Law put pressure on officials to privilege economic over noneconomic factors in assigning class labels. Because the law forbade the wholesale confiscation of rich peasant land, the majority of confiscated land had to come from landlords and communally owned land (公地)—for example, land managed by lineages, temples, or schools. Labeling more people as landlords liberated more resources

to redistribute, while labeling more people as rich peasants shrank the overall pool of potential recipients, as rich peasants were not supposed to receive additional land.⁶ To compound this issue, the Party tightened its labeling policy to quell the fears of middle peasants—who worried that they would be expropriated, as they were during the civil war period—by lowering the recommended quota for landlords from 8 percent to 3 to 4 percent of all rural households.⁷ Under these restrictions, officials had the difficult task of distributing labels in a way that ensured that there were sufficient resources to redistribute to the landless and land-poor without labeling a huge proportion of the population as landlords. Assigning class labels had now become inextricably intertwined with the practical demands of land redistribution.

The propensity to overlabel people as landlords or rich peasants was particularly severe in poorer, more equal parts of China. The need to ensure that land-poor and landless peasants believed they materially benefited from land reform meant that, ironically, poorer, more equal regions labeled a higher percentage of their population as landlords and rich peasants. Some localities admitted to this practice of overlabeling to adjust land redistribution. Fengyang County noted that overlabeling was pervasive and that only expropriating landlords did not provide enough resources to redistribute, which meant that even rich peasants had their land expropriated to make up the deficit.⁸ Data from county gazetteers in the East China Bureau illustrate that Fengyang's situation reflected a general trend. Despite receiving the same policy directives from the East China Bureau, patterns of class labeling differed markedly between the wealthy, unequal Lower Yangzi Delta; the wealthy, lineage-rich Southeast Coast; and impoverished Huaibei in the north. Counties in Huaibei, on average, labeled 4.04 percent of their households as landlords, which was at the very top of the range of the Party's recommended quota, while counties in the lower Yangzi and Southeast Coast 3.05 and 2.80 percent of their households as landlords, respectively, at the bottom of that range. These patterns persist when looking at all "bad classes"—rich peasants, landlords, and "landlord-equivalent" labels (see Fig. 8).

To more directly assess the proposition that economic concerns drove the distribution of class labels, I estimate an OLS regression model using data from 250 counties in the East China Bureau to detect potential correlations between landlord class labeling and landholding inequality, agricultural development, Party density, prerevolutionary conflict, and past history of land reform. Were economic considerations about land redistribution paramount, then economic variables should correlate negatively with the

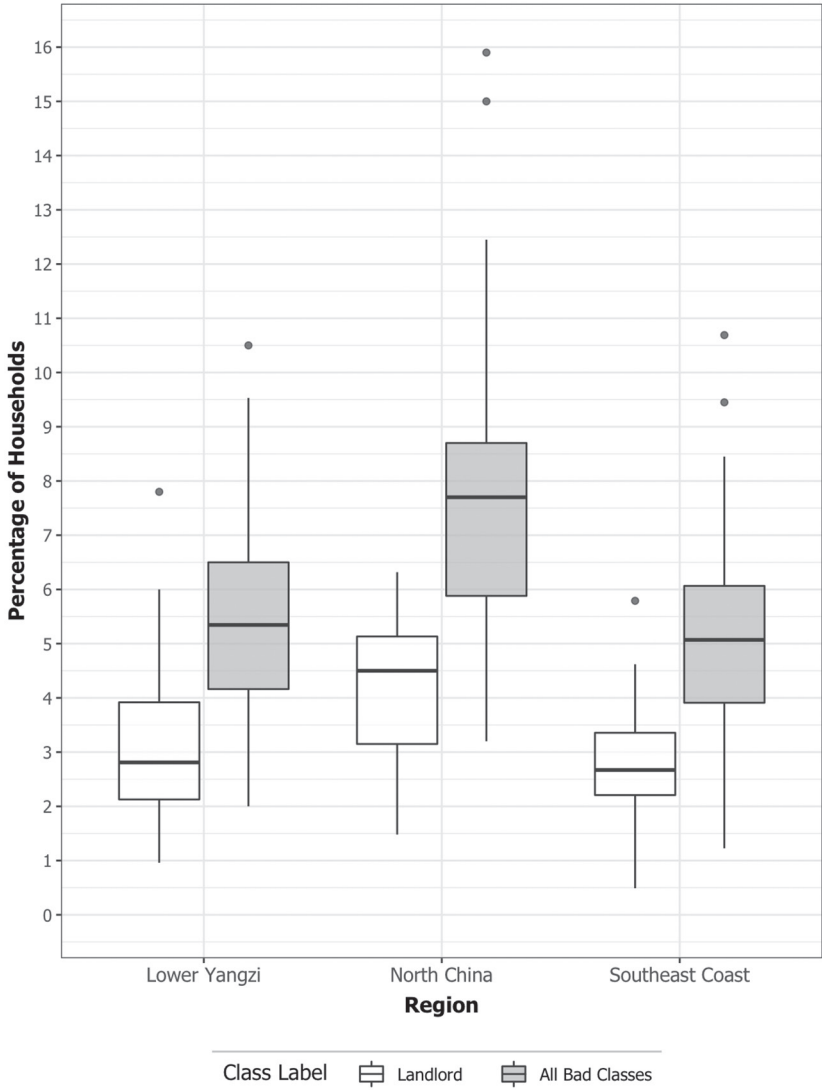


Fig. 8. Boxplots of the Percentage of Households Given Landlord and Other Bad Class Labels by Region

percentage of households labeled as landlords: wealthier, unequal localities would have confiscated property from fewer households to satisfy the land needs of the poor, while poorer, more equal localities would have had to confiscate from a larger percentage of households. If greed or feelings of relative deprivation drove the distribution of class labels, we should expect to find more households labeled as landlords in localities that were richer and more unequal. If revenge motives primarily motivated communities to label certain households as landlords, we would anticipate more landlord households in areas with marked histories of intercommunal conflict or that had experienced Japanese occupation, where locals might have punished personal enemies and Japanese collaborators by labeling them as landlords. Last, land reform policy documents repeatedly stress “isolating the landlord class” (孤立地主阶级) from the rest of society to foster in-group solidarity among “the masses” and to dispel the fears of middle peasants who suspected that the movement might target them. This policy orientation, in conjunction with the 4 percent cap on landlord labeling, suggests an inverse relationship between Party density and percentage of households labeled as landlords.

The results in Table 5 support the idea that landlord labels were distributed with practical economic considerations in mind. The negative correlation between landholding inequality and landlord labeling suggests that relatively equal localities had to expropriate more landlords in order to have sufficient resources to give to the landless and land-poor. The large, significant negative correlation between agricultural productivity and landlord labeling supports the assertion that in areas where land was of higher quality, cadres felt less of an urgent need to confiscate and redistribute more land. Communities in Huaibei—like Fengyang cited above—would have had to expropriate more land to meet redistribution needs, since more land was necessarily for subsistence. Across all localities, the negative, though insignificant, correlation between landlord class labeling and Party density suggests that the Party was concerned with limiting the bounds of those who would be expropriated and considered members of the “bad classes,” which was in line with official Party policy.

Understanding the counterfactual scenario here is important. Local communities could have attempted to maximize resource confiscation regardless of levels of inequality and economic development, which would have increased not only the pool of redistributable resources but also the pool of class enemies. Indeed, a relative deprivation argument would predict

TABLE 5. OLS Coefficients for Determinants of Landlord Labeling

Variable	Outcome: Percentage of Landlord Households	
	(1)	(2)
Landlord: Average Landholding Inequality (logged)	-0.70*** (0.15)	
Landlord: Poor Peasant Landholding Inequality (logged)		-0.18* (0.10)
Agricultural Productivity (logged)	0.59*** (0.19)	-0.62*** (0.20)
Party Density (logged)	-0.00(0.07)	-0.06 (0.43)
Pre-49 Land Reform	-0.51*** (0.21)	-0.39* (0.20)
History of Intercommunal Conflict	-0.12 (0.18)	-0.14 (0.20)

N = 250. Missing data multiply imputed (*m* = 50) using the R package Amelia. See Honaker, James, Gary King, and Matthew Blackwell. "Amelia II: A Program for Missing Data." *Journal of Statistical Software* 45, no. 7 (2011): 1-47. * *p* < .1; ** *p* < .05; *** *p* < .01.

precisely this, as localities with poorer peasants who owned significantly smaller parcels of land than their landed counterparts may have demanded more land confiscation than the Party was willing to implement. Party documents refer to this "leftist" tendency among some peasants as the "equalizing land mindset" (平均分地的思想), which the Party adamantly opposed for fear of alienating peasants in the middle of the land distribution. It appears, however, that this leftist mindset did not predominate in poorer, more unequal areas.

A prerevolutionary history of intercommunal violence does not significantly correlate with class labeling. This contradicts arguments that revenge motives would have pushed for labeling a greater proportion of the population as landlords where preexisting conflict was more severe. Since Party policy before 1949 had not provided instructions on controlling the scope of land redistribution, local work teams were possibly more liberal in allowing larger proportions of the population to be labeled as landlords. The findings in Table 5, however, suggest the opposite: it appears that landlord labeling may have been more constrained before 1949.

In sum, resource constraints and the need to redistribute property in that way that would satisfy landless and land-poor peasants forced cadres into

drawing class boundaries that made a larger proportion of the community vulnerable to class struggle in poorer, more equal localities. Once we turn to the selection of struggle targets, we find that the configuration of these newly imposed economic boundaries did not determine who would fall victim to class struggle. Instead, public assessments of the moral rectitude of an individual's behavior and character became the standard by which cadres and communities designated targets for class struggle.

MORAL BOUNDARY WORK: THE BASIS OF VIOLENT MASS MOBILIZATION

While the drawing of class boundaries was tied up with the practicalities of land redistribution, the moral boundaries that separated class enemies from the masses were grounded in a distinct set of normative concerns about individuals' behavior and character; significantly it was these concerns that ultimately condemned certain individuals to become targets of collective violence, partly if not wholly irrespective of their economic class label. The Party tailored its mobilization to appeal to moral norms that were central to a locality's pre-1949 social relations, which were ultimately rooted in its political economy—that is, the nature of the ruling elite and its economic and political ties to the greater community shaped the normative framework through which locals assessed what was right or wrong, just or unjust. Poor, relatively equal localities, like Fengyang County in Huaibei, mainly targeted and punished political elites—for example, local officials, strongmen, and bandits. Some of these political elites owned a great deal of land, but, because many locals were small “owner-cultivators” who did not rent land, they did not have a landlord-tenant relationship with these elites.⁹ Rather, locals were more concerned with elites' transgression of norms of care: expectations that political power-holders protect the community and not allow harm to come to it, through predation, corruption, or abuse. In contrast, wealthy, highly unequal localities like Baoshan County in Jiangnan, tended to target local, relatively small, landlords for their perceived transgressions of norms of fairness—that is, norms governing the proper way in which landlords should treat their tenants and collect rents. Landlord-tenant ties were far more central to rural social relations in Jiangnan, as it was through rent, not taxes, that villagers interacted with the state;¹⁰ these norms of fairness undergirded the cohesion of local society before 1949.

TABLE 6. Summary Statistics of Case Study Counties

Variable	Baoshan County	Fengyang County
Central Bureau	East China	East China
Region	Lower Yangzi Delta (Jiangnan)	North China (Huaibei)
Japanese Occupation	Yes	Yes
Landholding Inequality	6.25	4.48
Agricultural Productivity	223.5 kg/mu	40.08 kg/mu
History of Conflict	Antirent; resistance against Japanese; worker strikes	Antitax
Landlord Households (%)	1.85	3.26
Bad Classes (%)	3.50	7.01
Main Targeted Categories	Landlords Former officials	Strongmen Former officials Bandits Thieves

Despite these differences in social boundaries and their relevant moral norms, I find similarities in the process by which each locality differentially punished these targets: both counties employed lethal violence, torture, or minor violence against targets according to the gravity of their alleged moral transgressions.

The relationship between economic and moral boundaries was tenuous. Even though Fengyang labeled nearly twice as many households as landlords compared to Baoshan, only a portion of the struggle targets in Fengyang were formally labeled as landlords, while the majority of struggle targets in Baoshan were labeled as such. I hold constant major political variables that could affect patterns of targeting: both counties received policy directives from the East China Bureau; had experienced some Communist mobilization before 1949; and were hit by brutal “mopping-up” campaigns and occupied by the Japanese during World War II (see Table 6).¹¹ Nevertheless, the counties differed substantially in terms of their socioeconomic and ecological conditions, which shaped their pre-1949 social boundaries and the kinds of community elites who held power. Because the social boundaries and their governing moral norms are endogenous to these socioeconomic variables, I use process-tracing within each county case to adjudicate between the competing explanations for target selection.¹²

MAPPING THE SOCIAL FIELD BEFORE AND AFTER 1949:
DEFINING NORMS OF PROPRIETY AND NORMS OF BENEVOLENCE

The configuration of social boundaries—often called social cleavages in the political science literature—in a society or community is a common explanation for the onset and dynamics of conflict; yet despite the “constructivist consensus” that group identities are fluid and contingent, research on mobilization and collective violence seldom problematizes the boundaries that delimit groups.¹³ Social boundaries, in their categorical sense, separate “us” from “them,” but they do not automatically specify the behavioral relationship between in-groups and out-groups.¹⁴ This incongruity between the categorical and behavioral dimensions of boundaries has significant implications for the distribution of violence in mobilization,¹⁵ as it suggests that social boundaries cannot, in and of themselves, predict the use of violence against those who fall on the “wrong” side of those boundaries.¹⁶

I conceptualize pre- and post-1949 Chinese rural society in terms of class status and moral status—that is, competition for economic and moral resources structured social relations. While there were economic, contractual relations between landlords and tenants that defined the hierarchical and unequal distribution of political and economic resources, there were nonetheless significant moral norms that governed the proper way in which a landlord treated and behaved toward a tenant and vice versa.¹⁷ These shared understandings of the proper ways in which landlords and tenants should relate to one another are what I term norms of propriety. In line with Haidt’s moral foundation of fairness/cheating,¹⁸ violations of norms of propriety in rural China could include a variety of infractions related to “cheating” and “deception,” including extracting more rent than due, extracting rent during a bad harvest, withholding grain from tenants during a famine, refusing to pay or feed farmworkers, swindling others, and amassing land illegitimately by stealing it from others or by exploiting ties with the state. Morton Fried, in his firsthand account of social life in Chuxian in northern Anhui, argues that villagers viewed landlord-tenant relationships, like all social relationships in Chuxian, in terms of positive or negative “feeling” (感情).¹⁹ For Fried, “feeling” was particularly important in relationships between persons of unequal status unrelated by kinship.²⁰ As he puts it, “Even the wealthiest landlord has a certain interest in *kan-chi’ing* [feeling] because production may be spurred by it, cheating may be reduced by it, and it is only

within the bounds of propriety that all relationships can be carried on properly.”²¹

Norms of propriety cut both ways: tenants could acquire the label of “evil tenant” if they had a reputation for viciousness or dishonesty—threatening or cursing their landlords, failing to pay rent and using that money for personal investment, illegally tilling land, and so on. For “recalcitrant tenants” who defaulted on rents, the Qing Code recommended harsh corporal punishment.²² Significantly, in prerevolutionary society the wealthy could easily use the instruments of the state to punish transgressions of propriety by the poor. For the poor, legal recourse was far harder to obtain, and rent resistance was a powerful extrainstitutional means of punishing wealthy transgressors of norms of propriety. Kathryn Bernhardt demonstrates that transgressions of norms of propriety motivated and structured the violence of prerevolutionary rent resistance in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Jiangnan. Despite attacking large and small landlords, peasants would also selectively target landlords based on the egregiousness of their behavior: they targeted those who collected more than the local average, failed to reduce rents during poor harvests, used unfavorable conversion rates for rents, refused to share tax remissions, or were particularly ruthless and unsympathetic in their collection of rents. Of particular note is that the peasants loathed those who exploited their ties with local officials to collect rents, often by arresting and beating tenants. Those landlords who exhibited some degree of civic virtue by contributing to local community services or public projects could avoid becoming targets of violence, though this was far from a surefire guarantee.²³ Importantly, these episodes of rent resistance were usually not antisystematic: “There was no fundamental questioning of the principle of tenancy, simply a protest against sudden changes in the status quo.”²⁴

Related to though distinct from norms of fairness, norms of benevolence concerned the expectations attached to how local political elites should behave and protect the communities they governed. The idea here is that local political elites—whether they be government officials or local power-holders—should shield the community from external harm, not prey on locals, and avoid corrupt activity. These norms center around Haidt’s care/harm moral foundation in that they are ultimately concerned with protecting the welfare of the local community. Corruption and harming the community were chief among these transgressions. The Qing state regarded official corruption and failed policy implementation as individual moral

failings, and expected officials to be morally upright and assume a paternalistic role in governance; the Yongzheng Emperor declared magistrates the “parent officials of the people.”²⁵ Even at the village level, virtuous behavior and upstanding character were considered important criteria for selecting local leaders, such as township heads (乡长) and *baojia* heads (保长).²⁶ This moralization of officialdom created a Janus-faced image of local officials as benevolent and paternalistic authority figures as well as depraved and predatory crooks. “The ideal that local government would be staffed solely by morally superior men,” Philip Huang argues, “led to its counter of a local government corrupted by immoral clerks and runners.”²⁷ Although by the Republican Era local officials could not and were not expected to live up to the Confucian imperative to “educate and nourish” to which their imperial scholar-official predecessors were held,²⁸ for a political power-holder, taking care of one’s community persisted as a norm. Up until the PRC period, traditional rural opera and patterns of protest and rebellion exhibited strong themes of anticorruption and retributive justice that mirrored the imperial state’s moralized view of official corruption, with its Manichaeian dichotomy between benevolent (central) and the abusive (local) officials.²⁹

Corruption, murder, rape, and other destructive acts against local communities constituted most violations of norms of benevolence. Locating examples of these transgressions was a relatively easy task because of the corruption and abuse by local strongmen and bandits who filled the many power vacuums left by the collapse of the Qing.³⁰ These “local bullies and evil gentry” (土豪劣绅) and bandits, who had replaced the traditional gentry class of scholar-officials, ruled through military power and political connections and, unlike the old gentry, lacked formal education and were not “rigidly bound by Confucian canons in their official conduct.” In place of Confucian ethics, they “had no political ideology to teach the villagers except the silent message that there were times when the strongman won regardless of class background or moral conduct.”³¹ To be sure, many of these corrupt and abusive elites were powerful landholders, though they were not necessarily the wealthiest members of their communities. These transgressions particularly enraged communities when they involved the destruction of families. Stories of “evil tyrants” conscripting only sons, murdering husbands and leaving their families destitute, and raping or stealing wives easily elicited empathy for victims and outrage toward the perpetrator; work teams and local cadres, in their search for potential struggle targets, sought these kinds of transgressive behaviors.

Of course, these sets of norms were not mutually exclusive: during land reform, most communities could come up with examples of dishonest landlords, abusive officials, and brutal strongmen (and those who fell into all three categories). A landlord who underpaid or cheated his tenants, which in turn caused them to lose their only son to hunger, would have transgressed norms of propriety and norms of benevolence. Not only would such a landlord be seen as a liar and a cheat, he would be responsible for the destruction of a family. Nevertheless, we can detect broad-patterned variation across regions in terms of the predominant kinds of people targeted based on the nature of local authority relations and the kinds of moral norms that characterized them. Unequal and wealthy communities with high rates of tenancy, where landlord-tenant relations were particularly important in everyday life, tended to focus on violations of norms of fairness and therefore mainly—though not exclusively—chose landlords as targets of violence. In contrast, communities in places that had low rates of tenancy and where local strongmen and bandit groups held power focused more on norms of care in selecting targets. In lieu of landlords, communities in these areas generally targeted former government functionaries, strongmen, bandits, and even petty criminals, who were far more relevant to the authority structure of the local community than economically defined landlords.³²

TRANSFORMING LOCAL SOCIAL STRUCTURES

I argue that the CCP, through moral boundary work, altered the existing social structure of rural communities such that they created a new in-group of “the masses” (群众), to which they ascribed positive class and moral status, and new out-groups based around landed elites and other members of the community of (perceived) low moral status. This process, in turn, shaped how local communities in different regions selected targets for collective violence. Because moral transgression was a central criterion for selecting struggle targets, I contend that the kinds of people targeted during land reform varied according to the moral norms that were most important to prerevolutionary social relations. I demonstrate this by comparing two counties, each from a different macroregion within the East China Bureau. I hypothesize that wealthy places with relatively clear class stratification, like Baoshan County in Jiangnan, selected proportionately more landlords for alleged violations of norms of fairness, while poor, relatively equal places, like Feng-

yang County in Huaibei, chose struggle targets for their abuse of power and other violations of norms of care.

The Party broke apart cross-class communal identities formerly bound together by villages or lineages (Fig. 9) and reorganized them according to economic and moral criteria (Fig. 10). Transgressors of norms of propriety cluster in the region of low class status, low moral status; these individuals were labeled as landlords and given the prefix of “evil tyrant” (恶霸), making them “evil tyrant landlords” (恶霸地主), for their alleged infractions against their tenants and, in some cases, against the greater community.³³ Work teams and Peasant Associations drew from this cluster to select struggle targets in Baoshan, where the preponderance of struggle targets were landlords. Transgressors of norms of benevolence, on the other hand, had low moral status but were distributed widely across the class status spectrum. These transgressors fell into the catch-all category of “evil tyrant” (恶霸), without a class designation, that described people who harmed others in the community, including anyone from local tax collectors to small-time bandits and vagrants. These individuals were by no means wealthy, nor did they have low class statuses—that is, rich peasant, landlord, and so on; their inclusion rested solely on their perceived abusive and predatory behavior. I argue that in localities like Fengyang, where landlord-tenant relations were less central to social relations, struggle targets were mainly transgressors of norms of benevolence who hailed from diverse class backgrounds.

Regardless of the local configuration of social relations, the Party pushed communities to struggle against suspected political transgressors—namely, those who resisted land reform or threatened the authority of the local government. One’s designation as a political transgressor depended on political attitudes and allegiances, irrespective of class or moral status. Political transgressors from landlord backgrounds were known as “unlawful landlords” (不法地主). Individuals chosen as struggle targets primarily for political transgressions were usually of neutral moral status; had they been of low moral status, cadres would have emphasized their moral offenses over their political ones. As I argue in Chapter 3, cadres reserved these politically motivated selections for collective violence later in the course of mobilization, after the masses had been sufficiently mobilized by struggling against low-moral-status targets. Nevertheless, we should expect political transgressors—that is, unlawful landlords, counterrevolutionaries, and some bandits—to comprise a sizable minority of struggle targets in both counties.

The Party-state’s focus on moral considerations in target selection inevi-

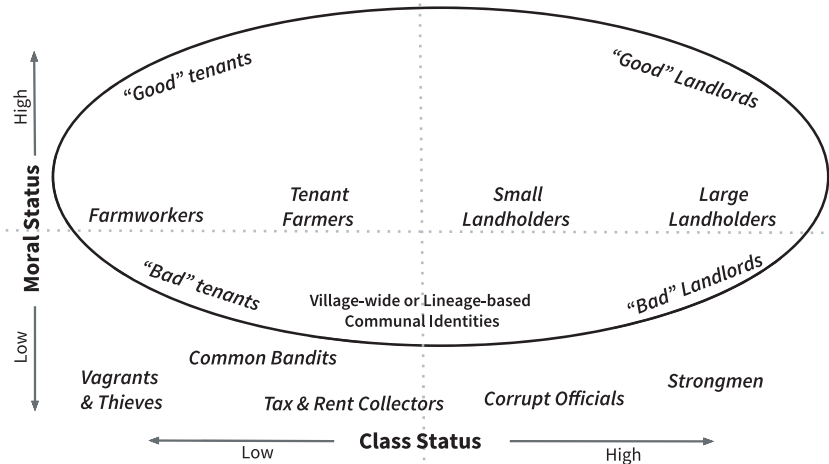


Fig. 9. Social Structure before 1949 by Class Status and Moral Status

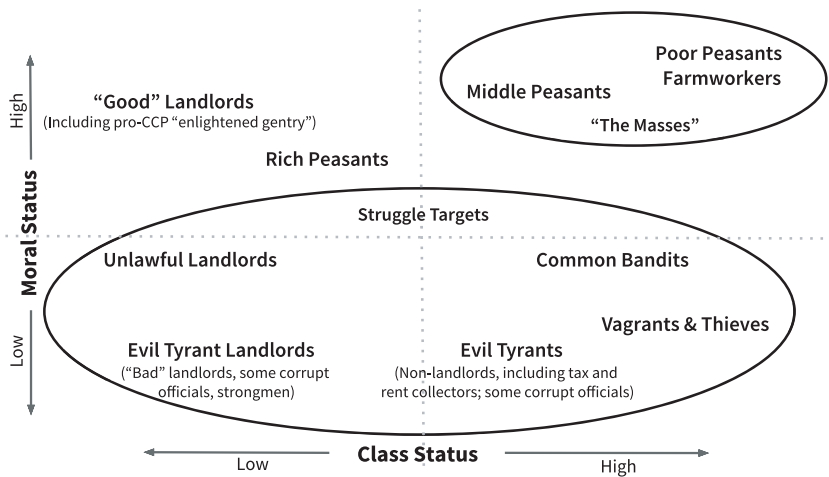


Fig. 10. Social Structure in the Early 1950s by Class Status and Moral Status

tably created a significant tension between the ideology of class struggle and the practicalities of violent mobilization. If it were indeed easier to mobilize violence against people whom cadres could portray as evil, many struggle targets would not formally be part of the landed elite. As the earlier discussion of Mao’s writings on class struggle indicate, Mao was open to casting a wide net when targeting class enemies: anyone who could be associated with the evils of the feudal order was fair game.

TRANSGRESSING NORMS OF BENEVOLENCE IN HUAIBEI:
THE CASE OF FENGYANG COUNTY

Located in “the heart of China’s so-called flood and famine region” between the Huai and Yellow Rivers, Huaibei is a nebulously defined area that encompasses northern Anhui and northern Jiangsu, and, more broadly defined, parts of eastern Henan and southwestern Shandong. As Perry discusses in her study of peasant rebellion in Huaibei, the region’s resource-poor environs—impoverished by its harsh ecology and recurrent war due to its geopolitical significance as the dividing pass between northern and southern China—created the conditions for fierce resource competition between predatory groups of wandering bandits and locally armed community defense groups organized to fend off rapacious outsiders.³⁴ Typical of northern China, landholdings were larger here, though the soil quality was poorer; tenancy rates were relatively low.³⁵ Many wealthier villagers were not “leasing landlords” but instead “managerial landlords” who worked the land alongside their laborers.³⁶ Class stratification in Huaibei was weak due to the crushing poverty of the region and its cyclical turnover of population and land. A “hydraulic cycle” involving the diking, silting, and flooding of rivers fueled this cyclical overpopulation, depopulation, and resettlement of land.³⁷ Compared to the Lower Yangzi Delta, which experienced 20 floods in five hundred years, the Yellow River caused 1,593 floods in North China, of which Huaibei was a part, throughout its recorded history.³⁸ This severe ecological instability, combined with the region’s prevalent banditry, effortlessly destroyed the fortunes of well-to-do households and contributed to the fluidity of the region’s social structure.³⁹ This helps explain why Huaibei’s socioeconomic structure lacked a clear middle stratum of well-to-do peasants and was instead bifurcated into a large mass of poor peasants and a small number of so-called landlords.⁴⁰

In Huaibei, village relations were complex, and class and moral boundaries were often crosscutting, as cross-class fictive kinship created encompassing identities that bound communities together.⁴¹ Owner-cultivators held a higher moral status in the community and often took up community leadership positions. In contrast, poor workers or day laborers, who were often outsiders, were viewed with contempt by locals. Yet villagers also disliked “village bullies,” some of whom descended from the traditional elite or simply filled local power vacuums left by the collapse of the Qing, for using their political clout to embezzle government funds or physically abuse locals.⁴²

Fengyang County, located on the southern bank of the Huai River, exhibited many characteristics of the greater Huaibei region at their most extreme. The county has a long reputation of poverty,⁴³ which was starkly more severe than elsewhere in the region. Nutritional data from John Lossing Buck's land survey in the early 1930s indicate that adult males in Fengyang consumed only 20 calories a day from animal food products, less than other localities in Huaibei like Funing (26 cal/day) and Huaiyin (37 cal/day) and only a fraction of the amount consumed in places in Jiangnan like Wuhu (115 cal/day) and Changshu (76 cal/day).⁴⁴ The county's crop yield, a general indicator of agricultural development, was a mere forty kilograms of grain per *mu* in 1949, well below the average of about fifty kilograms per *mu* for the entire Huaibei region covered by northern Anhui and northern Jiangsu.⁴⁵

In an agricultural economy with little industry or commerce, Fengyang's economic growth was regularly disrupted by a relentless alternation of floods and droughts. From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, over a span of 250 years, Fengyang was hit by natural disasters in 75 of these years, or roughly a natural disaster every 3.33 years.⁴⁶ After a terrible flood in 1931 ended decades of relatively good economic growth,⁴⁷ the county's economic situation was further damaged when a particularly devastating flood hit northern Anhui in 1949—a flood worse than any in the preceding thirty years, according to the Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee secretary Zeng Xisheng—affecting over eight million villagers in total.⁴⁸ As an indication of the severity of the situation, a few years later the county committee in nearby Quanjiao County was still engaged in emergency relief work, which entailed local cadres organizing villagers to forage for food by digging up vegetable roots and collecting edible herbs.⁴⁹

Landholding inequality in Fengyang was relatively mild in the county on the eve of the revolution: the ratio of landlord per capita to average per capita landholdings was 4.48, which was lower than the average for both the Huaibei and Jiangnan regions.⁵⁰ The county's relatively equal distribution of land and the general poverty of landlords and tenants alike frustrated the CCP's efforts to determine the "class structure" of local communities and to separate "landlords" from the rest of the community. A 1948 report on a *bao* in Feng District 1, a pre-1949 subadministrative unit in the county, noted that the area lacked any large landholders (over one hundred *mu* of land) and that land was not particularly concentrated, which made it "difficult to determine the difference between middle and rich peasants" (中农,富农之别较难确定).⁵¹ Despite the Party's claims that economic exploitation in the

local economy was severe, a county inspection group sent to Changhuai District found that there were few landlords, most of whom were small landholders; consequently, identifying landlords during the class-labeling process was quite difficult.⁵²

Significantly, the tenancy structure of Fengyang differed greatly from places in Jiangnan like Baoshan because of the prevalence of sharecropping and its overall low rate of tenancy. Buck's survey work in Fengyang indicates that about 81 percent of tenant farmers were using the sharecropping rent system whereby the tenant and landlord split the harvest by a fixed ratio, usually sixty-forty.⁵³ This kind of arrangement is to be expected in poorer, ecologically volatile locales, which is also reflected in Buck's findings that most southern localities in Anhui and Jiangsu completely relied on fixed rent systems.⁵⁴ In contrast to Jiangnan, localities in Huaibei, like other parts of the North China plain, was comprised mainly of "owner-cultivators" who paid taxes directly to the state and had developed local political organizations in order to deal with this form of direct extraction.⁵⁵

Because of Fengyang's relative equality and low rate of tenancy, norms of benevolence were of great concern: there existed significant social antagonism between locals and local officialdom, many of whom were or were perceived to be corrupt. Like elsewhere in Huaibei, villagers in Fengyang did not suffer so much from economic exploitation as the wanton and arbitrary abuse of political power. The overlap between the two categories of "local bullies" or "evil tyrants" and local officials was often significant, though difficult to ascertain, especially by the early twentieth century. Indeed, many of these large landlords and local bullies (豪强) in Huaibei were in fact military-government officials (军政官吏) whose power was far more political than economic.⁵⁶ In the decades preceding the Communist takeover, as local power-holders' monopoly on administrative power combined with military and economy power, these "evil tyrants" constituted a category apart from the conventional economic understanding of landlordism, and their authority—and the resentment toward them—was rooted primarily in their arbitrary use of political power.⁵⁷

Fengyang's legacy of antistate rebellion reflects the historical importance of norms of benevolence to the region. While the Han dynasty (206 BCE—220 CE) historian Sima Qian remarked that the residents of Huaibei were "proud, unruly and fond of making trouble,"⁵⁸ Fengyang has a particularly distinguished history of rebellion. The beginning of the *Fengyang County Gazetteer* proudly proclaims that "the people of Fengyang have always had a glori-

ous tradition of resisting foreign aggression and protecting home and country” (凤阳人民素有抵御外侮保家卫国的光荣传统).⁵⁹ Most notably, Zhu Yuanzhang, the founder of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and leader of the fourteenth-century Red Turban rebellion that overthrew the Yuan dynasty, was a Fengyang native. Once he assumed power as the Hongwu Emperor, he gave the county a massive tax break that persisted indefinitely because of the locals’ propensity to protest against all subsequent attempts to raise taxes.⁶⁰ Though wheat-growing areas in North China paid less in taxes than nearly anywhere else,⁶¹ Fengyang’s unique history contributed to an even lower tax burden, one that was, during the Republican Era, the lowest in the entire country. This remarkably light tax burden only exacerbated locals’ antagonistic attitude toward officials. Crucially, locals were less interested in mobilizing against landlords than rapacious officials and power holders. Bianco’s study of the 1937 anti-poppy tax revolt in northern Anhui, where Fengyang is situated, underscores the primacy of the social tension between the peasantry and “local bullies and evil gentry” (土豪劣绅) and officials, who were the principal targets of the peasantry’s demands for punishment during the revolt.⁶²

Indeed, the Party recognized the significance of norms of benevolence during its earliest days of organizing in the county. In 1927, taking advantage of the Nationalists’ weak foothold in Fengyang, the CCP recruited locals, mainly urban students, workers, and street vendors, into the Party through organizing them to participate in violent political struggle. Yet these “struggles” centered on tax resistance and targeted “corrupt officials” (贪官污吏), not landlords.⁶³ Because the Nationalists forced the Communists out of the region shortly after the outbreak of the civil war, the Party had to postpone further struggle efforts until after 1949; however, in preparing for land reform, local officials quickly recognized that locals’ concerns in Fengyang rested less in class antagonisms than in the profound animosity felt toward abusive local officials. The Changhuai report, which earlier mentioned the paucity of landlords in the district, observed that “puppet” and “obstinate” cadres were, conversely, relatively plentiful (顽伪干较多).⁶⁴

Aside from officials and strongmen, another important social group in Fengyang, like elsewhere in Huaibei, were the so-called bandits (土匪). Even after 1949, bandit groups continued to operate in Fengyang, in the vicinity of Huayuan Lake (花园湖) located in the northeastern part of the county, and the county’s mountainous areas.⁶⁵ The meaning of the term “bandit” and the relationship between locals and these bandit groups in Fengyang—and Huaibei more generally—were complex. In the Republican Era, rampant

local abuse and crime caused locals to use the blanket term “bandit” (匪) to describe negligent and abusive officials and power holders.⁶⁶ The term could also refer to criminal gangs of poor peasants or soldiers. In the 1920s, Ma Junya explains, many of the “bandits” in the Huaibei region were actually decommissioned soldiers who had been defeated in battle and later holed up in mountains and other inaccessible spots from which they would launch attacks on wealthy households.⁶⁷ Yet Fengyang also had a tradition of bandit-led uprisings in which bandits led the poor to rob the government in times of famine. A Fengyang County gazetteer published in the waning days of the Qing dynasty recorded that, in 1898, bandit leaders Niu Shixiu and Jian Geda, from nearby Guoyang County, rallied thirty thousand famine victims (饥民) under their banner to rebel and attack the Suzhou (宿州) region. The revolt was put down and the bandit leaders were executed.⁶⁸

This pattern of bandit-led rebellion and predation persisted into the early 1950s, though it is difficult to say *ex ante* if local communities supported or opposed these groups. At times, bandit groups allied with locals against the Party. The Fengyang County Party Committee observed that the region’s long history as a haven for banditry meant that locals in some areas continued to secretly support some bandit groups, even supplying them with intelligence and economic assistance.⁶⁹ Still other bandit groups were simply predatory and raided villages. As the Fengyang County Party Committee noted, bandit groups comprised of hundreds of people continued to rob and loot after 1949, which worried locals and contributed to their overall apprehensiveness.⁷⁰ Either way, like corrupt officials and abusive power-holders, predatory bandit groups were yet another potential source of targets for the land reform campaign.

SELECTING STRUGGLE TARGETS IN FENGYANG

The weakness of class-based social boundaries in Fengyang would predict that the CCP’s moral boundary work most likely relied transgressions of norms of benevolence related to local abuse of power, banditry, and crime. Despite using the campaign’s ideological framework of class struggle, therefore, we should expect to see fewer struggle targets who are selected for normative transgressions related to landlord-tenant relations—demanding unpaid labor or favors, mistreating or abusing tenants, and so on—or merely for their class identity as landlords.

Party policy in the Huaibei region emphasized finding former officials and strongmen who could be framed as corrupt and abusive, though also economically equivalent to landlords. Reflecting on the implementation of land reform, the Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee noted that “speaking bitterness targets ought to be restricted to landlord class, else it will easily blur class boundaries and disperse the power of the struggle.”⁷¹ This appears to have been rare in practice. Political elites who were “obstinate,” “puppet” (collaborationist) officials, or otherwise corrupt and disliked could be *treated as if they were landlords*, without changing their class designation. The Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee’s Land Reform Work Committee sanctioned “politically” treating former officials who had been accused of corruption as landlords without “economically” punishing them:

Some former township heads (伪乡长), although they are not technically landlords, built up a fortune through corruption (贪污起家) during their tenure as officials and are hated bitterly by the masses (为群众所痛恨者), so they may be treated as landlords. . . . As for former *baojia* heads accused by the masses of wrongdoing, they should not “have their accounts settled” (清算) economically, but politically they may have an accusation struggle session organized against them. As for those who have engaged in corrupt behavior or have seized the property of others, and whom the masses hate bitterly, the masses may accuse them; the judicial organs should sentence them and carry out their punishments.⁷²

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

Quickly terminate the use of and reliance on old township and *baojia* heads. Realize the previous use of these people was necessary, but if we continue to use them, we will estrange ourselves from the masses and commit an error of political principle. Of course, we shouldn’t adopt a kick-them-all-out (一脚踢开) policy and should instead go through the masses to differentiate between them. The ones the masses are satisfied with, we can continue using; the bad ones whom the masses oppose or sorely hate must be purged or given over to the masses to perform self-criticisms.⁷³

As in most localities conquered after 1949, Fengyang carried out an “anti-tyrant, antibandit” campaign before officially launching the land reform campaign as a way of eliminating political threats and mobilizing the masses by identifying targets whom they found to be particularly distasteful. The Party employed the same mobilization process to rally locals to identify and struggle against targets as they would during land reform. The county’s Party committee confined the mobilization of collective violence to areas where cadres had established a baseline of military control and carried out moral boundary work through collecting materials and holding mass meetings to discuss potential struggle targets. According to an early report on the campaign, the county held four struggle sessions against four targets, all of whom were selected for their alleged corrupt behavior. The largest struggle session, convened in the county seat, targeted an “obstinate” official who embezzled famine relief funds and abused a wet nurse (虐待奶妈). The county work team and the Women’s Association (妇女会) jointly organized the struggle session, which may explain the choice of selecting a corrupt official who was also accused of abusing women. While the struggle session in the county seat enjoyed popular support, the public reception of the three struggle sessions in Feng District 3, organized by the district committee and Party branch, was mixed. There locals had selected a small landlord who served as district head and had embezzled public funds and a corrupt *baozhang* accused of rape and having served as a thug for the Nationalists to “oppress the people,” most likely a state functionary who collected taxes for the government. Ten locals spoke bitterness against these targets and received, on the whole, sympathy from the audience, but because two of the three struggle targets were just as poor as members of the crowd, there was some resistance. This discomfort reveals the contradictions of the CCP efforts to mobilize class struggle: the masses responded best to targets who had allegedly harmed the community, but expanding the scope of class violence beyond recognizably wealthy individuals could undermine the “class” element of the movement. Expanding the scope of violence no doubt also worried participants who felt that the community might possibly target them, too.⁷⁴

The selection criteria during the antityrant campaign revolved around perceived transgressions of norms of benevolence, with class as a secondary factor. In an “old liberated territory” in Fengyang, local communities differentiated locals according to their transgressive behavior and class background, though less than half of the 106 people deemed evil tyrants were

landlords (46), the rest being rich or middle peasants. Significantly, these evil tyrants were further categorized according to the gradation of their “evil deeds” (恶绩)—“average” or “extreme”—a practice that echoed the ledgers of merit and demerit used in the Qing-era village compact system.⁷⁵ The report includes an abridged list of these offenders and their offenses, which were exclusively transgressions of norms of benevolence: rape, murder, beating up others, extortion, stealing land, and stealing wives.⁷⁶

The land reform campaign—which began countywide in June 1951, relatively late due to massive flooding and resistance by insurgents—retained the antityrant campaign’s emphasis on corruption and other transgressions of norms of benevolence. While cadres attempted to contain the scope of the campaign to those officially labeled as landlords, countywide statistics on struggle targets during land reform seem to confirm that nonlandlords bore the brunt of violence during the campaign. A breakdown of 336 struggle targets by label or accusation (Table 7)⁷⁷ reveals that only a third of those struggled against were formally labeled as landlords. Significantly, about half of all targets were evil tyrants or bandits—identities more closely associated with corruption, abuse of power, and criminal activity.⁷⁸ The picture that emerges from these data supports the idea that local Party leaders, cadres, activists, and villagers struggled against a mixture of moral transgressors—evil tyrants and bandits—and political threats—secret agents, counterrevolutionaries, and so-called unlawful landlords. Because the report does not provide a breakdown of targets by class label, it is unclear that those labeled as evil tyrants, bandits, and so on were not also given landlord labels and struggled against for transgressions of norms of propriety in landlord-tenant relations. To ascertain this, I turn to more micro-level data on struggle targets.⁷⁹

Township-level data on struggle targets reveal that local communities focused their attention on struggling against “evil tyrants” (恶霸) and criminals while paying little heed to their class background. A county inspection team report on land reform in Guangou Township of Lushan District reported a list of struggle targets, all of whom were given the prefix “tyrant” (霸) or “evil tyrant” (恶霸). These targets included one “bandit-tyrant” landlord (匪霸) who served as the former village head; seven evil-tyrant rich peasants who were former officials; fifteen evil-tyrant middle peasants who were former military personnel; one poor peasant who served as a company commander for the puppet government under the Japanese; and over twenty petty thieves.⁸⁰

TABLE 7. Breakdown of Land Reform Struggle Targets by Identity, Fengyang County (1951)

Identity	Struggled Against	Executed
Unlawful Landlord	111	7
Evil Tyrant	93	12
Bandits	72	16
Secret Agents (特务)	29	6
Counterrevolutionary	18	1
Secret Society Members	9	0
Unspecified	4	3
Total	336	45

Violations of norms of benevolence and political offenses characterized the majority of targets. Records of struggle sessions in Fenglin District reveal that most struggle targets were chosen and attacked for their past abuse of power and corrupt behavior as well as political offenses—namely, resisting the land reform campaign. The district, which comprised of six townships and thirty-eight villages, chose sixty struggle targets, wherein 1,477 people “spoke bitterness” against them across a total of thirty-eight struggle sessions. The report lists the main crimes (主要罪恶) of those targeted in the following order: “Taking advantage of one’s power to bully the people in the past (过去仗势欺压人民), scattering grain, destroying agricultural implements, spreading rumors, threatening others, or dispersing land.” One of the “classic” (典型) examples of “speaking bitterness” provided in the report resonates with this theme of abuse of power and corruption. In this example, someone spoke out against the landlord Li Guisan, saying:

Li Guisan was a traitor when the Japanese devils were here; he was the head of the Maintenance Association [an organization established by the Japanese Army to control village affairs during the Japanese occupation] and he brought the [Japanese] devils into the countryside to beat and kill people, rape women, steal pigs and chickens, and commit all other sorts of crimes . . . [three villagers whom he names] were all beaten to death by the [Japanese] devils on his orders.⁸¹

Breaking apart households and sexual crimes figured heavily into these accounts. When struggling against a local tyrant and former township head of Chengxi Township, one woman tearfully recounted:

In the past, [the accused] was the township head and conscripted my son. At that time my husband, who was ill, went on his knees to beg him [not to conscript his son]; instead, [the accused] beat him, a sickly man, so badly that he couldn't move, after which he drew his last breath. Even my son was beaten, tied up, and forced into the army. It's been a few years since I've received any information about him, and I don't know if he's dead or alive.⁸²

A landlord surnamed Lei of Toupu Township was struggled against because he had been accused of robbing and killing a peasant who was on his way back to the village from selling his cow, after which he raped his granddaughter; the locals alleged that he had raped up to seven women.⁸³

Another report on struggle sessions in Fenglin District during this time reveals that while struggle targets were mainly guilty of transgressions of norms of benevolence, some targets—who were landlords in the traditional economic sense—were struggled against for their transgressions of norms of propriety. The accusations against these landlords emphasized their abuse of their tenants and their dishonesty. During a struggle session in Chengdong Township, a peasant said of his landlord that she had falsely accused him of theft and had him imprisoned:

Someone stole some potatoes from her house and she insisted that I stole them. She dragged me to the public security office, where I was locked up for several days. My mother was worried to death but didn't have the money or power to save her son and died from grief. . . . My body still bears the scars from my beatings [while imprisoned].⁸⁴

A landlord in Chengxi Township attempted to bribe the local village head with two hens and some wood. The village head, however, refused the bribe and reported it to the authorities. The Peasant Association then held a struggle session against this landlord and exposed the details of his bribery attempt—that is, how the landlord attempted to “play tricks” (耍花样) and “rope in” (拉拢) cadres and how the village head “stood firm” (站稳) and refused to be bought. The report notes that this struggle, using a real example of “crafty” (狡猾) landlord behavior, “educated the vast masses and strengthened their hatred of the landlord class.”⁸⁵ Communities struggled against some individuals who had allegedly transgressed both sets of norms. In Chengbei Township, one tenant spoke against his landlord's cruelty and pettiness, saying, “She not only collaborated with the [Japanese] devils to

come down to the countryside with guns to collect rent, she also demanded that we pay her a visit every New Year and stand in front of her courtyard and vow not to steal grain.”⁸⁶

Data on other districts are sparse, but extant data suggest that this pattern of targeting was not exclusive to Fenglin District. In Changhuai District, one of the major targets, who was brought before a People’s Court for a two-day trial attended by 120,000 people, was the evil tyrant and landlord Sun Qinfang, who was accused of tying up eleven cadres and villagers in burlap sacks and tossing them into the Huai River.⁸⁷

DIFFERENTIAL PUNISHMENT IN FENGYANG

The severity of violence used against struggle targets in Fengyang mapped onto the perceived severity of the moral transgressions of struggle targets. Party members, cadres, and peasants—mainly poor peasants and farmworkers—discussed the treatment of struggle targets in Peasant Association small groups. Aside from establishing the order of struggle targets—the “big” ones were to be struggled against first—they also discussed the necessity of having a differential treatment policy for the punishment of targets, which targets to kill and how they would be killed, what punishments to set for other targets, and how to handle and monitor (surviving) targets after struggle sessions.⁸⁸ Of course, there was not unanimous agreement among the locals about who should be targeted and how they should be handled, as locals’ assessments of their behavior varied. After the end of struggle sessions in Fenglin District, one peasant from Chengbei Township remarked, “The landlord class is the worst: on the surface they are honest, but deep down they are really bad. In the future, we will have to monitor them closely.” Meanwhile in Chengxi Township, several women from the Zhu family disagreed with the treatment of the landlords: “[They] were struggled against too fiercely. There wasn’t great enmity between us and the landlords; why is there a need [to struggle against them]?”⁸⁹

Yet despite local disagreement over how targets should be treated, countywide statistics on the execution of struggle targets during land reform support the contention that violence was used differentially against targets according to a logic of moral retributivism. Struggle targets who were defined mainly by their moral transgressions against the local community—evil tyrants and bandits who abused and terrorized the masses—were more likely

to face execution than those targets accused only of impeding the land reform campaign and breaking policy. Despite constituting the majority of struggle targets, only about 6 percent of unlawful landlords—landlords accused primarily of political offenses—were slated for execution (see Table 7). Bandits and evil tyrants were executed at much higher rates: 22 percent of bandit struggle targets and 13 percent of evil tyrant struggle targets were executed. Of those struggled against, 15 percent of secret agents and counter-revolutionaries were executed.

CASE SUMMARY

Fengyang County selected and punished its targets according to perceived transgressions of norms of benevolence. Importantly, the kinds of targets selected in Fengyang reflected the locality's pre-1949 social boundaries rooted in the unequal distribution of political and military power: the majority of those struggled against were evil tyrants, bandits, and corrupt officials. The differential punishment of targets according to the perceived severity of their transgressions was also rooted in these moral considerations. Struggle targets endured various degrees of punishment—lethal and nonlethal—depending on whether they had committed serious moral offenses against the community or merely undermined state policy.

TRANSGRESSING NORMS OF PROPRIETY IN JIANGNAN: THE CASE OF BAOSHAN COUNTY

As the New Fourth Army entered Jiangnan in the early stages of the War of Resistance against the Japanese, the Party leadership voiced disdain for what they perceived to be the moral depravity of the residents of the region, which it blamed on its urban wealth and Western influences. Various leaders described the locals as “[l]ess frank and honest than the people of the Yellow River basin,” “rather cunning,” and suffering from “excesses” of “lakes, rivers, fake guerrillas, intellectuals, bath-houses, and prostitutes.”⁹⁰ Notwithstanding the CCP's disdain for the people of Jiangnan, the commercialization of Jiangnan's economy, its high crop yields, and its remarkably stable ecology allowed generations of families to accumulate wealth, which greatly concentrated landholdings.⁹¹ This regional economy characterized by

wealth and inequality made landlord-tenant ties far more important for villagers here than in Huaibei, which manifested itself in patterns of pre-1949 violence: in contrast to Huaibei, rural violence in Jiangnan was far more likely to target landlords than outsiders and officials. Part of the reason is that the Nationalists' and Japanese army's strategies of rural governance reinforced the social boundary between landed elites and their tenants and imbued it with a political, in addition to class, dimension. The landlords of Jiangnan were unique in that many were ensconced in the Nationalist political apparatus, due to their proximity to the Nationalist headquarters in Nanjing and the regime's reliance on them to carry out its will in the countryside.⁹²

Baoshan County was a generally prosperous county in the fertile Lower Yangzi Delta, not far outside Shanghai. Compared to many Chinese counties, Baoshan—present-day Baoshan District—is relatively young: it emerged in 1724 during the Yongzheng Emperor's rule from the counties of Kunshan and Jiading.⁹³ Class relations in Baoshan were complex because of the intertwined nature of rural and urban markets. Party officials disparaged the locals' entrenched "sideline and light agricultural industrial mentality" (副业轻农业的思想), referring to the tendency of many locals to migrate to Shanghai to work in light industry or to engage in profitable sideline work.⁹⁴ Baoshan's economic situation resembled the greater Jiangnan region: despite the region's unusually high levels of commercialization and marketization, land relations between landowners and tenants were not inherently antagonistic; these social boundaries were more market-based than feudal in nature. The exchange of land use rights allowed the small peasant economy to increase the efficiency of its land use and to provide land for land-poor peasants in need of land to till.⁹⁵

Norms of propriety were important in governing landlord-tenant relations in Baoshan. A former land reform activist in neighboring Jiading County noted that landlord-tenant relations were embedded in familial relations and subject to certain normative expectations. Her family's landlord was kin, so they did not have to submit rent. Between strangers, though, it was expected that landlords abide by particular rules of conduct: "If you had peasants work for you, to provide them food to eat and to treat them well was only right and proper."⁹⁶ Compared to the rest of Jiangnan, landlord-tenant ties were particularly significant here because of a peculiarity unique to Baoshan—and neighboring Jiading County: the *juese tian* (脚色田) rent system. *Juese tian* was a rent system that extracted payment mainly in the

form of uncompensated labor for one's landlord. Landlords stipulated the number of days of labor to be levied per *mu* of land—about twenty days per *mu* per year in Baoshan—and determined a wage equivalent for each day worked; if the tenant failed to work for the stipulated number of days, he or she would have to pay the landlord the equivalent amount of wages, while landlords were obligated to pay tenants wages for every day worked in excess of the stipulated amount. This system was prevalent in Baoshan and other counties proximate to Shanghai because of the acute labor shortages during the agricultural busy season caused by the large number of local laborers who migrated into the city for work.⁹⁷ The difficulty of renting land in this manner from afar meant that absentee landlords tended to avoid using this rent system; rather, medium and small landlords and rich peasants, many of whom cultivated some of their own land, typically relied on the *juese tian* system. Moreover, landlords and rich peasants only rented out two or three *mu* of land per tenant household using this system.⁹⁸

Violations of norms of propriety were often at the heart of pre-1949 social conflict in Baoshan. In many townships in Baoshan, landlords drew up lists of tenants who owed them rent and submitted them to the county government, which would send runners (差人) to extort money from the tenants, sometimes imprisoning those who were unable to pay. There was also outright violent conflict between landlords and tenants. According to Baoshan County's local gazetteer, landlords murdered 603 people, hounded another 176 to death over rents and debts, raped 104 women, and stole 38,990 *mu* of land.⁹⁹ It is probable that landlord-tenant conflicts escalated over the previous decades because Baoshan, unlike other areas of Jiangnan, which did not experience significant changes in rents during the Republican Era, was one of the few counties that witnessed rent increases, owing to its identity as a primarily cotton-growing county.¹⁰⁰

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

rent collection system for the local community; that is, issues arising out of the proper treatment of tenants and the fair collection of rents would most likely involve them. This reflects larger trends in Jiangnan at the time. Increased state intervention in rent collection during the Nationalist decade (1927–37) caused individuals who had face-to-face interactions with locals, such as rent and tax collectors and officials, to replace large landlords as the primary target for the peasantry's ire. According to Bernhardt, by the Republican Era only 8 percent of targets during episodes of collective action were landlords, with the vast majority of targets being officials and tax collectors—namely, those most proximate to the tax and rent collection process, which was fraught with unfair and corrupt practices, became the primary targets of peasant unrest.¹⁰¹ A notable example of this change in collective resistance targets occurred in October 1934 in Suzhou. Across multiple townships in Suzhou, over a thousand peasants launched insurrections to protest tax collectors' (催甲) unfair and inaccurate assessment of the bad harvest, burning down the houses of a notorious local tax collector's family.¹⁰² What is key here is that many of these officials and collectors were agents of absentee landlords, while small landlords most likely carried out these unpopular tasks themselves. These smaller landlords, collectors, and officials were far more likely to be accused of transgressions of norms of propriety because they, unlike large absentee landlords, had frequent interactions with local communities.

IDENTIFYING “BAD” LANDLORDS IN BAOSHAN

Countywide statistics illustrate that those labeled as landlords represented the majority of struggle targets. A statistical report from late 1950 specifies the identities and class labels for all struggle targets during Baoshan's land reform campaign thus far (see Tables 8 and 9).¹⁰³ The identity categorization specified an individual's purported crime (or in the case of “ordinary landlords” the lack thereof), while the class label categorization referred to the formal economic designation given to an individual on the basis of his or her landholdings and sources of income. Out of the county's 337 struggle targets, 73.6 percent were struggled against primarily for being landlords of some kind. Although an overwhelming majority of targets were attacked as landlords, about 45 percent of all struggle targets had labels that indicated that they had committed some kind of moral transgression or political

TABLE 8. Breakdown of Land Reform Struggle Targets by Identity, Baoshan County (1950)

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

TABLE 9. Breakdown of Land Reform Struggle Targets by Class Label, Baoshan County (1950)

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

crime, such as being an evil tyrant, breaking the law, engaging in counter-revolutionary activities, or serving as henchmen for local strongmen or landlords. Of these 337 struggle targets, about a third were former officials who held political or military positions before 1949.^{104, 105, 106}

Notwithstanding the preponderance of landlords selected as struggle targets, one did not even have to have been formally labeled as a landlord to be struggled against, which suggests the existence of nonclass criteria in selecting struggle targets. Table 9 shows that one-fourth of struggle targets were not even labeled landlords; a small number even had “good” class labels such as “poor peasant” or “worker.” This is particularly surprisingly because of the wealth and inequality of Baoshan. A class-based account of land reform violence would predict an exclusive focus on landlords in a locality situated in the heart of the Lower Yangzi Delta. If a quarter of targets here

were not economically defined as landlords, one must imagine that this percentage would be significantly higher in poorer, more equal parts of China. It is also surprising that such a large proportion of struggle targets would not be formally defined as landlords, since using violence against people with “good” class labels would seemingly undermine the new moral taxonomy the Party as attempting to impose on society. If, however, authorities were targeting individuals on the basis of assessments of their behavior, the commonality between “bad” poor peasants, farmworkers, and middle peasants and “bad” landlords may have reified in-group/out-group boundaries based primarily on moral rectitude.

Since about twelve hundred households were labeled as landlords,¹⁰⁷ what distinguished these targeted landlords from the rest? More micro-level data elucidate that perceived normative transgressions were significant factors in the selection of struggle targets. Eyewitness testimonies, directives sent to localities, and summary reports on land reform in Jiangnan reveal that cadres and villagers relied heavily on moral assessments in selecting targets for collective violence. Although villagers and work teams did assign class labels to individuals using economic criteria, they differentiated between good and bad landlords. In the selection of struggle targets, there was a clear focus on selecting “bad people” (坏人) and avoiding more sympathetic targets, regardless of their class background. In an oral history, a former worker who lived in Baoshan County but worked in a factory near Shanghai, remembered seeing and hearing struggle sessions during land reform. He noted that many landlords were small, owning upwards of thirty *mu* of land, but that they were subdivided into three types: evil tyrant landlords (恶霸地主), destitute landlords (破落地主), and unlawful landlords (不法地主):

Evil tyrant landlords were the local people who had power, *whom you'd have to kiss up to* (需要拍他们马屁). They often didn't work themselves and exploited the local folk, making them help them till the fields; *the local folk would have to treat their land as their number one priority, regardless of whether it was a windy and rainy or extremely hot day*. Destitute landlords once had a lot of land but had sold it all. Unlawful landlords were those who sold off their livestock, spent their wealth, or intentionally broke policy and didn't turn over their assets.¹⁰⁸

This differentiation of the economic category of landlords reveals that the community's assessment of moral behavior guided the selection of a minor-

ity of evil tyrants. Not just holding power but also forcing tenants to work in inclement weather distinguished evil tyrants from the majority of landlords. According to the logic of class struggle, however, evil tyrants were identical to any other member of the landlord class, as they all economically “exploited” their tenants simply by owning the land and extracting rents. In practice, communities viewed evil tyrants as a category of their own because of their unrelenting treatment of their workers and the way in which they lorded their power over locals. “It was usually *landlords and bad people* (坏人) who were dragged onto stage to be struggled against, [as well as those who] *had bad tempers* (脾气坏) *and liked to scold villagers and cadres.*”¹⁰⁹

Small landlords who had more frequent face-to-face interactions with their tenants comprised the majority of those singled out for political struggle. Chief among these landlords were those who used *juese tian*, as described above. One Baoshan resident, when asked to recall her memories of violence during land reform, remarked that “it was usually landlords and bad people (坏人) who were dragged onto stage to be struggled against. All of these landlords were ones who exploited landless peasants who tilled *juese* land (做脚色).”¹¹⁰ Few systematic data exist on the backgrounds of struggle targets, but descriptive lists of struggle targets, despite their small sample size, provide a useful glimpse into the characteristics of those chosen for political violence. According to a detailed list of thirty-nine landlords struggled against during autumn grain requisition across three districts in Baoshan County, it is evident that many landlords had relatively small landholdings. To begin with, the landholdings of the struggle targets varied wildly, from 24 to 300 *mu*, with a median of 80 *mu* (see Fig. 11).¹¹¹ While all of the targets listed had at least 20 *mu*, which was twice the middle peasant household landholding average (10.56 *mu*), the landholdings of some of these struggle targets were actually below the rich peasant household landholding average (28.95 *mu*).¹¹²

Every target on this list had been accused of a moral or political offense (see Appendix B). A little over half of the targets had allegedly committed offenses described primarily in terms related, mostly, to transgressions of norms of propriety—for example, being dishonest (不老实), cunning or sly (狡猾), obstinate (态度强硬), engaging in bad behavior (不良行为), abusing one’s power, or working with the Japanese or Nationalists to oppress the local community. Over 80 percent of targets were charged with overtly political offenses, such as hiding land, engaging in saboteur behavior, and resisting the government.¹¹³

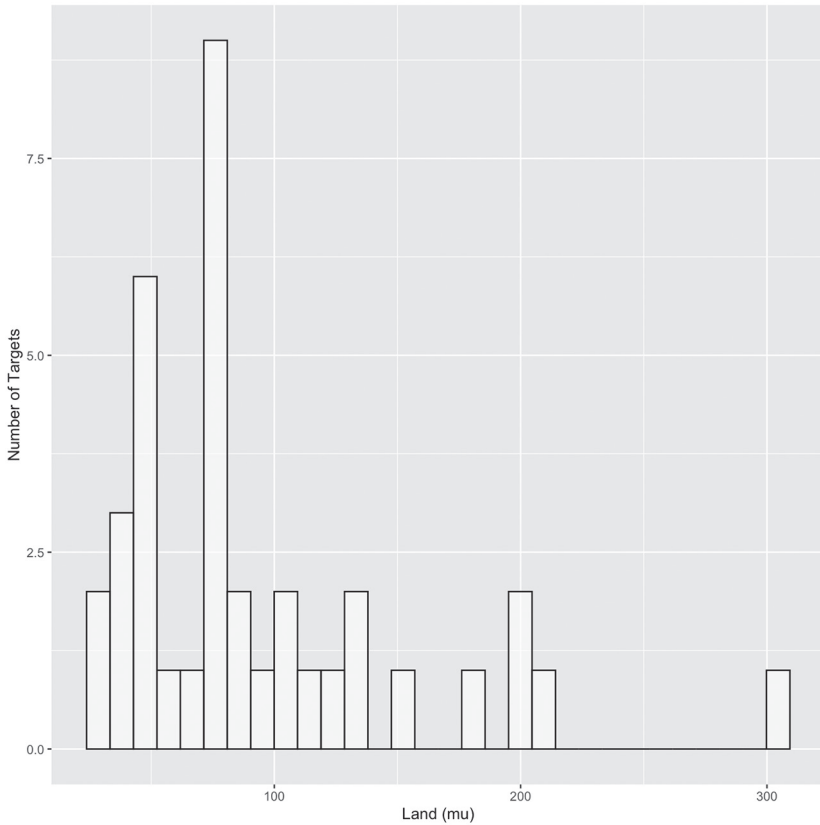


Fig. 11. Landholdings among Thirty-Nine Struggle Targets in Three Districts of Baoshan County

Accounts from struggle sessions illuminate this habit of selecting transgressors of norms of propriety. The case of Landlord Xu is particularly revealing. Xu was a formidable landlord in Fengtang Township. Nicknamed Little Bingchuan, he was feared by the locals and regarded as an “evil tyrant.” According to locals, he was especially notorious for employing villagers without giving them anything to eat in compensation. During land reform, he was tried in a public sentencing, where his own wife took to the stage to decry him, after which he was sentenced to death and shot.¹¹⁴ From the aforementioned thirty-nine-person list, one of the most harshly treated targets was a relatively small landholder (30.5 *mu*) accused of “using his connections to the Nationalists to steal land; swindling and exploiting the peo-

ple; and hiding [his] land.” The report notes that “the masses demanded his punishment” and that he was “subjected to speaking bitterness, beaten, cursed, stripped of his clothing, and paraded through the streets.”¹¹⁵ In both of these cases, the target was reviled for his perceived transgression of a norm of propriety: refusing to feed one’s workers in the former and cheating people and stealing land in the latter.

This focus on moral transgressions casts a wide net for the selection of struggle targets; it was inevitable for miscellaneous moral transgressors to be swept into the campaign in one form or another. An archived report on house arrests in Panshi Township shows that a curious mixture of individuals were put under house arrest for various moral transgressions and political offenses (see Table 10). The report contains a footnote that reads: “These targets include rapists, gamblers, swindlers, and those who attempted to sabotage land reform” (奸、赌、诈骗等及破坏土改的案犯). Before undergoing house arrest, these transgressors had been “educated and released” (教育释放), most likely some sort of admonishment for their misdeeds. Less than half of those put under house arrest had landlord labels. The inclusion of people who resisted land reform is not surprising, but the targeting of nonlandlords and the inclusion of rapists, swindlers, and gamblers indicate that the moral discourse of class struggle in the land reform campaign affected a significant minority of people for nothing more than their perceived dissolute behavior.¹¹⁶

DIFFERENTIAL PUNISHMENT IN BAOSHAN

Baoshan County’s land reform policy explicitly encouraged the differential punishment of struggle targets based on their perceived transgressions. In a missive sent to all districts in the county, the county Party committee instructed, “Pay close attention to struggle tactics; treat landlords differently according to their different circumstances. [The policy] should be to ‘suppress [those who] sabotage and resist, be lenient toward [those who are] run-of-the-mill, and correctly show consideration toward [those who are] enlightened.’ Do not standardize [punishments].”¹¹⁷ Indeed, this differential treatment was reflected in the sequencing of struggle sessions, public sentencing, and executions. During the first stage of land reform work in late October through the end of November 1950, the eighteen townships that spearheaded the campaign targeted unlawful landlords, punished active counterrevolutionaries suspected of engaging in saboteur activities, and

TABLE 10. Breakdown of House Arrestees by Class Label in Panshi Township, Baoshan County, 1950

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

arranged large-scale People's Court trials and public sentencings to prosecute and execute several evil tyrants and landlords who had "infuriated the people" (民愤极大).¹¹⁸ A resident, who earlier noted the different categories used to differentiate between landlords, corroborated this point: landlords were "struggled against with different levels of severity according to differences in their nature" (根据性质的不同, 被斗的程度也不同).¹¹⁹

These observations are reflected in the county's extant data on the punishment of land reform "criminals" (案犯). Table 11 presents a breakdown of punishments for 161 targets by class label. Evidently, lethal punishment was only roughly meted out by class label. Of those apprehended, approximately 40 percent of those labeled as landlords or rich peasants, 55 percent of those labeled as middle peasants, and 17 percent of those labeled as poor peasants or farmworkers were executed. Landlords and poor peasants made up roughly equal proportions of all those executed, and the majority of criminals punished were poor peasants, though they were more likely to receive light punishment. Out of thirty-seven "criminals" sentenced to death during Baoshan County's land reform campaign, about two-thirds were "evil tyrants"—the remaining third being counterrevolutionaries and spies. Intriguingly, less than a quarter of these targets were landlords, while a full one-third were classified as poor peasants.¹²⁰ Looking at the distribution of violence according to one's alleged crime reveals that the nature of one's transgression was a stronger predictor of violence than one's class background. According to Table 12, the state executed 66 percent of evil tyrants and 100 percent of counterrevolutionaries, secret agents, and bandits it apprehended. Those accused of lesser crimes, such as sabotage, drug peddling, theft, or tax resistance, were much more often given nonlethal punishments such as imprisonment or "education and release" (教育释放).

Lacking data on specific categories of crimes committed by class background in Baoshan hinders any inferences one can make about potential differences in the nature of nonlandlords' and landlords' transgressive behavior, but it is likely that nonlandlords were punished for transgressions of norms of benevolence—for example, harming others, theft and robbery, and banditry. Reports from the southern Jiangsu region suggest that the land reform campaign targeted numerous nonlandlords suspected of aiding or being otherwise associated with politically powerful, urban-based landlords. In the suburbs of Wuxi, officials noted that there were many bandits, vagrants, and secret society heads who served as the “feudal foremen” (封建把头) for these politically powerful landlords who resided in Wuxi proper and carried out their will during the Japanese occupation and Nationalist rule. Successfully mobilizing land reform, the report argued, required expanding the scope of violence to include these nonlandlords, as there was considerable animosity between them and the locals.¹²¹ The face of this abusive behavior, these transgressions of norms of benevolence in Jiangnan, and possibly Baoshan, was these nonlandlords, not necessarily the landlords themselves, as these politically powerful landlords usually resided in cities and were not known personally to locals. Since Baoshan was located on the outskirts of Shanghai, these nonlandlords punished as “criminals” during the land reform campaign may have been the associates of landlords based in Shanghai.

It should give us pause that class labels were only weak indicators of one's fate during a movement that nominally claimed to be waging class warfare. The greater significance of perceived transgression in determining the kind of political violence one endured suggests that a logic of moral retributivism guided the distribution of punishment during the land reform campaign. The assessment of one's moral transgressions against the community was not only much more likely to affect one's probability of becoming a target of violence, but also determined the severity of the punishment.^{122, 123}

Looking back at the three-district data set of thirty-nine struggle targets, we can also do a preliminary analysis of why more punitive forms of violence were used against some targets than others. I conducted a logit regression analysis of this data using a dichotomous outcome variable for the punitive nature of violence, where I coded 1 for struggle targets who endured unusually harsh or violent punishment. As Table 19 (Appendix B) shows, these targets may have been stripped naked and paraded through the streets, beaten, insulted, strung up with a rope, or forced to kneel or kowtow before the crowd. I

TABLE 11. Punishment of Criminals during Land Reform by Class Label, Baoshan County (1950)

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

TABLE 12. Punishment of Criminals during Land Reform by Alleged Crime, Baoshan County (1950)

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

regressed this indicator of unusually severe punishment on indicators for the struggle target's size of landholdings; whether one formerly held a political position; the number of participants; and whether the offense was described, wholly or in part, in moral language—being accused of being dishonest, sly, abusive, and so on. We might expect more extreme violence at larger rallies and when the target was a former official or a large landholder. The logit regression results, presented in Table 13, indicate that the size of landholdings is not a significant predictor of punishment severity and the sign of the coefficient is not in the expected direction, which suggests that, despite the campaign's emphasis on class struggle, size of landholdings was not an important determinant in how targets were punished. Having held a former political position and number of participants also lack significant coefficients, and their signs are not in their expected directions. The coefficient on moral offense is significant and in the predicted direction. Holding all other variables constant at their means, the probability of enduring more punitive punishment is 37 percent higher when a target was treated as a moral offender. Of course, the small size of this data set and the lack of data for other important individual-level controls, such as age and gender, prevent us from establishing more generalizable and causal connections between these variables. Nonetheless, these results lend credence to the idea that perceived moral transgressions figured into the differential distribution of violent punishment.¹²⁴

CASE SUMMARY

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

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The construction of landlords as an out-group entailed the refashioning of both economic and moral boundaries. Categorical economic boundaries

TABLE 13. Logit Regression Coefficients for the Determinants of Severe Punishment of Struggle Targets in Three Districts of Baoshan County

Variable	Outcome: Severity of Punishment	
	(1)	(2)
Moral Offense	1.974** (0.880)	1.979** (0.949)
Land		-0.009 (0.010)
Position		-1.293 (1.096)
Participants		-0.001 (0.001)
Constant	-2.079*** (0.750)	-1.524 (1.319)
Observations	37	36

Note: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

determined whose property would be confiscated and who would receive property, and in what amounts, but they did not prescribe violence; that is, the mobilization of collective violence did not mechanically follow from the designation of some members of society as landlords. While economic boundaries formally designated class affiliation, moral boundaries determined who was culpable of present or past behavior that made them “deserving” of punishment. Moreover, the kinds of moral transgressions that figured into the selection of struggle targets varied regionally according to localities’ social relations, which is why they subjected different kinds of individuals to collective violence. This is not to say the north and the south had different moral universes; rather, different norms were more relevant in different areas depending on the configuration of the local political economy.

This chapter began by demonstrating that the Party’s stratification of society into classes was a process apart from the moral boundary work that laid the foundation for the mobilization of collective violence against so-called class enemies. While local authorities imposed the same set of class boundaries on local communities in the north and the south, each region labeled different proportions of their populations as class enemies. I show that, paradoxically, the Party labeled more households as rich peasants, landlords, and other “bad classes” in Huaibei, which was poorer, had a lower

rate of tenancy, and had a more equal distribution of land than Jiangnan. Second, I demonstrate that despite having a larger proportion of households labeled as landlords, localities in Huaibei were less likely to struggle against people labeled as landlords than Jiangnan. This, I argue, is at the crux of the regional difference in the dynamics of violence between Huaibei and Jiangnan: moral boundaries were more important than economic boundaries in selecting targets. Each region relied more on the moral norms that characterized dominant social relations than on the formal class categories imposed from above by the Party.

The argument forwarded here builds on a long line of literature that emphasizes the role of political entrepreneurs in manipulating social cleavages to mobilize violence or conflict;¹²⁵ however, it departs from this literature by focusing on how political actors construct new boundaries that they can use as the basis for mobilization and how existing economic and moral resources constrain the creation and exploitation of these boundaries.¹²⁶ My analysis resonates with Kalyvas's observation that the "master cleavage" of a conflict—class, in this case—"simplifies, streamlines, and incorporates a bewildering variety of local conflicts."¹²⁷ Certainly the use of both moral and economic boundaries allowed cadres and communities to subsume many nonlandlords under the umbrella of class enemy. Yet this violence did not simply reflect the conflicts of the pre-1949 social field: the Party guided the mobilization process to ensure that, regardless of context, communities would struggle against a large proportion of landlords. Though "bad" members of society among the land-poor and landless also fell victim to "class struggle," they were significantly underrepresented. There is, then, a partial continuity between Communist mobilization practices and traditional rural rebellion that was rooted in moral economic conflict, but we cannot ignore the Party's role at the helm of this mobilization effort and its desire to confine the scope of violence to perceived transgressors among the landed elite and clear political threats.

CHAPTER 6

In-Group Solidarity and State Building during and after Land Reform

The armed struggle mobilizes the people, i.e., it pitches them in a single direction, from which there is no turning back.

—FRANTZ FANON, *THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH*¹

The Party-state's goals in mobilizing collective violence in the early years after the revolution reached far beyond striking down the authority of local elites: it aspired to create a new class of righteous revolutionaries who would devote themselves to the aims of the regime and remain amenable to further political mobilization and resource extraction.² For the central leadership, creating a new revolutionary subjectivity among the peasantry that could spill over into other forms of mobilization required a profound psychological transformation that could only be forged through revolutionary violence. Huang Yanpei, vice premier of the State Administrative Council,³ articulated this conviction at a council meeting in 1951: "I believe that land reform is not just about redistributing land from the hands of the landlords. [We] must make the peasants stand up and cultivate their self-respect; make them realize that they are the masters of their fate; [and] encourage their enthusiasm to work hard at production. . . . Can these things be done using peaceful methods?"⁴ As Potter and Potter argue, land reform was an opportunity for the peasants to transform themselves through "revolutionary praxis," which explains the Party-state's insistence on mass participation in violence: "The leaders of the new government did not send in soldiers to arrest landlords and confiscate property, but insisted that peasants carry out these acts themselves, so that they would become active participants in the revolutionary drama."⁵

This psychological transformation was, ultimately, aimed at building a new national consciousness to undergird the nascent Chinese Party-state. As David Der-wei Wang, in his analysis of the “land reform novel,”⁶ elegantly puts it, “Reform of the Chinese landscape results in reform of the Chinese mindscape. A national discourse cannot be complete until its human components, the people, are redefined.”⁷ Revealingly, Party reports summarizing land reform work looked for signs of these deeper behavioral transformations when assessing the success of the campaign. A report from land reform inspectors in southern Jiangsu triumphantly proclaimed, “After the peasants’ political and economic emancipation . . . many peasants hung portraits of Chairman Mao during the Spring Festival, and far fewer burned incense to the Buddha; gambling has nearly disappeared.”⁸

But did the ferocity of mass violence during land reform leave an imprint on local communities that facilitated further state-building efforts, including state-led violence? This chapter explores the impact of land reform violence on other kinds of violent and nonviolent political mobilization after 1949. I argue that land reform violence left two enduring legacies. First, by ritually reinforcing the division between the “oppressed masses” and the “oppressive landlord class” and making participants complicit in state violence, land reform forged powerful bonds of in-group solidarity between ordinary citizens and the state. Second, land reform established a stigmatized out-group (landlords) who would be excluded from economic mobilization but abused and scapegoated during subsequent campaigns of state violence. Using county gazetteer data from the East China Bureau from 1949 to 1983, I show that areas that had mobilized more collective violence during land reform experienced faster growth in rural production during the Maoist period; sent more soldiers during the Korean War (1950–53); arrested more rightists during the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957); and arrested more people during the first Strike Hard Campaign of the early reform period (1983–86). The size of the landlord population, however, inversely correlated with economic mobilization but positively correlated with extractive and violent mobilization.

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows. I first discuss how collective violence generates in-group solidarity by deepening moral boundaries and creating feelings of shared fate. I then elaborate on the specific rituals of in-group solidarity cadres employed during land reform mobilization—namely, speaking bitterness and struggle sessions. The rest of the chapter looks at how the legacy of land reform violence facilitated war mobilization,

economic production, and state repression in the Maoist period and state repression in the early reform period.

FORGING IN-GROUP SOLIDARITY THROUGH RITUALS OF COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE

Collective violence over time forges in-group solidarity among perpetrators in two ways: by deepening moral boundaries that set apart conflicting groups and by making participants accomplices in violence.⁹ Group violence carried out along the lines of moral boundaries underscores the division between a virtuous group of perpetrators and a demonized out-group and affirms a feeling of superiority among those not subject to violence. In her analysis of lynchings of African Americans, Amy Louise Wood writes that “executions, as spectacles of white power and black culpability, also produced a sense of white solidarity among the crowd that was founded on a shared sense of white moral virtue and authority . . . united in beholding a drama of retribution against sin and criminality that, as white people, they believed themselves removed and absolved from.”¹⁰ This does not require strong preexisting group attachments: repeated participation in violence crystallizes group identities that may have only been weakly felt at the outset.¹¹ The deepening of these moral boundaries makes future violence more readily justifiable. Even when coerced, participation in violence can socialize individuals into group norms that may lower the moral-emotional threshold for further participation.¹² Merely witnessing public displays of ritualized violence—what Lee Ann Fujii terms “violent displays”—may inculcate new groups norms in spectators who hitherto did not identify strongly with the group, especially if these displays occur repeatedly over a long period of time.¹³

It is important to note that spectators of violence do not have to buy into the normative logic behind the division for it to affect their behavior. As with Swidler’s argument about culture not needing to be “deeply held” to influence behavior, collective violence shapes behavior by simply designating who is and is not a potential target of violence and making that division salient.¹⁴ In the Chinese case, being a poor peasant marked a person as a member of the righteous revolutionary vanguard; even if one did not view oneself as morally superior to landlords, being a poor peasant was an inescapable fact that lessened one’s chances of becoming a target of violence.

Aside from deepening boundaries, by creating “collective responsibility” for violence, participation creates a sense of shared fate among perpetrators that makes future defection more difficult.¹⁵ As the epigraph from Fanon bluntly states, once one participates in revolutionary violence, the die is cast: the fates of the perpetrators of violence and the state that enables them intertwine, who must together ensure that the state survives and the victimized never achieve power. The CCP knew this full well. Esherick, looking at the 1930s, notes that Party recruited many cadres during its most violent political campaigns and that their complicity in violence deepened their commitment to success of the regime.¹⁶ Following the revolution, the Party-state sought to build a broader, more durable base of support by implicating “the masses,” not just newly minted cadres, in violent political struggle.

What is the “mechanism of reproduction” that could explain the persistence of the legacy of land reform violence? The lack of population mobility in the Maoist period and the relatively short time frame for this analysis—around thirty-five years—makes it reasonable to assume that the experiences of collective violence of the early Maoist period were still familiar to most people participating in subsequent mobilization campaigns through the beginning of the reform era. Intergenerational transmission of the experiences of the 1950s to those who would be adults during the Cultural Revolution and reform era may have generated “behavioral path dependence” that maintained the strength of in-group identities forged through collective violence.¹⁷ As the section on military conscription and the Anti-Rightist Campaign demonstrates, the Maoist state frequently invoked class boundaries in its political mobilization, especially during campaigns of state violence, and warned that class enemies might return, presumably with the desire to seek vengeance against the masses that had brutalized them.

In-Group Solidarity and the Rituals of Speaking Bitterness and Struggle Sessions

How exactly did land reform violence create in-group solidarity among “the masses” (群众)? As Chapter 3 describes in greater detail, the CCP used the rituals of speaking bitterness and struggle sessions to generate in-group solidarity among villagers during the land reform campaign. Speaking bitterness ritualized the expression of personal suffering and its contextualization within a framework of class struggle, while struggle sessions ritualized the use of violence itself along the moral boundaries that speaking bitterness

helped lay. This section delves deeper into the solidarity-building aspects of the rituals of speaking bitterness and struggle sessions.

Speaking bitterness, known more for its use in struggle sessions, was used first in small face-to-face settings organized by local cadres, often in the homes of poor peasants. Here locals were given a safe space to discuss their everyday problems and desires and encouraged to express their grievances to their fellow villagers as a way of building in-group solidarity through commiseration. Sharing heartfelt stories and communal crying helped identify a handful of individuals designated as “masters of bitterness” (苦主), who allegedly suffered great abuses at the hands of landed elites and their associates.

Directives from higher-level officials instructed grassroots cadres to treat solidarity building as a gradual process that should begin with forming bonds between the poorest segments of the community—that is, tenant farmers and poor peasants. Before land reform, these various nonlandlord strata of peasants—farmworkers, poor peasants, and middle peasants—did not necessarily view themselves as a coherent community bound by a shared identity. Work teams, therefore, worked to guide the poorest members of this community—the poor peasants and landless farmworkers—to view themselves not only as “the oppressed” (被剥削者) but also as leaders at the helm of the revolutionary effort; they were then encouraged to “unite” (团结) with the middle peasantry to form a cohesive front against the landlords and their allies. A 1951 report on land reform propaganda work from Fenglin District in Fengyang County in northern Anhui urged cadres to “repeatedly discuss with the poor peasants and farmworkers whom [they should] unite with and rely upon [to] establish a mindset of ‘being masters of the house.’”¹⁸ After building a base among the poor peasants and farmworkers, they could expand their work to include middle peasants. A land reform work report from Yaowan Township, also in Fengyang County, laid out its procedures for this process of gradual boundary work. After uniting the poor peasants and farmworkers, cadres were to incorporate the middle peasants by revealing to them that they, too, were oppressed:

First mobilize the poor peasants and farmworkers.

Hold a Peasant Association meeting of poor peasants and farmworkers—make sure the ranks are pure, middle peasant delegates can also attend—and carry out class education. Begin by talking about why they are poor and hold a speaking-bitterness session.

Accuse the landlord class and link them together with Chiang Kai-shek and American imperialism (把地主, 蒋介石, 美帝国主义联系起来) and excite class hatred (激发阶级仇恨). Also emphasize closely unifying with the middle peasants and becoming the “new masters of the house.”

Next, hold a meeting of the middle peasants, with poor and farmworker peasant delegates in attendance, and start out with comparing the two governments (GMD and CCP), bring together actual examples—how they were victimized and reduced to poor peasants under the old administration; how the middle peasants were also oppressed—and [tell them] how they should closely rely on the poor and farmhand peasants to eliminate class enemies together.¹⁹

The strategy of “uniting” (团结) the masses—around 90 percent of the community (farmworkers, poor peasants, and middle peasants)—and “isolating” (孤立) class enemies (landlords and rich peasants) unified the ranks and established a moral boundary that melded the various strata of peasantry as the victimized “masses” (群众).

Speaking bitterness was key to building on this foundation of solidarity between poor peasants. After building solidarity among farmworkers and poor peasants, cadres held expanded Peasant Association meetings where everyone, including the middle peasants, could participate in speaking bitterness. A Jiangdu County report suggested cadres help the poor and farmworker peasants bond with the middle peasants by having them jointly “accuse the landlord class” (控诉地主阶级) in these small group sessions so as to help them “closely unite” (密切团结) their ranks.²⁰ One township reported that speaking bitterness was critical to building solidarity between the middle peasantry and their poorer brethren: it was counterproductive, the report argued, to hold large meetings that simply brought the classes together; rather, it was bringing together the farmworkers, poor peasants, and middle peasants to struggle against landlords that increased the middle peasants’ “enthusiasm” (积极性).²¹ This bonding also helped middle peasants understand that they would not become targets of violence, which helped cultivate the belief that “the farmworkers, poor peasants, and middle peasants are all one family.”²²

Revealingly, the use of speaking bitterness to build in-group solidarity can be traced back its use within the ranks of the People’s Liberation Army during the civil war. Wu Guo’s thoughtful and fascinating exploration of the

PLA's use of speaking bitterness illustrates that the Party used it to recruit, build solidarity among, and provoke soldiers to hate and use violence not just against internal "class enemies" but also its military enemy—namely, the Nationalists. Like the moral boundary work conducted in small group meetings and informal chats during land reform, the Party relied on guided discussions among soldiers to encourage them to speak bitterness to draw moral boundaries between themselves and their fellow Chinese nationals who fought for or allied with the Nationalists.²³

The *Speaking Bitterness and Seeking Vengeance* (诉苦复仇) handbook, published in 1947 by the PLA, contains a collection of "classic" speaking-bitterness materials that the Party used as templates for speaking-bitterness work with PLA soldiers. With colorful titles like "How Vicious Are the Hearts of the Landlords!" (地主老财的心多狠呀!), "When Will Two Generations of Hatred Be Avenged: Setting One's Mind to Eliminating Chiang Kai-Shek" (两代冤仇何时报, 立志消灭蒋介石), and "Tell My Bitterness to the Party" (把我的苦告诉给党), these stories were designed to conform to formulaic templates of narratives of suffering that could trigger the righteous indignation of soldiers before battle. Some of these stories of exploitation were even written in verse.²⁴ Because speaking bitterness was used to fan hatred against both the Nationalists and landed elite and strongmen who allied with them, cadres drew on examples of injustice from members of the local community to mobilize soldiers. To an audience of soldiers at the battlefield of the Qingcang Campaign in 1947, an elderly man surnamed Liu spoke of his abuse at the hands of the region's notorious strongman—a "traitor and evil tyrant" landlord named Gao Hongji—who beat Liu senseless after failing to extort money from him: "As the soldiers heard this, they became moved, one by one, [until] everyone shouted, 'Resolutely avenge Old Man Liu!'" After hearing more stories of how Gao Hongji raped women, ordered the demolition of people's houses, and otherwise oppressed locals, one of the army commissars (政委) led his troops to yell the slogans "Avenge the people!" and "Resolutely exterminate Gao Hongji!" after which the soldiers, "through gritted teeth, avowed to avenge the people."²⁵

Struggle sessions, as ritualized public displays of violence, helped reinforce group boundaries set during weeks of painstaking moral boundary work. Gathering the masses together as an audience to watch struggle targets paraded in humiliation through the crowd onto a stage or clearing, demarcated a spatial boundary between the masses and class enemies. Activists planted throughout the crowd led them in shouting slogans in unison and

ensured that the ranks of spectators remained united and orderly. Reports criticized cadres who allowed the masses to fall into disarray, shouting different slogans that prescribed different punishments for the struggle targets on stage.²⁶ A crucial moment in the course of a struggle session was to have targets “bow their heads before the masses” (向群众低头) and admit their culpability.²⁷ This act of having targets apologize to “the masses” emphasized the collective nature of the bitterness spoken by accusers at struggle sessions and “struck down the landlords’ authority” (打下地主阶级的威风) over the masses.²⁸ Communal chanting at the end of a struggle session emphasized the triumph and superiority of the masses and their unity with the state. A report on land reform in Suzhou Prefecture in southern Jiangsu noted that in one township of Changshu County the audience chanted, “Love live the peasants! Long live the People’s Militia! Long live the cadres!” after struggling against landlords.²⁹

The moral drama at the heart of the struggle session served a function similar to the dramatic displays of egregious behavior in revolutionary operas and plays: mobilizing participation in the revolutionary effort. For example, while fending off the Nationalists at the Jiangxi Soviet, the CCP’s revolutionary dramas revolved around the theme of “strengthening the resistance of the soviets in the civil war.” Judd explains that “the theme is presented through the portrayal of events of violent conflict: looting, rape, and killing are fairly common occurrences in these plays . . . invariably combined with exhortations to take specific actions (join the army, spy on the enemy, produce more for the front, and so on), and examples of soldiers and peasants courageously taking such action.”³⁰ In struggle sessions, moral theatrics sought to galvanize participation in violence against class enemies, with the hope that such participation would translate into long-term mobilization in other areas of political life.

LAND REFORM VIOLENCE, ECONOMIC MOBILIZATION, AND WAR MOBILIZATION IN THE EARLY 1950S

With the former local elite eliminated or categorized as part of a the “oppressor class,” the Party-state quickly proceeded to mobilize the masses to carry out a variety of political and economic goals. The Party claimed that land reform mobilization had apparently smoothed the way for a variety of tasks, including mobilizing agricultural production, suppressing counterrevolu-

tionaries, and recruiting for the military.³¹ But did delegitimizing elites and mobilizing violence against them facilitate these other state-building efforts? In this section I show that areas that had mobilized repeated participation in collective violence, as an active participant or spectator, during land reform reinforced the moral boundary that separated “the oppressed masses” from the “oppressive landlord class,” producing stronger in-group and out-group identities that facilitated further state mobilization and repression. I begin by examining conscription during the Korean War and production growth under collectivized agriculture, before turning to campaigns of state repression. Delegitimizing elites may have carried over to subsequent episodes of repression by inculcating norms that justified violence against enemies of the state and by creating a stigmatized out-group to be mobilized against. I find that participatory violence and the size of the landlord out-group created during land reform influence patterns of violent and nonviolent mobilization throughout the Maoist period and even the early reform period.

WAR MOBILIZATION DURING THE KOREAN WAR (1950–53)

The righteous, violent rhetoric of the land reform campaign found itself reflected in the propaganda of the Resist America, Aid Korea (RAAK) campaign, which sought to translate the moral outrage against landlords and counterrevolutionaries into a fiery hatred of the evil American imperialists. RAAK propaganda work underscored the moral depravity of the American troops. For example, one RAAK propaganda poster depicts scenes of American troops butchering women and children and bombing schools and hospitals; encircling the soldiers is a noose with the sentence: “*The noose of awaits them!*”³² Aside from these direct vilifications of America, the Party-state juxtaposed the behavior of the American imperialists with that of landlords, Nationalists, and even the Japanese to incite outrage; cadres used these juxtapositions both in propaganda and in their orchestration of struggle sessions and public sentencings. The East China Bureau reported that localities had been linking ideological mobilization during land reform with the RAAK campaign, and that bringing in examples of Japanese and Nationalist cruelty was particularly effective in this endeavor.³³ At the height of southern Jiangsu’s land reform campaign, the regional Party committee called for linking the “land reform struggle” with the RAAK campaign by guiding the peasantry to make a psychological association

between the struggle against feudalism and American imperialism.³⁴ In parts of Suzhou Prefecture, three months into the RAAK campaign some localities were able to excite hatred toward landlords, American imperialism, and the Nationalists simultaneously and to mobilize youths to join the People's Volunteer Army. For example, immediately following a district-wide accusation session (控诉大会) in Changshu County, 351 youths registered to join the army.³⁵ Some localities explicitly linked public displays of violence with the war effort. In Fengyang County in northern Anhui, the county leadership reported that, at the height of the RAAK campaign, each district held memorial services for revolutionary martyrs and other compatriots, alongside which they organized accusation sessions and public executions of over eighty "counterrevolutionaries."³⁶

I consider whether the public displays of violence during the land reform campaign aided RAAK mobilization by examining whether counties recruited higher numbers of soldiers into the People's Liberation Army and the People's Volunteer Army in the early 1950s where they had mobilized more mass violence during land reform. Using county gazetteer data from 250 counties in the East China Bureau,³⁷ I estimate several OLS models for military recruitment.³⁸ I measure military recruitment using a yearly measure of the number of soldiers who entered or were approved to join the People's Liberation Army or the People's Volunteer Army in the early 1950s (per one thousand people). Most gazetteers report data for military recruitment in one of two ways: number of people who applied (报名) or were approved for recruitment (被批准参军). While the number of applicants appears to be a good measure of war mobilization *prima facie*, it is often a clearly exaggerated figure, orders of magnitude higher than the number of applicants approved for entry or recruited in that same county (and elsewhere). Because the application figures appear to be exaggerated, I only use actual recruitment figures. Another issue with these figures is that gazetteers report them in the aggregate or only for a single year between 1950 and 1953. To make these figures comparable, I take the yearly average of aggregate figures. Last, because the RAAK campaign sought to increase military recruitment during the Korean War, I only include recruitment data between 1950 and 1953.

I test the principal hypothesis on public displays of violence and ingroup solidarity using a measure of struggle targets per one thousand during the land reform campaign. The ideal measure for public displays of violence would be the number of struggle sessions or accusation sessions per capita; however, the gazetteers rarely report data on the number of struggle or accu-

sation sessions. While multiple targets could be struggled against at a single session, it is reasonable to assume that there were more struggle sessions organized where there were more struggle targets, as cadres were often told to avoid long struggle sessions with many targets, which could “fatigue the masses” (疲劳群众) and inhibit mobilization.³⁹

I control for several potential confounders. Areas with higher densities of Party members (Party members per one thousand people) may have had greater mobilization capacity. As Vu argues, a cohesive and well-trained corps of cadres was essential to the Party-state’s controlled mobilization, which would imply that a greater Party presence would translate into greater state power.⁴⁰ Because the brutality of the Japanese occupation may have created stronger nationalistic solidarity, which may have facilitated conscription, I control for whether an area had been occupied by the Japanese. Last, I control for agricultural development in 1949, as youths in poorer areas would have faced lower opportunity costs for joining the army.

Even if we accept the assumption that in-group solidarity is critical for successful mobilization, there are alternative, nonviolent ways of achieving social cohesion. One of the clearest examples is relying on existing social ties. Lineages were not vehicles for integrating people into prostate collective identities; rather, as Chapter 4 details, the Party-state saw lineages as feudal identities that would obstruct violent mobilization and the building of class identity. If social cohesion mattered more than in-group solidarity—feelings of shared fate between local communities and the Party-state—created through state violence, we would expect lineages to have a strong, positive association with mobilization outcomes.

Table 14 presents the standardized coefficients from the partial and full OLS models that estimate the relationship between land reform violence and military recruitment. Both models support the hypothesis that collective violence galvanized military mobilization: land reform violence correlates positively with military recruitment, significant at the $p < .1$ level in the partial model and barely insignificant in the full. Across all four models, Party density has a negative, insignificant correlation with recruitment. Other coefficients are largely insignificant and, in some cases, not in their expected direction. Curiously, agricultural productivity correlates positively with recruitment, suggesting that wealthier areas may have been more likely to send recruits to the army, though this correlation is barely insignificant at the $p < .1$ level.

What if the correlation between land reform violence and state-building

outcomes is simply due to higher levels of repression? That is, might any kind of violence have facilitated state mobilization and repression, regardless of its content or degree of public participation? To test this claim, I run additional models using data on other forms of coercion during the early 1950s: the army's suppression of bandits and arrests of counterrevolutionaries during the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries (CSC). Shortly after 1949, the People's Liberation Army's engaged in extensive anti-bandit operations (剿匪) to eliminate armed insurgent groups. The elimination of these groups was crucial, as bandit groups severely dampened the local government's efforts to mobilize popular participation in land reform. While the CSC was synchronous with the land reform campaign, it had more formal state involvement in that the Public Security Bureau was involved. Accusation sessions, which resembled struggle sessions, and public sentencings were parts of the CSC, but the level of mass involvement was somewhat lower. Moreover, these data for the CSC are for arrests, not mass violence per se. More violence here indicates more state coercion, though not necessarily more public participation.

The OLS estimates in Table 14 demonstrate little support for a general coercion argument. There is an insignificant, positive correlation between counterrevolutionary arrests and military recruitment, while antibandit suppression correlates negatively, contrary to expectations, with military recruitment and is also insignificant.

Last, I consider whether out-group size—the percentage of households labeled as landlords—facilitated military recruitment by providing a pool of people who could be press-ganged into the army. Indeed, scholars have documented that a fair number of “volunteers” sent to Korea were in fact people deemed class enemies.⁴¹ Table 14 lends credence to this argument. In both partial and full models, the percentage of landlord households correlates positively and significantly with military recruitment. As the rest of this chapter shows, landlords continued to suffer from state repression throughout the Maoist period.

ECONOMIC MOBILIZATION UNDER SOCIALIZED AGRICULTURE (1949–78)

Moral mobilization during land reform aimed to coalesce group identities that could be harnessed for economic reconstruction (see Chapter 1); this

TABLE 14. OLS Coefficients for Land Reform Violence and Other Determinants of Yearly Military Recruits per 1,000 (Logged) during the Korean War (1950–53)

Variable	Outcome: Annual Military Recruits per 1,000						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Struggle Targets per 1,000	0.24* (0.13)	0.25 (0.16)					
Landlord Households (%)			0.08* (0.05)	0.10** (0.05)			
Counterrevolutionary Arrests per 1,000					0.08(0.09)		
Bandit Suppression (length in months)						-0.10 (0.08)	
Lineage Strength							-0.00 (0.01)
Agricultural Productivity (1949)		0.08 (0.14)		0.19 (0.12)	0.16 (0.12)	0.19 (0.12)	0.16 (0.12)
Party Density		-0.00 (0.06)		-0.02 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)
Japanese Occupation		-0.03 (0.20)		-0.08 (0.17)	-0.10 (0.18)	-0.12 (0.18)	-0.12 (0.19)
Anti-state Resistance		0.12 (0.13)		0.09 (0.12)	0.08 (0.12)	0.07 (0.13)	0.07 (0.13)

N = 250. Missing data multiply imputed (*m* = 50) using the R package Amelia. See Honaker, James, Gary King, and Matthew Blackwell. "Amelia II: A Program for Missing Data." *Journal of Statistical Software* 45, no. 7 (2011): 1–47. * *p* < .1; ** *p* < .05; *** *p* < .01.

section tests whether there was a significant link between land reform violence and rural production in the early and late Maoist periods. I measure agricultural growth by calculating the percentage change in grain output per *mu* of land in two periods: the pre- and immediate post-land reform period (1949–52) and 1949 and the beginning of the economic reforms (1949–78). This first measure looks at the immediate impact of land reform mobilization on agricultural growth. I use grain output per *mu* because of the Party-state's emphasis on grain production during the Maoist period. Mao's call for taking "grain as the key link" exhorted cadres to focus on grain production instead of cash crops for which localities may have had comparative advantage. Grain output, then, is a good gauge of economic development during the Maoist period.

I run the same OLS models as with the military recruitment analysis, excluding only the Japanese occupation variable, and find some evidence

TABLE 15. OLS Coefficients for Land Reform Violence and Other Determinants of Growth in Agricultural Production

Variable	Outcome: Growth (1949–52)				Outcome: Growth (1949–78)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Struggle Targets per 1,000	13.06* (6.96)				44.5 (29.1)			
Counter-revolutionary Arrests per 1,000		0.53 (5.11)				19.4 (14.7)		
Bandit Suppression (length in months)			2.03 (4.34)				-6.72 (12.17)	
Lineage Strength				0.13 (0.29)				0.71 (0.76)
Agricultural Productivity (1949)	1.56 (6.37)	13.14* (7.44)	12.97* (7.23)	10.97 (9.25)	10.8 (22.3)	32.9 (16.8)	30.43* (16.28)	31.14* (16.14)
Party Density	-3.11 (2.35)	-1.70 (3.05)	-3.53 (3.13)	-0.09 (3.81)	-46.8 (37.1)	-58.2 (37.3)	-51.06 (36.59)	-55.52 (38.47)
Anti-state Resistance	-1.54 (6.83)	-7.42 (7.41)	-13.95* (7.26)	-5.46 (8.82)	33.6 (24.2)	17.0 (21.1)	23.75 (22.66)	14.44 (22.06)

N = 250. Missing data multiply imputed (*m* = 50) using the R package *Amelia*. See Honaker, James, Gary King, and Matthew Blackwell. "Amelia II: A Program for Missing Data." *Journal of Statistical Software* 45, no. 7 (2011): 1–47. * *p* < .1; ** *p* < .05; *** *p* < .01.

that land reform violence may have facilitated agricultural production. As Table 15 indicates, areas that had mobilized more mass violence during land reform experienced greater growth in agricultural productivity in the immediate postrevolutionary period, though this correlation becomes statistically insignificant by the end of the Maoist period.

STATE-MOBILIZED VIOLENCE IN MAOIST CHINA AFTER LAND REFORM

Fomenting mass violence against a vilified and dispossessed group of landed elites provided a convenient scapegoat for the Party-state to mobilize against throughout the Maoist period. Though Mao had once toyed with the idea that landlords and rich peasants could have their labels removed given time

and good behavior, he became convinced that class enemies could never truly be cleansed of their reactionary beliefs. The theatrics and frequency of mass violence during land reform inculcated norms that justified violence against landlords and their ilk and cemented feelings of shared fate among those who perpetrated violence against them. From the Anti-Rightist Campaign of the late 1950s to the Cultural Revolution, the Party-state continually invoked the sins of the landlords as a way of keeping alive the moral boundaries between the good and bad classes and of mass-mobilizing along those lines.

The Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957–58)

The Party resurrected moralistic tropes about landlords and other class enemies during the Anti-Rightist Campaign in the late fifties. Mao accused so-called rightists of sabotaging collectivization and opposing central policies, and the Party released propaganda that “portrayed [rightists] as an evil force.”⁴² Internal Party reports from provincial leaders across the county reveal that local leaders were eager to scapegoat landlords for poor production under collectivization and all sorts of antiregime activity. Linking so-called rightists (右派分子) to landlords helped legitimize an ill-defined, murky campaign, as class labels could be used as a heuristic for identifying rightists. Cadres dug up “historical materials” (历史材料) on individuals suspected of being rightists, which would surely have contained records of materials gathered during land reform on their alleged wrongdoings or the wrongdoings of their parents and grandparents. Loudspeakers played slogans like “Rightists, rightists, demons and ghosts (右派右派, 妖魔鬼怪)” and added them to the “five black elements” (黑五类) alongside landlords, the former targets of the land reform campaign.⁴³

Unlike the moral mobilization of the land reform period, the hunt for rightists in the late 1950s relied more on drumming up mass hysteria than outrage. Invoking class boundaries was an effective way of provoking fear for two reasons. First, the thorough demonization of class enemies in the preceding several years made a convincing case that people from bad class backgrounds were inherently dangerous. A Henan provincial Party report noted the confusion and fear one Party member caused by arguing that “Party members are from poor backgrounds and their stance is firm. Non-Party cadres are from landlord backgrounds; they eat human flesh and drink human blood” (党员是穷人出身, 立场坚定, 非党干部是地主出身, 吃人肉, 喝人血).⁴⁴

Second, and perhaps more importantly, there was a serious fear that class enemies would return to take revenge on those who struggled against them during land reform. Top-secret Party reports from provincial leaders indicate that there were instances of landlords and their descendants attempting to counterorganize against people who had persecuted them during land reform. A report from the Hubei Provincial Party Committee's Rectification Office recorded that some schoolteachers had instigated some middle school students to hold struggle sessions; at least one of these organizers had been labeled a landlord and rallied students to struggle against people who had struggled against him during land reform.⁴⁵ It is not surprising that there would be a real threat of retributive violence by the victims of land reform; however, cadres greatly exaggerated and exploited this threat to shift blame away from themselves for problems arising during collectivization; reports on collectivization work in the late 1950s repeatedly mention the supposed threat of sabotage by landlords, rich peasants, and "bad elements."⁴⁶

To test the hypothesis that the Party-state could more easily mobilize violence against rightists where land reform violence had strengthened in-group/out-group divisions, I run the same OLS models as in the preceding analyses. As with military mobilization, I consider the importance of out-group size. Though land reform violence did not strongly correlate with the size of the population labeled as landlords, by the late 1950s landlords as a group had become morally tainted and almost "ethnicized," as class label had become an inheritable identity. Indeed, localities reinforced these in-group/out-group divisions by continuing to use collective struggle against class enemies during collectivization, up until the eve of the Anti-Rightist Campaign.

Table 16 presents the standardized coefficients from the OLS models that estimate the relationship between land reform violence, out-group size, and rightist labeling. Both land reform violence and percentage of households labeled as landlords correlate positively with rightist labeling per one thousand, significant at the $p < .01$ level. Other coercion measures and lineage strength are insignificant and, in the case of bandit suppression, not in their expected direction. Controls for revenge—past history of conflict and Japanese occupation—also do not correlate significantly with patterns of rightist labeling.

Without further archival or interview data, it is difficult to pinpoint the mechanism linking land reform violence and antirightist violence. It may not have been solidarity or shared fate but retributive violence on the part of

TABLE 16. OLS Coefficients for Land Reform Violence and Other Determinants of Labeling of Rightists (logged) during the Anti-Rightist Campaign

Variable	Outcome: Rightists per 1,000 (logged)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Struggle Targets per 1,000	0.44*** (0.11)				
Landlord Households (%)		0.18*** (0.05)			
Counterrevolutionary Arrests per 1,000			0.03 (0.10)		
Bandit Suppression (length in months)				-0.13* (0.08)	
Lineage Strength					-0.01 (0.01)
Party Density (1956)	0.18 (0.23)	0.05 (0.18)	0.09 (0.24)	0.05 (0.18)	0.04 (0.20)
Intercommunal Conflict	-0.01 (0.13)	0.07 (0.13)	0.06 (0.12)	0.05 (0.13)	0.06 (0.13)
Japanese Occupation	-0.01 (0.18)	-0.04 (0.16)	-0.07 (0.17)	-0.14 (0.17)	-0.17 (0.19)

N = 250. Missing data multiply imputed (*m* = 50) using the R package Amelia. See Honaker, James, Gary King, and Matthew Blackwell. "Amelia II: A Program for Missing Data." *Journal of Statistical Software* 45, no. 7 (2011): 1–47. * *p* < .1; ** *p* < .05; *** *p* < .01.

victims of the land reform campaign that explains the persistence of violence. Three things suggest that revenge-driven violence may not have been at play. First, places that had recorded histories of intercommunal conflict, where one might expect there to exist more long-standing grievances and vendettas, were not more likely to persecute more rightists. Second, the significant positive correlation between landlord household presence and the persecution of rightists could indicate that places with more landlords were more violent because there were more people desiring revenge. Yet Chapter 4 has shown that the number of landlords did not predict the amount of violence a community experienced. During land reform, simply having more landlords around did not mean that a community was willing to engage in more collective violence, but by the late-1950s landlord density had become a predictor of violence. Third, and most importantly, the Anti-Rightist Campaign explicitly relied on class labels to target rightists, precisely because the Party-state was paranoid about individuals with poor class

labels trying to stage a comeback during the campaign. Since it was virtually impossible to hide one's class label, it is doubtful that people with poor class labels drove the violence of this period.

The Legacy of Land Reform in the Later Maoist Period: The Socialist Education Movement and the Cultural Revolution

The Socialist Education Movement, under the banner of “Never Forget Class Struggle” (千万勿忘阶级斗争), kept the memory of feudal exploitation alive by holding exhibitions of pre-1949 landlord crimes to educate younger generations about the evils of the landlord class and to convince locals to remain vigilant about their possible return.⁴⁷ It was during this time that localities began to reassess class labels by exhuming and reexamining the alleged pre-revolutionary “crimes” of those with bad class labels or questionable political histories—that is, the “five black types” (黑五类): landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, “bad elements” (坏分子), and rightists—with the prospect of improving or even worsening one's class status. The decade preceding the Cultural Revolution saw the emergence of popular depictions of mass violence from the land reform campaign, in novel and film.⁴⁸ These depictions of the violence of the 1950s may have conditioned the violent behavior of the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁹

By the time of the Cultural Revolution, class labels had become proxies for good and evil.⁵⁰ So strong was the memory of the land reform campaign that Tan Hecheng, in his terrifying reportage on the collective violence of Dao County in Hunan Province, observed that locals, while carrying out their massacres, referred to the Cultural Revolution as the “second land reform.”⁵¹ The language of class struggle and the techniques of violence used against class enemies—struggle sessions, speaking bitterness, parading targets and adorning them with placards, flags, and tall hats that broadcast their crimes, and so forth—that characterized the Cultural Revolution were used by the Party in the mass campaigns of the early 1950s, and even earlier in areas where the Party had carried out extensive, violent mobilization.⁵²

It is questionable, however, if land reform violence and class labels structured the violence of the Cultural Revolution. A comparison of violence between the gazetteer data set on 1950s violence and Walder and Su's database on deaths and victims during the Cultural Revolution yielded null results (not shown here). This supports Walder's argument that class labels were not a major predictor of factional violence during the Cultural

Revolution, which were instead a function of evolving cleavages that developed between the Red Guards during their skirmishes; this analysis suggests that Walder's analysis may hold validity outside of the urban environs of Beijing.⁵³

State-Mobilized Violence during the Strike Hard Campaign (1983–86)

Astonishingly, only a few years after Mao's death and the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Party suddenly eliminated the class label system, the social boundaries that governed the life chances of every Chinese citizen for decades. Did these boundaries, which were so central to the operation of Chinese society under Mao, simply dissolve and leave no lasting legacy? What legacy did land reform violence leave?

I argue that moral mobilization resurfaced in the early reform period with greater intensity in areas that perpetrated more violence in the early 1950s; however, unlike the Anti-Rightist Campaign, class labels no longer predicted the intensity of violence. In the absence of class labels and amidst significant economic and societal dislocation brought on by its reforms, the Party-state chose to mobilize outrage and violence against a new out-group—alleged criminals—to rebuild its legitimacy.

It seemed, at first, that moral mobilization was destined to go underground with the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping. The Cultural Revolution had persecuted Deng and many of the top Party leaders, leaving them with a distaste for mass campaigns of political violence. The reformers, however, felt themselves on shaky ground. The conservative clique led by Chen Yun questioned the destabilizing effects of the reforms and attributed the significant increase in crime throughout the country since 1978 to economic liberalization. Feeling a profound anxiety about the legitimacy of the reform agenda, the reformers reached into the Maoist past and revived the techniques of moral mobilization to build solidarity between the masses and the state and to “relegitimize the Party.”⁵⁴

The use of popular morality to gain public sympathy and support for violence against elites and intellectuals featured most prominently in the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign and the Strike Hard Campaign of 1983 to 1986. The Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign, aimed at attacking intellectuals who were “polluting” China with bourgeois liberal ideas, linked degenerate intellectual thought with moral decay—that is, rising rates of rape, murder, corruption. In response to fears about rising crime, the Strike Hard Campaign

attacked “societal threats” and criminals. As in land reform, the campaign focused on the most egregious and sensational acts—sexual crimes and murder—and punished these offenders using an approach that was “broadly modelled on the activities and events of the mass political campaigns of the 1950s” that employed “mass arrests” and “mass rallies.”⁵⁵ As Thaxton writes,

In city after city, top CCP and Public Security personnel stoked public indignation toward accused criminals, often issuing calls for quick, violent revenge against the accused . . . [P]eople were sentenced and shamed in mass public meetings and alleged wrongdoers were paraded through the streets with derogatory signs around their necks while scores of police cars, sirens screaming, were dispatched to seize “criminals” reported by “the masses.”⁵⁶

Localities drew on popular propaganda strategies from the early Maoist period. In the city of Huangshan and eleven surrounding localities, authorities staged an exhibition to display the many crimes of alleged transgressors, including over one hundred photographs, 130 pieces of “evidence,” and sixty cartoon drawings, which drew two hundred thousand visitors over thirty-five days.⁵⁷ To signal the Party’s seriousness about the campaign and to reaffirm its incorruptibility, the reformers, led by Hu Yaobang, executed Zhu Guohua—the great revolutionary general Zhu De’s grandson—on a series of rape charges.

Table 17 illustrates that violence during the land reform campaign and the campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries significantly correlates with higher levels of state violence during the first Strike Hard Campaign; however, percentage of landlord households *negatively* correlates with Strike Hard arrests. Considering that class labels had been abolished, it is logical that class labels would no longer predict violence. While more qualitative evidence is necessary to explain the inverse correlation between class labels and Strike Hard arrests, decades of persecution may have alienated individuals from landlord backgrounds, who may have been less willing to support another campaign of state violence that, as discussed above, resembled the violence landlords endured in the 1950s.

The significant positive correlation between violence in the early 1950s and violence during Strike Hard suggests that areas that had stronger legacies of violent state mobilization continued to be amenable to further violent mobilization. The small, barely significant positive correlation between lineage strength and state violence in the 1980s lends some support to Perry’s

TABLE 17. OLS Coefficients for Land Reform Violence and Other Determinants of Arrests (logged) during the First Strike Hard Campaign (1983–86)

Variable	Outcome: Strike Hard Arrests per 1,000 (logged)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Struggle Targets per 1,000	0.39** (0.17)				
Landlord Households (%)		-0.17*** (0.07)			
Counterrevolutionary Arrests per 1,000			0.31*** (0.15)		
Bandit Suppression (length in months)				0.04 (0.12)	
Lineage Strength					0.01* (0.01)
Party Density (1978)	-0.13 (0.27)	-0.07 (0.30)	-0.13 (0.30)	-0.01 (0.27)	-0.03 (0.28)
Intercommunal Conflict	-0.31 (0.16)	-0.25 (0.17)	-0.23 (0.16)	-0.27 (0.16)	-0.31 (0.16)
Japanese Occupation	-0.19 (0.28)	-0.30 (0.21)	-0.14 (0.22)	-0.23 (0.22)	-0.06 (0.24)

N = 250. Missing data multiply imputed (*m* = 50) using the R package Amelia. See Honaker, James, Gary King, and Matthew Blackwell. "Amelia II: A Program for Missing Data." *Journal of Statistical Software* 45, no. 7 (2011): 1–47. * *p* < .1; ** *p* < .05; *** *p* < .01.

claim that traditional collective identities regained salience in communal conflict in the post-Mao period.⁵⁸ As with the analysis of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, revenge variables are not significantly correlated with state-mobilized violence.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The documentary and quantitative historical evidence I present here suggest that the mass mobilized violence of the land reform created a camaraderie among “the masses” that the Party-state harnessed for mobilization during the Korean War, agricultural production, the Anti-Rightist Campaign, and the first Strike Hard Campaign. Assessing whether in-group solidarity forged through repeated participatory, public displays of violence during the land reform would benefit from in-depth oral history work. Yet interview-based

research on Maoist nostalgia has found that many people who lived in the 1950s felt—or believed they felt—genuine solidarity and unity, which in some cases gave rise to feelings of nostalgia. One interviewee, remarking on the Great Leap Forward, described the indelible impression that community solidarity and faith in the Party united the people:

During the three years of natural disaster [the Great Leap Famine]—that’s when I was in middle school—life was quite hard, but at that time the Chinese people had an unswerving loyalty to the Party and firmly believed that they could get through the crisis. So not only did this period of hardship leave a deep impression on me, so did the spirit of a people who firmly believed that they could survive a crisis together.⁵⁹

Even some young Chinese people look back to the Maoist period in awe of what they perceived to be an admirable commitment to “unity in strength” (团结就是力量).⁶⁰ Future research on solidarity and violence in Maoist China would benefit from additional data on the mechanisms linking violence and further mobilization, and from testing these relationships in other contexts during the Maoist and post-Mao period.

Conclusion

Moral Mobilization in Comparative Perspective

After the Chinese Communists execute the landlord Ximen Nao—the reincarnating protagonist of Mo Yan’s novel *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* (生死疲劳)—his spirit returns to Mao’s China in the early 1950s to discover that they have redistributed the land from his estate. He is less astonished by the fact of land reform than by his violent end: “Parceling out land has its historical precedents, I thought, so why did they have to shoot me before dividing up mine?”¹

In pondering his fate, Ximen Nao questions a significant and peculiar feature of the Chinese Communist revolution: while many revolutions dispossessed landowners through land reform, the Chinese Party-state was unique in undertaking to systematically and publicly abuse, humiliate, and kill the landed elite. Elsewhere in Asia, land reform in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea had proceeded peacefully. Even the North Vietnamese, who carried out violent land reform shortly after China did, only did so under the influence of the CCP, which had criticized Vietnamese leaders for their “peaceful” approach and dispatched a consulting team to help them carry out violent class struggle.²

This study has attempted to answer Ximen Nao’s question: China’s land reform campaign was not just about economic redistribution but part of a larger, brutally violent state-building effort to delegitimize the new Party-state’s internal rivals and establish its moral authority. Violent mobilization was a coercive means to normative ends. As Liu Shaoqi stated in his 1950 “Report on the Question of Land Reform”—one of the central documents of the post-1949 land reform movement and widely reprinted in land reform cadre handbooks and study materials—the goal of land reform was not to

eliminate landlords physically but to destroy their social authority: “[We are] only abolishing their feudal system of landownership and them as a social class; we are not eliminating their bodies” (废除他们这一个社会阶级,而不是要消灭他们的肉体).³

This chapter begins with an overview of the central arguments of the book. I then look at the revival of moral mobilization under Xi Jinping and two case studies of moral mobilization outside of China: the Spanish Inquisition and factory mobilization during Stalin’s Great Terror.

CLASS STRUGGLE, MORALLY UNDERSTOOD

I have argued here that the Chinese Communist Party’s use of moral discourse to delineate moral boundaries that designated victims and oppressors and the dramatization of the perceived moral transgressions of those defined in the latter category was the major impetus behind the mass mobilization of violence during the land reform campaign. I have stressed that the provocation—or “incitement” (激发), to use the Party’s own term—of moral outrage against the landed elites constituted the cornerstone of the Party’s mobilization work. The mobilization of outrage followed an intricate process of moral boundary work that forged new conceptual distinctions—or social boundaries—between the oppressed “masses” (群众) and the oppressive “landlord class” (地主阶级).

These social boundaries were simultaneously new and old. They were new categorical divisions that distinguished between various classes within rural society, imported from the Soviet Union’s own class stratification system. These class boundaries were then subsumed into a larger social boundary that juxtaposed the “good classes” who comprised the masses against a category of class enemies—landlords, evil tyrants, counterrevolutionaries, and the like. It was onto this newly imposed boundary between the masses and the landlord class and their associates that the Party grafted a new sociobehavioral boundary that not only reified this in-group/out-group distinction but also provided new “scripts of action,” to use Wimmer’s language, regarding how this out-group should be viewed and treated.⁴ This new moral boundary contained a script of action that justified the mistreatment, abuse, and even elimination of members of this category of class enemies because of their perceived moral turpitude. Yet the content of these boundaries, the material that moral boundary work drew upon to create

these new boundaries, was old. The creation of a morally retrograde category of people, defined in part by their wealth, drew on transgressions of traditional norms of propriety and benevolence—expectations regarding how landlords should treat tenants and how officials and those in power should behave—that long preceded the Communists.

The Communist innovation was to conflate the newly created boundary between the masses and the landlord class with these wicked figures through the identification and sensationalization of the supposed transgressions of long-standing norms of appropriate and good behavior. These techniques were not wholly new: speaking bitterness and struggle sessions had the precedents in the Qing state's rituals of moral governance and drew upon the imperial state's moralization of corruption. Rural folk opera and traditions of peasant rebellion provided styles of storytelling, theater, and norms of moral retributivism that the Party adapted to the style of speaking bitterness, the staging of struggle sessions, and the selection of struggle targets.

Looking at the regions of Jiangnan and Huaibei, which conducted land reform after the 1949 revolution, I find that the Party-state mobilized violence via moral mobilization in the absence of salient class conflict and in wildly different local socioeconomic contexts. Its ability to do so lay not in its arbitrary and rigid implementation of economic class struggle but rather the application of class struggle morally understood. In wealthy and unequal Jiangnan and poor and less-stratified Huaibei, Party work teams and villagers focused on alleged moral transgressors from the landed elite, the group that the Party was most interested in targeting, but also from a substantial number of individuals from other socioeconomic strata who were viewed as the moral equivalents of the evil landlord class. Thus, the association of non-landlord evil tyrants, thieves, bandits, and corrupt functionaries with the landed elite was not so much a deviation from mobilization policies as it was an intentional strategy of concretizing the moral division between the masses and the landlord class.

Understanding the land reform campaign through the lens of moral mobilization exposes the incongruity between “representational and objective reality” of which Philip Huang wrote over twenty years ago.⁵ The Party's ability to embed the narrative of class struggle within a narrative of moral transgression helps explain how the campaign's rhetoric of class struggle simultaneously functioned as the “organizing principle” of the conflict even while its class rhetoric strayed wildly from the underlying economic reality. Similar to what Lee Ann Fujii observes in Rwanda, class became a “script” by

which communities chose and attacked others—some of them landlords, some of them not—not for being wealthier or owning more land but for the harm, cheating, and pain they were perceived to have caused.⁶ It was in this sense that the Party was able to transform violent class struggle during land reform into what Huang termed a “dramatic struggle of good against evil.”⁷

While the process of moral mobilization describes the principal techniques that the Party used to mobilize land reform violence, there was also significant local variation in the intensity of the violence mobilized and the kinds of people targeted. The intensity of violence the Party mobilized in a locality hinged largely on coercive control. I find that the Party could mobilize more violence where it had secure coercive control for the duration of the campaign, because coercive control provided cadres a safe and stable environment for its extensive mobilization work and assured locals that they could participate in the campaign without suffering retaliatory violence from those they persecuted.

There was also variation in the kinds of people targeted by this violence. I argue that the Party’s shaping of the social structure of local communities in terms of class and moral status can explain why we observe different kinds of people being targeted during class struggle in different socioeconomic contexts. Specifically, I contend that the differences in the nature of the local elite and the predominant moral norms that governed the relationship between them and the rest of the community shaped the kinds of people who were targeted. In wealthy, unequal areas where ties between traditional economic landlords and tenants were prevalent, landlords bore the brunt of land reform violence for their alleged transgressions of norms of fairness and cheating in the landlord-tenant relationship (norms of propriety). Poor localities with low tenancy rates and inequality, dominated by strongmen and political officials, turned on those perceived to have transgressed norms of virtue and benevolent governance, for having brought harm to the community directly or indirectly by colluding with outside foreign, bandit, or government forces. Thus in Baoshan, communities rallied to denounce landlords not for their wealth but for their alleged mistreatment of tenants; in Fengyang, villagers condemned targets for their corruption and criminality or for working in collaboration with corrupt and criminal regimes or groups. Although the Party tried to direct this mobilization against perceived transgressors among the landed elite exclusively, that proved impossible in practice. In both Baoshan and Fengyang, the Party’s mobilization efforts drew in a considerable number of

people from nonlandlord backgrounds who had been accused of cheating or otherwise harming the community.

In the long term, the recursive process of boundary making, theatrics, and participation in collective violence that unfolded over the course of weeks, if not months, reified boundaries against targeted out-groups and concretized in-group solidarity among “the masses.” Significantly, this newfound solidarity provided the Party-state with a population that they could further mobilize, politically and economically, through the early post-Mao period.

XI JINPING AND THE REVIVAL OF MORAL MOBILIZATION

What is the contemporary legacy of moral mobilization in China? The violence of the early 1950s left an indelible mark on Chinese society and influenced subsequent collective violence in the Maoist period and support for state violence in the reform era, as Chapter 6 detailed. After the first Strike Hard Campaign, the state prohibited struggle sessions and public sentences.⁸ In 1988, the Supreme People’s Court outlawed the public parading of criminals. Strike hard campaigns continued throughout the reform era, but they began to lose the intensely moralistic flavor of the first Strike Hard Campaign. Despite their legal prohibition, localities continued to use moral theatrics throughout the reform era. During subsequent strike hard campaigns, there were cases of localities using local campaigns to root out “bad seeds” accused of immoral behavior.⁹ These cases seemingly occurred without central direction, for the Hu Jintao leadership viewed such public and sensationalized displays of state violence during Strike Hard as incompatible with “harmonious society.”

With the ascendancy of Xi Jinping to general Party secretary in 2012, moral mobilization reemerged, with some modifications, seemingly in response to the Party’s anxiety over its legitimacy. In 2013, Xi warned the top leadership that “winning or losing public support is an issue that concerns the CCP’s survival or extinction” and declared a return to the Maoist mass line to “serve the people, be down-to-earth, upright and corruption-free.”¹⁰ By “striking tigers and swatting flies” (打虎拍蠅), the Party-state under Xi has attempted to reassert its righteous image by vilifying corrupt officials and mobilizing support for their repression.

Xi’s anticorruption campaign has resorted to sensationalized accounts of moral wrongdoing to mobilize public support for what would otherwise

appear to be a campaign against his political enemies. In contrast to Thornton's description of the reform-era anticorruption cases under Hu Jintao and his predecessors as including "lurid descriptions of criminal and deviant sexual behavior . . . but relying more heavily on the language of the market,"¹¹ the anticorruption campaign under Xi has a marked moralistic flavor. ChinaFile's database of 2,447 officials whose corruption charges were announced by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection indicates that "lurid details" loomed large in many of these sentencings.¹² That is, most officials have their offenses described in terms of moral failings. For example, when Wei Minzhou, a senior official in Shaanxi Province and aide to the head of the powerful Organization Department, was taken down for corruption, he was accused, bluntly, of "corrupt political morals."¹³ Paying prostitutes for sex often appears in these accusations; research on sex workers in China has found that investigators save records of officials caught with prostitutes on file to release if they are accused of corruption.¹⁴

This moral dramatization and shaming of corruption has even permeated popular culture. The popular television series *In the People's Name* (人民的名义) shows a suave anticorruption investigator, played by the young, handsome television star Lu Yi, taking down a series of corrupt officials, whose excessive behavior stretches into the territory of farce. In the beginning of the series, a major official who narrowly escapes capture is shown flying out of the country (to America), drinking champagne in a first-class cabin surrounded by European supermodels. When the investigator interrogates a seemingly innocuous older gentleman who worked with this corrupt official, he finds that even this lowly official has in fact amassed a significant fortune in the form of an extravagant home, with piles of cash hidden within its walls. After he's been found out, he begs the investigator for mercy, explaining that growing up as a poor peasant made him susceptible to the allure of money. In a strange, paternalistic gesture characteristic of a Confucian ruler, the investigator admonishes him for the errors of his ways and encourages him to repent.

The Eliminate Crime, Purge Evil (扫黑除恶) campaign—whose name brazenly advertises its moralistic flavor—focuses not on corruption but on criminal behavior, particularly drug-related offenses. According to the "Notice on Launching the Specialized Struggle to Eliminate Crime and Purge Evil" (关于开展扫黑除恶专项斗争的通知), released by the CCP Central Committee in January 2018, the campaign is supposed to link up with the anticorruption campaign's mission of "swatting flies"—that is, identifying and purging

corrupt officials at the grassroots—by rooting out corrupt officials who provide protection for criminal groups.¹⁵ In many ways it has incorporated elements from the Strike Hard Campaign and the mass campaigns of the early 1950s. Strikingly, some localities have revived public sentencings, terming them 宣判大会 instead of 公审大会, to showcase egregious alleged criminals to the masses. In Lufeng Municipality in Guangdong,¹⁶ thousands of people assembled in a high school track field to watch the sentencing of ten alleged drug lords. A video shows Public Security Bureau parading them around the field on trucks, with guards on either side of the offender and with a short rope around their necks to prevent them from speaking. The parade ended at the execution site, where they were immediately executed; it is unclear if spectators were allowed to follow.¹⁷ The parading on trucks, the offender flanked by guards, and the rope around the offender's neck are elements straight out of the struggle sessions and public sentencings of the land reform campaign.

Last, a critical tool in staging the moral theatrics of these campaigns is the use of televised confessions to humiliate officials, alleged criminals, dissidents, and even celebrities using sensationalized details of prostitution, gambling, and extravagant lifestyle to humiliate, shame, and broadcast their alleged sins. The goal of these coerced, scripted performances is to delegitimize their targets and portray them as untrustworthy, bad people.¹⁸ Similar to the land reform campaign's mixing of moral and political offenders, televised confessions have been used against both political and nonpolitical opponents. While human rights organizations and scholars have noted the use of televised confessions to persecute political dissidents, some of the most high-profile, and earliest, confessions were by drug lords.¹⁹ While Tiffert notes the parallels between these confessions and the newspaper confessions during the “three-antis” campaign of the early fifties,²⁰ similar confessions and lurid evidence abounded during the struggle sessions and public sentencings of the antityrant and land reform campaigns and the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries. Just as struggle targets were forced, ultimately, to “bow to the masses” and admit their guilt, so too must confessors thank the Party—and Xi—for their benevolent treatment and apologize to the masses for their sins.

The architecture of state violence in present-day China rests upon a foundation laid by the techniques of moral mobilization during the violent mass campaigns of the early Maoist era. Xi, however, is not Mao: while Mao envisioned the masses as participants in righteous repression, Xi desires they

remain spectators. Still, as much as these are top-down campaigns, both involve some degree of popular participation. The Party-state solicits tips and leads (线索) from ordinary citizens and offers monetary rewards for their help in catching corrupt officials and criminals. The *Hunan Procuratorate's Corruption Inspection Guidelines* recommends officials begin their investigations by “immersing themselves in the masses” (深入群众) to find leads on officials suspected of corrupt behavior.²¹

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES OUTSIDE OF CHINA

When do political actors use moral mobilization? When political elites perceive themselves to be in the throes of a legitimacy crisis, they are more likely to use moral mobilization to build or reaffirm an in-group identity among their supporters and mobilize violence against their opponents. Moral mobilization is particularly crucial where political elites are trying to mobilize along latent or weak social cleavages. I demonstrate the use of moral mobilization in two cases: The Spanish Inquisition and Stalin's Great Terror.

The Spanish Inquisition (1483–1834)

The rise of Christian humanism and Protestantism pushed the church in Spain to identify and punish threats to its authority, mainly in the form of heretics, or those who spoke out against church doctrine or otherwise threatened ecclesiastical authority. For centuries the church had worried about the nebulous threat of heresy, but, paradoxically, it appears that there was no “general popular antipathy towards heresy as such,” as R. I. Moore points out.²² He goes on to remark,

That observation made, the over-familiar assertion that “medieval man” feared and resented any deviation from his simple Catholic faith is remarkably difficult to justify. On the contrary, the reason why preachers of heresy were denounced, pursued and extinguished by whatever means availed was precisely the fear that they would undermine the faith of the *simplices*, and with it the social order.²³

In Spain, despite assertions of the fervent religiosity of Spaniards, villagers were generally uninterested in the issue of heresy, which the Spanish authori-

ties considered a significant threat to their power. Organizing and implementing a violent inquisition against these perceived enemies, however, was impossible without mass cooperation; the inquisitors needed to convey the urgency of heresy to the Spanish public and enlist their help. Underfunded and understaffed, the Inquisition relied heavily on testimonies it collected from locals, though “hostility to the tribunal at a popular level was commonplace.”²⁴ Because of this public ambivalence, and, at times hostility, a major task of the Inquisition involved mobilizing public cooperation. Indeed, Henry Kamen has argued that “the essential component of an Inquisition was and is the compliance and cooperation of ordinary people.”²⁵

How did the Spanish inquisitors mobilize a population that seemed rather apathetic about heresy to join them in the search for heretics? I suggest that the Inquisition used moral mobilization to overcome the public’s apathy toward heresy by identifying, emphasizing, and sensationalizing the supposed transgressions of alleged heretics to draw a new moral boundary between the virtuous Catholic public and heretical sinners. Associating speaking out against the church with sin provided the public a means for understanding and relating to the danger of heresy. Moreover, the idea of using sin as justification for mobilization was, as one may expect, rather common in the Europe of the Middle Ages. Among European communities there were powerful, entrenched beliefs about how sinful behavior—mainly on the part of Jews and Muslims—could bring plagues or other calamities to the villages. Nirenberg argues that the perception of sin was enough to galvanize communities and authorities against a suspected group or even an individual sinner. He cites an example of a man accused of “enormous crimes” whose immoral behavior caused people to “wonder[] if some great plague would not follow in the land, because of the injustice and impunity of this sin and others.”²⁶

Central to the mobilization efforts of the Inquisition was the invention of the “heretic.” The definition of heresy changed over time and across countries, though the church generally defined it as whatever set of behaviors seemed to threaten its interests. The Inquisition’s moral boundary work sought to socially construct and justify the persecution of so-called heretics by exploiting the idea of sin and by subsuming under the label of heresy a broad “general class of moral offenses.”²⁷ Because inquisitors were few in number and poorly funded, the tribunal itself did not carry out moral boundary work; it delegated that task to the local clergy. Before a tribunal arrived, local clergy, on the orders of the tribunal, would deliver sermons

against heresy and detail criteria for identifying heretics within the congregation. Once the tribunal had arrived, local clergy would then proclaim an “Edict of Grace” that opened up a period of several weeks or months “when people might voluntarily confess or identify suspects to the inquisitors”; the “Edict of Faith,” which eventually replaced the Edict of Grace, went so far as to promise excommunication to those who failed to confess their sins or unmask heretics living among them.²⁸ Aside from asserting “a moral obligation to denounce both oneself and others,” the reading of the Edict was part of an elaborate ceremony in which the inquisitors, shortly after arriving in a locality, would hold a mass for the local community where they would “hold a crucifix in front of the congregation and ask everybody to raise his right hand, cross himself and repeat after the inquisitor a solemn oath to support the Inquisition and its ministers.” The fear of being associated with sin, being expelled from the church, or being denounced by someone else unleashed waves of denunciations against those who were perceived to have committed one of the litany of moral offenses described in sermons or otherwise had a “bad reputation” in the local community.²⁹

As with any campaign of mass mobilized violence, the ever-present desire for revenge in local communities threatened to disperse the energies and resources of the Inquisition.³⁰ Extensive investigative could not prevent false reporting by locals trying to exploit the Inquisition to settle old scores. Nevertheless, “There is also substantial evidence that inquisitors became relatively more skillful than others in identifying evidence or accusations given for other than pious reasons.”³¹ Moreover, the Holy Office was sincerely concerned with dealing with potential threats to its authority, much more so than meting out violence per se. In fact, in the majority of cases, the inquisitors recommended “reconciliation with the Church,” lesser sentences in accordance with the nature of the crime—for example, wearing the *sanbenito* on certain holidays, forced pilgrimage, property confiscation, exile, or imprisonment.³²

The Inquisition hoped that the public display of moral transgressions—moral shocks—would draw the faithful, despite their persistent apathy, closer to the church. The Inquisition used these moral transgressions as spectacles, not merely for punishment, and only the most dramatic transgressions were worthy of publicity. Indeed, cases of minor transgressions were not even given a public audience: their sentences were relayed to the transgressors in private at an *auto particular*. More serious cases of moral transgression were punished at spectacular *autos-de-fé*, where the church could use elaborate pageantry

and symbolism to showcase the egregiousness of convicts' sins and mete out appropriate punishments. Moral transgressors became part of the Holy Office's "numerous morality plays, at which large numbers of outsiders, dressed in penitential costumes, underwent public humiliation, acknowledging their guilt while prostrate before the green cross of the Inquisition."³³ These public spectacles "served as a means of reinforcing the faith of those who observed them as much as a means of celebrating the penitence of those who participated in them."³⁴ Through these "rituals of social cohesion, where evildoers were separated from the Christian community,"³⁵ the Inquisition deepened the moral boundaries it established and repeatedly emphasized the distance between true Christians and heretics.

This abbreviated account of the Spanish Inquisition reveals that the tribunals were able to use moral mobilization to overcome significant public apathy toward the enterprise of hunting real or perceived challenges to the church. Introducing the notion of the "heretic," which was then equated with sin and encompassed a vast category of moral offenses—for example, spreading Judaism or Islam, homosexuality, witchcraft—provided a tangible basis for mobilizing locals to denounce others to the tribunals. The spectacular display of those accused of moral transgression aimed at solidifying this new boundary between heretic and the virtuous Catholic community.

The Great Terror under Stalin (1936–38)

When Sergei Kirov, one of Stalin's staunchest supporters, was assassinated in Leningrad in 1934, Stalin blamed the incident on the machinations of "Trotskyists" concealed within the Party ranks, and he used the assassination to justify the launching of "a vast campaign against alleged anti-Soviet conspirators."³⁶ A massive wave of violence ensued in July 1937, when Stalin claimed that "a large number of former kulaks and criminals . . . are the chief instigators of all sorts of crimes"³⁷ and demanded local leaders apprehend these "hostile elements" and send them to the troikas, three-person tribunals led by regional Party secretaries that hastily distributed sentences to alleged anti-Stalinists.³⁸ The Party had also decided to shift its focus away from purges of the Party elite; Stalin sought to shake up the leadership personnel in the factories—namely, factory shop managers and Party officials—in his hunt for Trotskyists.

Few, if any, factory workers knew what a Trotskyist was, and district officials "as late as fall 1936 . . . were still unsure how to identify a 'Trotskyist-

Zinovievite.”³⁹ The Soviets were clearly not drawing upon preexisting social cleavages between factory workers and so-called Trotskyists, so when they attempted to mobilize workers to participate in the campaign to “unmask” internal enemies within the factory, they received a tepid response. How did the Soviets successfully mobilize workers to participate in the Great Terror under these conditions? Looking at the Great Terror from the perspective of moral mobilization, the Soviets mobilized mass participation by associating the label Trotskyist with the image of the industrial “wrecker,” which facilitated the creation of a new moral boundary between victimized workers and negligent and malicious factory management.

The Soviets engaged in moral boundary work to guide workers to understand and identify anti-Soviet or Trotskyist elements by drawing on normative transgressions regarding the proper treatment of workers—that is, “wrecking.” The rapid industrialization of the Soviet economy in the 1930s had generated a tremendous number of industrial accidents that became a popular source of discontent for factory workers. Although the root cause of these industrial accidents was the state’s strategy of rapid industrialization, officials redirected the blame for these accidents to a nebulously defined group of “wreckers”—that is, people who intentionally or out of negligence caused industrial accidents. This shift in focus, Wendy Goldman argues, was extraordinarily effective: “The new emphasis on wrecking as an explanation for production problems transformed conflicts among shops heads and engineers into political warfare.”⁴⁰

To mobilize workers against “Trotskyists” and other ill-defined enemies, local authorities engaged in face-to-face boundary work to clarify the division between the mass of factory workers and suspected wreckers. Similar to the Chinese Communists’ “informal chats” and “small group” meetings, authorities “held [meetings] in all the shops during special ‘politdni’ or ‘political days’ to teach people ‘how to recognize the aims, methods, practical wrecking, and diversionist work of foreign espionage organs and their right-Trotskyist agents.’ And the papers encouraged employees to ‘unmask’ (razoblachit’) or ‘tear off the masks’ of hidden enemies and expose their ‘true faces.’”⁴¹ This process of moral boundary work had its precedents in czarist Russia. Hoffman notes that the imperial regime developed techniques of “social cataloguing” and “social excision” by which it isolated or exiled threats to the social body and demarcated “deviant groups.”⁴²

Simply conflating the idea of wrecking and industrial accidents with Trotskyism was only the first step in mobilizing factory workers; authorities

used sensationalized accounts of wrecking—moral shocks—to galvanize the moral outrage of factory workers and motivate their participation in the unmasking effort. Near the beginning of the campaign to mass-mobilize factory workers in late 1936, the Soviets exploited the Kemerovo mines explosion to underscore the danger of wreckers. The show trial portrayed workers as “victims” of reckless and malicious managers.⁴³ Local industrial accidents became opportunities for sensationalized examples of factory management misconduct and disregard for the workers. A Party official and manager of a mill was accused of “poisoning the workers” after some workers fell ill after a chemical accident exposed them to noxious fumes. When he apparently reprimanded a worker for causing an accident, another worker criticized him, saying: “A person should think about how to talk to a Soviet citizen. Is this how a Soviet engineer should speak to a worker? A worker who takes every breakdown deeply to heart?”⁴⁴ By the end of the campaign, the massive attack on the moral integrity of factory management and unions was so thorough—one newspaper decried them as “an entire army of free loaders and good-for-nothings”—that the state had to intervene to rehabilitate their image, as factory discipline had severely declined.⁴⁵

The Communist Party was evidently aware of the moral nature of its mobilization work. At the end of the Great Terror in 1939, Andrei Andreev announced that “our Party home has become cleaner and fresher . . . [and] elements of moral degeneration have largely disappeared.” He continued:

The entire Party has come to the Eighteenth Congress with a feeling of *deep moral satisfaction* with its work. How, comrades, could we not be satisfied when the Party with the support and participation of the entire people succeeded in crushing and annihilating the Trotskyist-Bukharinist cadres and all other conspirators, wreckers, murderers, and spies.⁴⁶

Evidently, by the end of the Great Terror the term “Trotskyist” had transformed into a catch-all category for moral deviants who became the lightning rod for the Soviets’ mass mobilization efforts.

In the mass mobilization of factory workers during the Great Terror, officials delineated a moral distinction between the victimized and honest working class and malicious and negligent “wreckers” in factory management positions. The theatrical use of national and local industrial accidents to generate moral outrage against factory officials further entrenched these boundaries and motivated workers to denounce their supervisors on

the shop floor. While I argue that moral mobilization was at the core of the mass mobilization of factory workers during the Great Terror, Richard Pipes contends that fear motivated this participation. “Failure to report ‘subversive’ talk,” he argues, “was tantamount to subversion.”⁴⁷ As with the Spanish Inquisition and Chinese land reform, fear most likely played a significant role in driving participation in public denunciations, but only after the campaign was well underway. Fear cannot explain how the Soviets succeeded in initially mobilizing this participation, which required Party elites to overcome substantial inertia and apathy among factory workers. Once in motion, fear certainly maintained, if not accelerated, the momentum of the campaign.

CONCLUSION: RETHINKING STATE FORMATION AS A MOBILIZATION PROCESS

This analysis addresses several limitations of existing theories of state building and mobilization. To begin, the Chinese case demonstrates that an institutional approach to state building cannot fully explain the development of state authority; the PRC after 1949 shows that mass mobilization was a far more critical component of state authority than its institutions. In contradistinction to Michael Mann’s nebulous concept of “infrastructural power” as an “institutional capacity,”⁴⁸ state authority in Maoist China manifested as the capacity to mobilize. Party committees, not official state organs, organized and led the charge in mobilizing the masses to redistribute land, struggle against alleged class enemies and counterrevolutionaries, collectivize, and later promote agricultural socialization. The classic Weberian view of the modern state as a rational bureaucratic apparatus does not take us far in understanding the postrevolutionary Chinese state because it elides the process behind state building and narrowly understands state authority in terms of bureaucratic capacity.⁴⁹ While the Party did eventually establish a legitimate coercive monopoly, the depth of this legitimacy varied across the country depending on well how the Party was able to mass-mobilize the local population. Explaining this variation requires, at the very least, an understanding of the mechanisms behind mass mobilization. More importantly, understanding state power in terms of bureaucratic capacity does not explain how the Party was able to mass-mobilize in the absence of a meritocratically staffed bureau-

cratic apparatus. Indeed, it was mass mobilization that helped build and staff the state bureaucracy after 1949. Land reform and other mass campaigns were opportunities to locate promising young activists who could fill Party and state positions at the local level.⁵⁰ Attaining state goals of economic production, conscription, and repression continued to rely on mass mobilization more than on state institutions, as Party committees directed mobilization efforts.⁵¹ The development of mobilization capacity, not state bureaucracy, was more crucial to state authority in the Maoist period.

In addition, it shows the insufficiency of a bellicist approach that focuses exclusively on the coercive dimension of state power. Simply put, war and eliminating internal competitors were not sufficient for the consolidation of state authority in China after 1949. The Chinese masses were not a passive audience to be won through brute force alone; the subjugation of local elites entailed significant mobilization work that attempted to establish the legitimacy of the Party-state's rule and compliance with its demands by typecasting the local elite as evil and deserving of violent retribution.⁵² Moreover, the Party-state began to consolidate its authority outside of the context of external war. Although China's participation in the Korean War came only one year after the Communist victory, the CCP had already been diligently working to eliminate "bandit" groups and mass-mobilize violence against local elites associated with the old regime. Mass mobilized military recruitment intertwined with the ongoing land reform campaign and repression of so-called counterrevolutionaries. Thus, while the Korean War was undoubtedly an important part of state building in the early PRC period, war mobilization was in fact part of a larger ongoing mass mobilization effort to consolidate state authority.

In confronting local elites, the Chinese case shows that states are not always at the mercy of the existing configuration of local elites, though they need to tailor their mobilization to local conditions. The scattering of social authority in the Chinese countryside after the founding of the republic in 1912 produced a "weblike society" that Migdal claims is least conducive to the consolidation of the state's social control; this societal fragmentation would force a state to co-opt and delegate power to local elites, undermining centralized rule. This was indeed the case with the Nationalist regime, which relied heavily on local landed elites to carry out state functions and had a weak presence outside of the cities. The PRC, however, is known for precisely the reverse: it subjugated local elites and extended its authority down to the villages. The driver here was violent mass mobilization. Land reform did not

merely strip local elites of their economic sources of power; it used mass mobilized violence to strike down their political and social authority.

State building was simultaneously coercive and normative mobilization process: the CCP used violent mobilization against elites as a tool to build normative authority, something that the culturalists believe required, at the very least, co-optation.⁵³ Yet indirect rule was not a viable option for the Chinese Party-state: it had transformational goals that fundamentally conflicted with the interests of the landed elite and decades of political and economic chaos had obliterated local sources of moral authority.⁵⁴ That is not to say that the CCP did not use any symbolic resources. In fact, the CCP did creatively use symbolic resources in its mobilization work;⁵⁵ however, the local elites were not the repository of those resources as they were, say, in the confessional movements of early modern Europe.⁵⁶ Instead, the Chinese Party-state had to confront the challenge of constructing moral authority *de novo* in opposition to what came before it; and so instead of simply eliminating elites deficient in symbolic resources, the Party-state generated its own symbolic power through the systematic degradation of the moral image of existing elites and the presentation of itself as the righteous defender of the public.

Last, this analysis encourages a reassessment of theories of mobilization in three ways. First, it reveals the limitations of neo-Marxist approaches to mobilization that fixate on class consciousness and material class interests as salient “participation identities” and means for gaining popular support.⁵⁷ Instead, it builds on a Gramscian approach to mobilization and class by examining how the state constructs and mobilizes communal class identities using moral appeals rather than material ones.⁵⁸ Second, it shows the importance of and relationship between practice and discourse in mobilization. While this study emphasizes the discursive power of a narrative of moral transgression in mobilizing violence against an out-group, it also elucidates the concrete practices—of boundary work and social performance—by which political actors use discourse to shape behavior. Third, it underscores the importance of moral norms as a resource for mobilization. Instead of viewing morality as a component of meaning making⁵⁹ or an exogenous impetus for social mobilization,⁶⁰ it demonstrates how actors incorporate morality into their mobilization tactics.

I do not suggest that moral mobilization is the only pathway to state authority; it is one of many. Still, regardless of what means they use, all states that wish to carry out their will must confront the task of delegitimizing

those who came before them and their major competitors in society. This study merely provides an entry point for the study of the links between morality, mobilization, and state authority. Future research should investigate the kinds of local social structures and individuals who are more or less amenable to moral mobilization. How do age, class, gender, race, and education affect how convincing individuals find moral appeals that attempt to convince them of their victimhood and the misdeeds of others? Do moral theatrics solicit outrage more easily in some individuals than others? Another important unanswered question concerns the longevity of moral boundaries. What undergirds their persistence and reproduction?

Appendixes

Appendix A

Notes on Methodology and Sources

COUNTY GAZETTEERS

The county gazetteers have a few limitations worth mentioning here. Although standardized in their overall format and the kind of information presented, they fail to report statistics consistently on key variables. Nevertheless, this pattern of missingness is unclear and appears somewhat random: a rather long and elaborate gazetteer may strangely lack data on Party membership; a gazetteer that details violence during the land reform campaign may fail to provide statistics on violence during the concurrent campaign to suppress the counterrevolutionaries, and vice versa. I surmise that this pattern of missingness was probably related to county-specific decisions on political sensitivity as well as when the gazetteer was published. The 1985 “Preliminary Rules for the Compilation of the New *Difangzhi*” did not set clear guidelines for dealing with politically sensitive topics; therefore, deciding what was a state secret devolved to the county.¹ Date of publication most likely mattered as well: the earliest gazetteers, published in the early to middle 1980s, seem to have elicited more political scrutiny,² and it is reasonable to assume that gazetteers published before 1989 may have enjoyed more political leeway because of the unusually liberal political atmosphere. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the gazetteers did allow the discussion of politically sensitive issues in a “rough, not detailed” manner and as long as they confined critiques to local governments and not the Party. As Vermeer writes, the 1983 *Summary of Fangzhi-ology* (方志学概论) “stressed the need for a correct ideology and positive evaluation of the CCP. . . . They cautioned care in expressing criticism of the authorities. Shortcomings, if any, should not be attributed to policies of the Party per se but to individuals or local implementation.”³ While Vermeer finds that county gazetteers, in seeking to

present a facade of political “conformity,” downplayed or omitted local variations in policy implementation, many county gazetteers mentioned obstacles to the land reform campaign and issues of rightism or leftism.⁴

These issues of inconsistent reporting and censorship presented significant challenges that I address in two ways. First, it was an official policy to “split up” (分) information on “political mistakes” by spreading this information across various parts of these gazetteers.⁵ To deal with this, I scoured the various sections of the gazetteers, most of which were over eight hundred pages, to identify the sections in which political violence was most likely to appear. By doing this, I was able to come up with a list of areas to check in each gazetteer, which allowed me to locate a great deal of data that would otherwise have been mistakenly labeled as missing. Second, I used multiple data sources, where possible, to cross-check and validate data on more sensitive statistics related to political violence. In most cases, this method of data triangulation confirmed the accuracy of the collected data; discrepancies, where they did occur, were rather small.

One may still be concerned with the validity of government-recorded data from the early 1950s. Here I assert that the source material from the early 1950s was less subject to exaggeration and falsification than materials published after the mid-1950s, when political self-reflection was far less appreciated. As Shue notes, the Party was remarkably self-reflective in the early 1950s and adhered to a strategy of trial and error.⁶ Through my experience reading countless archived reports, I find that these reports nearly all contain sections enumerating both political successes and failures. While this by no means excludes the possibility of misreporting, it does suggest that the incentives for forging data were not particularly strong.

While most gazetteers were available at the Harvard-Yenching Library or online, many county gazetteers were unavailable because many counties merged together in the 1950s. In Fujian, the following seven counties were excluded because their county gazetteer has not been published: Haideng, Longxi, Mingqing, Ningyang, Sanyuan, Shuiji, Zhangping. In addition, I exclude Jinmen because it was under Taiwanese control. In Zhejiang, the following sixteen counties were excluded from the analysis because their gazetteer has not been published: Changhua, Chongde, Fenshui, Hang, Jingning, Pingyang, Shouchang, Sui’an, Tongxi, Wukang, Xiaofeng, Xuanping, Yandong, Yueqing, Yuqian, and Zhenhai. The following six counties were excluded because of availability: Rui’an, Sanmen, Wenling, Yin, Yongjia, and Yunhe.

Although I collected data on all variables for all counties in the data set, the inconsistency of data reporting across gazetteers meant that about 15 percent of the data set was missing and over half of all observations contained some missing data. Because of the significant issues of inefficiency and bias with listwise deletion where data are not missing completely at random (MCAR), I present all results with missing data multiply imputed using Honaker et al.'s program Amelia II in R.⁷ Using all the variables included in the regression analysis, I conducted a total of fifty imputations to account for the rather large amount of observations with missing data.⁸ The size, direction, and statistical significance of the coefficients for the main explanatory variables in the multiply imputed models are roughly equivalent to those of the listwise-deleted models. Table 18 presents descriptive statistics for all variables used in the gazetteer data analyses throughout this book.

ARCHIVES AND INTERNAL DOCUMENTS

Much of the archival and documentary material I use here reflects the standpoint of Party officials at various levels of the political hierarchy. Where it is available, I have incorporated material from memoirs and oral histories to supplement the analysis; however, I have not found substantial discrepancies between Party and non-Party accounts. Despite the heavy reliance on Party materials, much of the material I use was internal (内部) and not meant for public consumption, which mitigates some issues of bias. A major advantage of using Party materials from the 1940s and 1950s is that they do not suffer from issues of memory recall and retrospective rationalization, as oral histories do.⁹

One considerable concern is that local cadres were deliberately misinforming their superiors to hide their flaws; however, this concern is not nearly as severe as one would think. The Party's political culture in the 1940s and early 1950s invited a great deal of self-reflection and self-criticism without severe punishment. As Vivienne Shue observed in her analysis of provincial Party newspapers during this period, nearly every report provided a candid account of both positive and negative outcomes.¹⁰ Even by the early 1950s land reform policy was being debated openly—and amicably—by central Party leaders: Deng Zihui publicly challenged Liu Shaoqi's "economic" land reform approach. The Center also tolerated if not encouraged variation in the implementation of land reform policy—according to local condi-

TABLE 18. Descriptive Statistics for All Variables in County Gazetteer Analyses

Variable Name	Description	Mean	Max	Min	N
Agricultural Productivity	Grain output per mu of land in a county in 1949	115.98	416.00	29.14	212
Bad Classes	Percentage of households labeled as capitalists; counterrevolutionaries; landlords; half-landlord, half-rich peasant; rich peasant; or "landlord equivalents"	5.81	15.90	1.23	210
Bandit Suppression	The length, in months, of antibandit (剿匪) operations in a county	18.06	77.00	2.00	224
Coercive Control (land reform)	Indicates whether the county had finished antibandit operations by the time land reform began. 1 = Yes.	0.38	1	0	241
Counterrevolutionary Arrests per 1,000	Number of counterrevolutionaries arrested during the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries per 1,000 people in the county	5.69	58.16	0.41	126
Intercommunal Conflict	Indicates whether the county recorded armed conflict (<i>xiedou</i>) between local communities between 1900 and 1949. 1 = Yes.	0.27	1	0	242
Japanese Occupation	Indicates whether the Japanese army occupied or committed atrocities (暴行) in a county during the War of Resistance against the Japanese (1931–45). 1 = Yes.	0.88	1	0	247
Landlord Households	Percentage of households labeled as landlords	3.14	7.80	0.49	209
Landlord Land	Percentage of land owned by households labeled as landlords in a county before land reform	24.57	66.20	0.36	216
Landlord:Average Landholding Inequality	The ratio of landlords' land per capita to the average land per capita the county	6.90	26.00	0.80	199
Landlord:Poor Peasant Landholding Inequality	The ratio of landlords' land per capita to the poor peasants' land per capita the county	25.72	295.56	0.86	209
Lineage Strength	Percentage of land owned by corporate entities (<i>gongdi</i>) before land reform	17.86	56.23	0.04	170
Military Recruitment per 1,000	Number of people recruited into the army between 1949 and 1953 per 1,000 people and per year in a county	3.29	20.98	0.15	191
Party Density (1949)	Number of Chinese Communist Party members per 1,000 people in a county in 1949	3.42	45.96	0.10	217

Party Density (1956)	Number of Chinese Communist Party members per 1,000 people in a county in 1956	13.36	48.09	0.46	165
Party Density (1978)	Number of Chinese Communist Party members per 1,000 people in a county in 1978	28.24	148.35	8.90	112
Physiographic Macroregion	Physiographic microregion in which the county is situated. ^a Regions are Lower Yangzi (126); North China (46); and Southeast Coast (78).	NA	NA	NA	250
Pre-1949 Land Reform	Indicates whether the CCP implemented countywide land reform before 1949. 1 = Yes.	0.32	1	0	242
Production Growth (1949–1952)	Percentage growth in grain output per mu from 1949 to 1952 in a county.	35.38	252.90	-20.84	163
Production Growth (1949–1978)	Percentage growth in grain output per mu from 1949 to 1978 in a county.	151.07	828.79	-19.17	177
Rightists per 1,000	The number of people labeled as rightists during the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957–59)	0.67	5.28	0.05	203
Strike Hard Arrests per 1,000	The number of people arrested during the Strike Hard Campaign (1983–86) per 1,000 people in a county.	1.33	5.74	0.06	159
Struggle Targets per 1,000	The number of people subjected to violent class struggle during the land reform campaign (1950–52) per 1,000 people in a county.	2.92	10.29	0.21	78

^aSee G. W. Skinner, "Regional Urbanization in Nineteenth-Century China," in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. G. William Skinner (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1995), 211–49, for regional boundaries.

tions, particularly military control and bandit resistance.¹¹ In such a political atmosphere, while we should remain cautious when interpreting reports by local cadres and work teams, we should not discount the genuine desire of Party leaders, both local and central, to learn from policy mistakes and find new ways of adapting to challenging circumstances.

A final concern is that the Party's organizational culture—then and now—emphasized hierarchy and enumerated procedures. It is difficult, therefore, to read Party documents—both published and unpublished, internal and public—and ascertain whether the steps and procedures outlined in their summary and work reports faithfully reflect what actually happened on the ground. We must ask, then, to what extent are these reports fitting a messy reality into a more acceptable organizational form? To deal with this problem, I emphasize material that provides concrete details and examples of the implementation of procedures and problems encountered in the process.

MEMOIRS AND ORAL HISTORIES

A significant shortcoming of the data collection process is the underrepresentation of “popular materials” (民间材料)—that is, data not generated by the Party. Because of low literacy rates in the early years of the PRC, there is little written record of what everyday people thought and felt *written by the participants themselves*. Party materials do include many testimonies and interviews done with locals about their thoughts on the campaign, some of which are revealing and appear quite candid. Even memoirs, though a valuable historical source, tend to be written invariably by former land reform cadres, many of whom were urban intellectuals.

Appendix B

Landlords Struggled against in Baoshan County¹

TABLE 19. Register of Landlords Struggled Against in Three Districts of Baoshan County

Surname	Land Size (mu)	Political Background	Reason for Struggle	Punishment	Number of Attendees
1. Lei	30.5		Colluded with the Nationalists to steal land in the past; swindled and exploited the people; hid land; masses demanded [his punishment].	Subjected to speaking bitterness; beaten, insulted, had his clothing stripped off, and paraded through the streets.	1,200
2. Chen	48		Failed to report all of her land.	Masses demanded that she kneel; made to promise to turn over grain.	Over 600
3. Shen	~74	Township head under GMD; worked for the land survey bureau (测量局) when he was 20.	Masses believed he had hidden land.	Forced to turn over land.	Over 600
4. Wang	Over 45		Tried to spread his landholdings across three households (himself, his son, and his wife).	Forced to turn over his land that he tried to separate and turn over summer tax grain in compensation.	Over 600
5. Zhou	74	Informant for former township head	Didn't report all of his land.	Admitted that he hid 27 mu of land; forced to turn over all of his grain.	
6. Gu	58	Former township head	As former township head, fleeced the people of their wealth; aided the bandits and local tyrants, so the masses said they wanted to struggle against him. The masses said, "[We] will never forget his crimes."	Subjected to struggle through reasoning (说理斗争).	Over 98% of the entire township across 11 villages
7. Zhu	200		Hide land; split his family's landholdings.	Struggle through reasoning.	Over 100
8. Zhou	103		Hide land.	Forced to apologize to the masses.	Over 400

9. Wang	45	Failed to submit tax grain; frightened livestock; the masses said that the “old devil” (老鬼) needed to be struggled against and were very unhappy that he never submitted a single grain of tax grain.	Made to kowtow twice, but he refused to kneel.	300
10. Chen	110	Collected rents and spread rumors	No physical abuse used during struggle.	Over 400
11. Su	46	Sabotaged the autumn grain requisition; led the masses to attack the government.	Strung up with a rope.	Over 100
12. Zhang	45	Former bureaucrat Constantly engaged in “bad behavior” (不良行为); was a notorious evil tyrant in the locality; the masses demanded he be struggled against.	Over 500	
13. Zhang	97	Hidden land, spread rumors, sabotaged autumn grain requisition	Mainly forced to reveal hidden land and turn over autumn tax grain, along with summer tax grain for extra compensation.	Over 400
14. Xu	40	Failed to report all of his land.	Struggle through reasoning; forced to reveal hidden land.	520
15. Huang	41	Former <i>baojia</i> head; became a bandit after his son died.	Struggle through reasoning; forced to reveal hidden land.	600
16. Gu	47	Failed to report all of his land; starved livestock; resisted grain requisition.	Struggle through reasoning; forced to reveal hidden land.	350
17. Wang	200	Failed to report all of his land.	Forced to turn over his grain and land.	850
18. Jin	300	Failed to report all of his land.	Forced to turn over his grain and land.	600

TABLE 19—Continued

Surname	Land Size (mu)	Political Background	Reason for Struggle	Punishment	Number of Attendees
19. Lu	80		Scattered his land to avoid his [rent] burden.	Forced to turn over rent in an amount commensurate with the amount of unreported land.	40
20. Fei		Township head during Japanese occupation	Guilty of eight major crimes [罪状].	Turned over to the government.	2,000
21. Shen	73		Stood up for those who did not report their land and showed sympathy to those who do not turn over their grain on time.	Forced to turn over his land and grain.	120
22. Hu	212		Failed to fully report her land.	Forced to turn over her land.	Over 400
23. Shen	138		Failed to fully report his land.	Forced to turn over his land.	Over 1,000
24. Zhang	90		Failed to fully report his land.	Forced to turn over his grain.	800
25. Zhu	150		Failed to fully report his land.	Forced to turn over his grain.	1,500
26. Yan	Over 80	Former administrator	Used his power as an administrator within the “reactionary” government to hide his land; the masses thought he should be struggled against because he knew of land hidden by others in other townships.	The masses demanded to beat him up.	Over 1,000
27. Chen	Over 80		He is very sly (狡猾) and hides his land.		300
28. Su	Over 80		He is neither progressive nor honest (不开明不老实); failed to report his grain.	Insulted and scolded by the masses during a struggle session.	300
29. Pan	Over 40	His son was a representative (参议员) under the puppet regime;	Underreported land; dishonest.	Forced to kneel.	300

30. Li	102	Exploited others severely in the past and the masses demanded his punishment.	Masses wanted him to reveal his hidden land.	500–600
31. Li	Over 80	Exploited others severely in the past and the masses demanded his punishment; he was the younger brother of the aforementioned Li (see target number 30); the people hated them equally.	Masses wanted him to reveal his hidden land.	Over 300
32. Li	Over 90	Exploited others severely in the past and the masses demanded his punishment.	Masses wanted him to reveal his hidden land.	Over 300
33. Xu	180	Threatened the masses; and did not report all land.	Forced to bend at the waist 90 degrees.	Over 300
34. Wu	47	Had an obstinate attitude; denied having hidden land.	Threatened by the struggle session chair until he replied to questioning; the people threatened him because he refused to confess.	Over 1,500
35. Chen	123	He is very dishonest; failed to fully report his land.	Because he was so sly (狡猾), he was forced to kneel.	1500
36. Wang	131	He is very dishonest; failed to fully report his land.	Because he was so sly (狡猾), he was forced to kneel.	Over 300
37. Xu	76	Did not report all of his land; exploited peasants.	Struggle through reasoning	Over 800
38. Zhou	64	Did not report all of his land; exploited peasants.	Struggle through reasoning	Over 800
39. Zhao	24	Former township head Masses demanded his punishment.	Struggle through reasoning	Over 200

Notes

Introduction

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

2. G. William Skinner, Zhijia Shen, Stevan Harrell, and William Lavelly, *Rural China on the Eve of Revolution: Sichuan Fieldnotes, 1949–1950* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 182.

3. There are no precise estimates for the number of deaths during China's land reform campaign, though most estimates place the figure in the low millions. Mao himself claimed that out of China's thirty-six million landlords, one million landlords were executed, one million were imprisoned, and another two million were put under house arrest. See Yang Kuisong, "On the Attempt and Possibility of the CCP's Peaceful Land Reform after the War" [关于战后中共和平土改的尝试与可能问题], *Nanjing Daxue Xuebao (Zheshe Ban)* 5 (2007): 334–51. Stavis provides an estimate of over one million deaths, Teiwes cites a figure of one to two million executed, while Domes believes that five million were killed during the campaign. See Benedict Stavis, *The Politics of Agricultural Mechanization in China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 29–30; Frederick C. Teiwes, "The Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime, 1949–1957," in *The Politics of China: Sixty Years of the People's Republic of China*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6–86; Jürgen Domes, *Socialism in the Chinese Countryside: Rural Societal Policies in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1979* (London: C. Hurst, 1980), 8. Julia Strauss presents a good overview of the various estimated figures for deaths during land reform (and the concurrent campaign to suppress counterrevolutionaries), giving a figure of one to five million in total for both campaigns. See Julia Strauss, "Morality, Coercion and State Building by Campaign in the Early PRC: Regime Consolidation and After, 1949–1956," *China Quarterly* 188, no. 1 (2006): 901 n. 17. For a more recent assessment of violence during land reform, see Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution, 1945–1957* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).

4. Wang, *Monster That Is History*, 73.
5. Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
6. Migdal, *Strong Societies*, 22.
7. Joel S. Migdal, ed., *Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
8. William H. Sewell Jr. “Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case,” *Journal of Modern History* 57, no. 1 (1985): 76.
9. Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 15; Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
10. Elizabeth A. Wood, *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
11. Gene Burns, “Ideology, Culture, and Ambiguity: The Revolutionary Process in Iran,” *Theory and Society* 25, no. 3 (1996): 349–88.
12. See Etzioni’s typology of organizational power. Amitai Etzioni, *Modern Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964).
13. Moral boundaries are a subset of symbolic boundaries that are forged “on the basis of moral character . . . qualities such as honesty, work ethic, personal integrity and consideration for others,” though the specifics of these qualities will necessarily vary by social context. Michèle Lamont, *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 4. For more on boundary work, see Michèle Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, “The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2002): 167–95; Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
14. Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press, 1979).
15. Lewis A. Coser, “The Visibility of Evil,” *Journal of Social Issues* 25 (1969): 101–9.
16. Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Drama of Social Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).
17. Outrage and empathy are moral-emotional responses, “feelings that stem from violating evaluative cultural codes, that is, codes that indicate what is good or bad or right or wrong in a society.” Jan E. Stets, “Current Emotion Research in Sociology: Advances in the Discipline,” *Emotion Review* 4, no. 3 (2012): 330. This is essentially a Durkheimian process by which affronts to the moral order elicit demands for punishment. See Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. George Simpson (New York: Free Press, 1965 [1893]).
18. M. J. Crockett, “Moral Outrage in the Digital Age,” *Nature Human Behav-*

ious 1, no. 11 (2017): 769–71; Julie H. Goldberg, Jennifer S. Lerner, and Phillip E. Tetlock, “Rage and Reason: The Psychology of the Intuitive Prosecutor,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 29 (1999): 781–95. Also see Jennifer S. Lerner and Dacher Keltner, “Fear, Anger, and Risk,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81, no. 1 (2001): 146–59; Roger D. Petersen, *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 35–37; Nicholas A. Valentino, Ted Brader, Eric W. Groenendyk, Krysha Gregorowicz, and Vincent L. Hutchings, “Election Night’s Alright for Fighting: The Role of Emotions in Political Participation,” *Journal of Politics* 73, no. 1 (2011): 156–70.

19. Tania Singer, Ben Seymour, John O’Doherty, Holger Kaube, Raymond J. Dolan, and Chris D. Frith, “Empathy for Pain Involves the Affective but Not Sensory Components of Pain,” *Science* 303, no. 5661 (2004): 1157–62. See also Adam Smith’s definition of “sympathy” as “fellow-feeling”: Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Los Angeles: Enhanced Media, 2016 [1759]), 13–16.

20. Jocelyn Viterna, “Radical or Righteous? Using Gender to Shape Public Perceptions of Political Violence,” in *Dynamics of Political Violence: A Process-Oriented Perspective on Radicalization and the Escalation of Political Conflict*, ed. Lorenzo Bosi, Charles Demetriou, and Stefan Maltaner (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 191.

21. While legitimacy implies an internalized belief in the rightness of the state and its rules, compliance—which I use interchangeably throughout this paper with authority—only requires obedience to state demands. See Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

22. Lee Ann Fujii, “‘Talk of the Town’: Explaining Pathways to Participation in Violent Display,” *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 5 (2017): 661–73. Also see Jeffrey T. Checkel, “Socialization and Violence: Introduction and Framework,” *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 4 (2017): 592–605; Dara Kay Cohen, “The Ties That Bind: How Armed Groups Use Violence to Socialize Fighters,” *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 5 (2017): 701–14; Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Martha K. Huggins, Mika Haritos-Fatouros, and Philip G. Zimbardo, *Violence Workers: Police Torturers and Murderers Reconstruct Brazilian Atrocities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

23. Lisa Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). On violence and solidarity within political parties, see Adrienne LeBas, *From Protest to Parties: Party-Building and Democratization in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, “The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes,” *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 3 (2013): 5–17.

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

25. Teiwes, “Establishment and Consolidation.”

26. Research that has addressed the mass mobilization of violence in land

reform has focused primarily on the *prerevolutionary* land reform campaign carried out in the northern Communist base areas between 1946 and 1948 during the Chinese Civil War. The CCP carried out land reform, violently and nonviolently, many times beginning in the 1920s; however, the civil war-era land reform campaign was the largest episode of violent land reform before 1949. For thorough discussions of land reform violence during the Chinese Civil War, see Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945–1949* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); and Yang, “Peaceful Land Reform.”

27. For economic accounts of land reform, see Robert Ash, “Economic Aspects of Land Reform in Kiangsu, 1949–52: Part 1,” *China Quarterly* 66 (1976): 261–92; Victor D. Lippit, *Land Reform and Economic Development in China: A Study of Institutional Change and Development Finance* (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences, 1974); and John Wong, *Land Reform in the People’s Republic of China: Institutional Transformation in Agriculture* (New York: Praeger, 1973). For more historical and policy-centric accounts, see Dong Zhikai, *Land Reform during the War of Liberation* [解放战争时期的土地改革] (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chuban She, 1987); Du Runsheng, ed., *China’s Land Reform* [中国的土地改革] (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo Chuban She, 1996); Yang, “Peaceful Land Reform”; Zhao Xiaomin, ed., *The History of Chinese Land Reform, 1921–1949* [中国土地改革史, 1921–1949] (Beijing: Renmin Chuban She, 1990).

28. Pepper, *Civil War*; Mark Selden, *The Yanan Way in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

29. Vivienne Shue, *Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development toward Socialism, 1949–1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 2, 325.

30. Shue, *Peasant China in Transition*, 7.

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

32. For a fuller description and discussion of social relations, see Peter A. Hall and Michèle Lamont, “Why Social Relations Matter for Politics and Successful Societies,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 16 (2013): 49–71.

33. Randall Collins, *Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

34. This is in line with Hoffman’s critique of the Weberian definition of violence—that is, a state’s coercive monopoly alone does not explain how it “win[s] people over” to ease its rule. Philip T. Hoffman, “What Do States Do? Politics and Economic History,” *Journal of Economic History* 75, no. 2 (2015): 303–32.

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

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

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

38. Lippit, *Land Reform*, 95.

39. Zhou Xiaohong, *Tradition and Change: The Social Psychology of the Peasantry of Jiangsu and Zhejiang and Its Modern Evolution* [传统与变迁:江浙农民的社会心理及其近代以来的嬗变] (Beijing: Shenghuo Dushu Xinzhi Sanlian Shudian, 1998), 153. Also see Teiwes, “Establishment and Consolidation,” 35.

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

41. Thomas P. Bernstein, “Problems of Village Leadership after Land Reform,” *China Quarterly* 36 (1968): 3–4.

42. Li Huaiyin, *Village China under Socialism and Reform: A Micro-history, 1948–2008* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2009).

43. Bernstein, “Problems of Village Leadership.”

44. See Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*; Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996); Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009); Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

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

46. Petersen, *Western Intervention*, 9.

47. Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*, 41.

48. Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*, 49. On the problem of social cleavages and salience, see Daniel N. Posner, “Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi,” *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (2004): 529–45; Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). The significance of salience also explains research on civil wars that finds that the presence of more social cleavages does not produce more violence. See Paul Collier and Anke Hoefler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563–95; James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90; Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Ethnic Defection in Civil War,” *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 8 (2008): 1043–68.

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

50. Zheng Linzhuang, “Is Struggling against the Landlords the Result of Cadres’ Sowing Discord?” [斗争地主是由于干部挑拨起来的吗?], June 1951, *CCPM*.

51. Huang Yanpei, “Report Inquiring into Southern Jiangsu’s Land Reform (Excerpt)” [视察苏南土地改革报告(节录)], February 13, 1951, *JSTGYD*, 152.

52. Southern Jiangsu Land Reform Inspection Team, “A Record of the Situa-

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

53. Dong, *Land Reform*; Zhao, *History of Chinese Land Reform*, 442–43.

54. These are only the major class categories used during land reform. For a much more extensive discussion of the class label system, see Shue, *Peasant China in Transition*, 47–56.

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

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

57. Shue, *Peasant China in Transition*, 44.

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

59. Fei Xiaotong, *Chinese Village Close-Up* (Beijing: New World Press, 1983), 91; Zhou, *Tradition and Change*, 150.

60. Isabel Crook and David Crook, *Ten Mile Inn: Mass Movement in a Chinese Village* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 11.

61. E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past & Present* 50 (February 1971): 79.

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

63. Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900–1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

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

65. Consider the sense of righteousness in popular sayings like “Officials drive the masses to revolt” (官逼民反), which Chinese protestors continue to use today. See Bianco, *Peasants without the Party*, 249–50.

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

67. Chen, *Making Revolution*, 161–62.

68. Wou, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 121.

69. Ann Swidler, “Cultural Power and Social Movements,” in *Social Movements and Culture: Social Movements, Protest, and Contention*, ed. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 35–36.

70. Guo Yuhua and Sun Liping. “Speaking Bitterness: A Type of Mediating Mechanism in the Formation of the Concept of the Peasant State” [诉苦: 一种农民国家观念形成的中介机制], *Zhongguo Xueshu* 3, no. 4 (2002): 130–57.

71. For a list of the major archival and internally published materials used in this study, see the list of abbreviations in the front matter. For a discussion of the biases inherent in these materials, see Appendix A.

72. This number encompasses nearly all counties in Anhui and Jiangsu, apart from a few that did not publish local gazetteers.

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

74. For the precise division between Huaibei and Jiangnan, I follow G. W. Skinner's division of Anhui and Jiangsu Provinces into the North China and Lower Yangzi Delta macroregions. See G. W. Skinner, "Regional Urbanization in Nineteenth-Century China," in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. G. William Skinner (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1995), 211–49.

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

76. Peter A. Hall, "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics," in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 373–406; Peter A. Hall, "Tracing the Progress of Process Tracing," *European Political Science* 12, no. 1 (2013): 20–30. Also see Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013). On crucial cases, see Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).

Chapter 1

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

2. Teiwes, "Establishment and Consolidation," 34.

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

4. Ezra F. Vogel, *Canton under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949–1968* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 95.

5. Mao Zedong, quoted in Teiwes, "Establishment and Consolidation," 34.

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

7. Vogel, *Canton under Communism*, 95.

8. Teiwes, “Establishment and Consolidation,” 35.

9. Teiwes, “Establishment and Consolidation,” 35–36.

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

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

12. See Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

13. “为完成苏北土地改革, 恢复与发展农业生产而奋斗,” *SBTGWX*, 36.

14. Fengyang County, Anhui Province, [关于安徽省凤阳县凤临区六个乡土地改革第一阶段工作报告], August 30, 1951, *CCDC*, no. 1951XW11_50–57.

15. Xu Hongci, *Give Me Back My Freedom* [还我自由] (n.p.), 25. Unpublished memoir given to author.

16. Southern Jiangsu Region Peasant Association Committee, “Notice on the Comprehensive Meeting on Responding to the Call to Resist America and Aid Korea (June 1)” [关于响应抗美援朝总会(六一)号召的通知], June 10, 1951, *SNT-GWX*, 312.

17. “The Situation of Land Reform in the East China Region” [华东区土地改革情况], March 27, 1951, *CCPM*.

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

19. Ouyang Huilin, “The Situation of Land Reform Work in Southern Jiangsu” [苏南土地改革工作情况], *ZGTDGGSXLB*.

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

21. Li Liangyu describes this as the shift from a “policy-control model” (政策控制型) to a “violent-implementation model” (暴力进行型) of land reform. See Li Liangyu, “Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu and the Question of Modernizing Tradition” [苏南土改与现代化传统问题], *Jiangsu Daxue Xuebao: Shexue Kexue Ban* 8, no. 3 (2006): 1–12.

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

23. Li Lifeng, “The Dialectical Logic of Policy Operations” [政策运作的辩证逻辑], *Jianghai Xuekan* 1 (2012): 161–68.

24. For an in-depth exploration of the intertwining of political and economic imperatives during land reform, see Matthew Noellert, *Power over Poverty: The Political Economy of Communist Land Reform in China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020).

25. Shue, *Peasant China in Transition*, 66.

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

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

28. Shue, *Peasant China in Transition*, 72–73.

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

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

31. Though, as Chapter 2 shows, Mao’s definitions of the various classes included many noneconomic, moral criteria. For an exhaustive discussion of the official policy on the distribution of class labels and their economic definitions, see Shue, *Peasant China in Transition*, 47–56.

32. Zhou, *Tradition and Change*, 150–51.

33. Rich peasants were left somewhere in the middle, for the Party regarded them as “neutral” players. See Shue, *Peasant China in Transition*, 44.

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

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

36. Anagnost, *National Past-Times*, 4.

37. This appears to have been standard practice during the civil war-era land reform campaign as well, as eyewitness accounts from this period also indicate that poor and farmworker peasant small groups selected struggle targets in secret. See Crook and Crook, *Ten Mile Inn*. According to Li Maoxiu, a landlord interviewed in the 2006 Hong Kong documentary *The Hurricane* [暴風驟雨], which interviewed eyewitnesses to the land reform campaign in a northeastern village during the Chinese Civil War, poor and lower-middle peasants held secret meetings to decide the fate of potential struggle targets. Those under consideration for struggle had no say in their selection and were simply informed of the small group’s decision. See *The Hurricane* [暴風驟雨], directed by Jiang Yue and Duan Jinchuan (Hong Kong: China Memo Films, 2006).

38. See “The Agrarian Reform Law of the People’s Republic of China” [中华人民共和国土地改革法], June 28, 1950, in *Collection of Important Documents on Land Reform* [土地改革重要文献汇集] (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe: 1951), 9.

39. How local communities and Party work teams made use of this leeway in target selection is one of the central issues this chapter explores and the principal subject of Chapter 5.

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

41. According to the archival record, if cadres intervened they almost always reduced the severity of the crowd’s recommended punishment. There are no data that can determine how often cadres increased or decreased the harshness of punishments, but it is revealing that the Party tended to *pull back* the violence of the crowd. This is also in line with the finding I present in Chapter 5 that areas with a larger Party presence tended to exhibit lower rates of violence, which I argue is due to the Party’s insistence on carefully controlling the scope of violence. Lucien Bianco has made similar observations. See Bianco, *Peasants without the Party*, 235.

42. According to data from eight struggle sessions (seven village level and one township level) from a “key point” township in Lutang District of Fengyang County in Northern Anhui, the number of accusers per struggle target ranged from fifteen to thirty-eight, while the number of overall attendees at each struggle session varied from 100 to 808. Accusers comprised at least 10 percent of those in attendance and, in the case of Wudai Village, almost one-third of attendees. Fengyang County Party Committee, “Land Reform Work Report for Each Township in Lutang District (12/11–12/20)” [鹿塘区各乡土改工作情况报告12月11日至20日], December 21, 1952, *CCDC*, 1952XW08_28–3.

43. For Anhui figures, see “Statistical Table on the Scope of Struggles during Land Reform in Anhui Province” [安徽省土地改革中斗争规模情况统计表], *AHST-DGGZL*, p. 26 of appendix. For Southern Jiangsu figures, see Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Summary of Southern Jiangsu Land Reform Work” [苏南土地改革工作的总结(附表)], August 28, 1952, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-001-066.

44. Oral history BS10, May 2015.

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

46. Oral history JD05, April 2015.

47. Xu, *Give Me Back My Freedom*.

Chapter 2

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

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

3. Quoted in Lifeng Li, "Rural Mobilization in the Chinese Communist Revolution: From the Anti-Japanese War to the Chinese Civil War," *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 9, no. 1 (2015): 109.

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

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

6. Elizabeth J. Perry, *Anyuan: Mining China's Revolutionary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 4.

7. Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Ziblatt, "The Historical Turn in Democratization Studies: A New Research Agenda for Europe and Beyond," *Comparative Political Studies* 43, nos. 8–9 (2010): 931–68.

8. See, for example, Swidler, "Cultural Power"; and Charles Tilly and Sidney G. Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

9. Charles Tilly, "Getting It Together in Burgundy, 1675–1975," *Theory and Society* 4 (Winter) (1977): 479–504.

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

11. Traugott, "Barricades as Repertoire," 45.

12. See, among others, Eugenia Lean, *Public Passions: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Perry, *Anyuan*; Strauss, "Morality, Coercion"; and Patricia M. Thornton, *Disciplining the State: Virtue, Violence, and State-Making in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

13. Thornton, *Disciplining the State*, 31.

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

15. William Theodore De Bary, *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy and the Learning of the Mind-and-Heart* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 77.

16. Lean, *Public Passions*, 6.

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

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

19. Feiyu Sun, *Social Suffering and Political Confession: Suku in Modern China* (Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific, 2013), 45.

20. Sun, *Social Suffering*, 47.

21. Mao Zedong, “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan,” in *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1971).

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

23. Li Fangchun, “Making Revolution on the Mind: Fanxin and the Exercise of Thought-Power in the Land Reform Movement of Northern China (1946–48),” *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 6, no. 4 (2012): 618; De Bary, *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy*, 68–69.

24. Hsiao, *Rural China*, 184.

25. Huang, *Complete Book Concerning Happiness*, 525.

26. Huang, *Complete Book Concerning Happiness*, 531.

27. Village compacts had become common practice among local communities by the (mid-)Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and had emerged in some areas as early as the Song dynasty (960–1279). See Hiroaki Terada, “The Nature of Social Agreements (Yue) in the Legal Order of Ming and Qing China (Part One),” *International Journal of Asian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2005): 321–23.

28. This is an abbreviated account of the village compact ceremony. For a fuller description, see Huang, *Happiness and Benevolence*, 533–36.

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

30. Hsiao, *Rural China*, 186.

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

32. Terada, “Nature of Social Agreements,” 325.

33. Mao, “Peasant Movement in Hunan,” 26–27.

34. Mao, “Peasant Movement in Hunan,” 25–26.

35. Mao, “Peasant Movement in Hunan,” 29–30.

36. Hsiao, *Rural China*, 412. Also see Thomas M. Buoye, *Manslaughter, Markets, and Moral Economy: Violent Disputes over Property Rights in Eighteenth Century China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

37. Sun, *Social Suffering*, 19.

38. The emphasis on good deeds manifested in the more general use of “model” citizens and Party members in mass. Of course, the use of revolutionary models has precedents outside of China—namely, the Soviet Union. Li, “Mass Movements,” 167.

39. Philip A. Kuhn, “Local Self-Government under the Republic: Problems of Control, Autonomy, and Mobilization,” in *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial*

China, ed. Frederic E. Wakeman and Carolyn Grant (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 261.

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

41. See Chen, *Making Revolution*; Elizabeth J. Perry, “Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution,” *Mobilization* 7, no. 2 (2002): 111–28; Li, “Rural Mobilization”; Strauss, “Morality, Coercion.”

42. Strauss, “Morality, Coercion,” 907.

43. Lean, *Public Passions*, 211.

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

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

46. When I visited Bao Zheng’s memorial park (包公园) in his hometown of Hefei in 2015, one of the exhibits in his temple celebrated Xi Jinping’s anticorruption campaign and showcased uncorrupt and selfless officials in China today.

47. This opera, among others, Esherick writes, influenced the Boxer rebels’ cosmology and provided the “narrative context” for their rebellious behavior. Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 328–31.

48. Brian J. DeMare, “Turning Bodies and Turning Minds: Land Reform and Chinese Political Culture, 1946–1952” (PhD diss., UCLA, 2008), 97.

49. DeMare, *Mao’s Cultural Army*, 130–31.

50. DeMare, *Mao’s Cultural Army*, 121.

51. DeMare, *Mao’s Cultural Army*, 98.

52. The independent power of land reform operas to conduct moral boundary work during post-1949 land reform is questionable. DeMare writes that the Central-South Bureau pushed for the use of cultural troupes in its land reform movement, though it only gathered about three thousand participants for the entire region. In my research on the East China Bureau I have not come across any evidence that shows the bureau leadership’s interest in widely staging land reform operas. DeMare, *Mao’s Cultural Army*, 160–61.

53. “Huang Shiren Is Struggled Against” [黄世仁被批斗], September 11, 2016, <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/白毛女>

54. DeMare, *Mao’s Cultural Army*, 133.

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

56. Xu, *Give Me Back My Freedom*. Xu’s memoir was recently published in English by Swedish journalist Erling Hoh. See Xu Hongci, *No Wall Too High: One Man’s Daring Escape from Mao’s Darkest Prison*, trans. Erling Hoh (New York: Straus and Giroux, 2017).

57. Mao, “Peasant Movement in Hunan.”

58. Lucien Bianco, “Peasant Movements,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 13, ed. John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 311–12. Also see Fernando Galbiati, *P’eng P’ai and the Hai-Lu-Feng Soviet* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

Chapter 3

1. Huang, “Southern Jiangsu’s Land Reform,” 151–52.

2. Zhonghua Quanguo Yinyue Gongzuozhe Xiehui Shanghai Fenhui, ed., *The Jiangnan Land Reform Suite: Musical Score* (Shanghai: Huadong Renmin Press, 1951).

3. This metaphor refers to a traditional belief that those who die due to an injustice will not be able to close their eyes until that injustice is redressed.

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

5. Jiang and Duan, *The Hurricane*. For an extended discussion of the character of Han Laoliu, see Dikötter, *Tragedy of Liberation*.

6. Coser, “The Visibility of Evil.”

7. On “most different” designs, see Henry Teune and Adam Przeworski, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1970).

8. This is essentially Jeremy Weinstein’s argument regarding insurgent recruitment: insurgent groups with strong economic endowments will rely more on economic inducements than on normative appeals to recruit followers. See Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

9. Albert Bandura, “Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3, no. 3 (1999): 193–209; Albert Bandura, Bill Underwood, and Michael E. Fromson, “Disinhibition of Aggression through Diffusion of Responsibility and Dehumanization of Victims,” *Journal of Research in Personality* 9, no. 4 (1975): 253–69; Roy F. Baumeister, *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999); Aaron T. Beck, *Prisoners of Hate: The Cognitive Basis of Anger, Hostility, and Violence* (New York: Perennial, 1999); Collins, *Violence*; Alan P. Fiske and Tage S. Rai, *Virtuous Violence: Hurting and Killing to Create, Sustain, End, and Honor Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

10. For a striking experimental demonstration of this natural aversion to violence, see Fiery Cushman, Kurt Gray, Allison Gaffey, Wendy Berry Mendes, and David Desteno, “Simulating Murder: The Aversion to Harmful Action,” *Emotion* 12, no. 1 (2012): 2–7.

11. Bandura, “Moral Disengagement”; Beck, *Prisoners of Hate*; Fiske and Rai, *Virtuous Violence*.

12. Barbara Geddes, Erica Frantz, and Joseph G. Wright, “Military Rule,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 17 (2014): 147–62; Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in*

Politics: Military Coups and Governments (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977).

13. Collins, *Violence*.

14. James Fearon and David Laitin, “Explaining Interethnic Cooperation,” *American Political Science Review*, 90, no. 4 (1996): 715–35.

15. Olson, *Logic of Collective Action*.

16. These activists who receive clear material benefits for their participation are those whom McCarthy and Zald call “beneficiary constituents.” John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory,” *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1212–41.

17. Ostrom provides an excellent review of experimental research on the conditions under which actors, under the influence of social norms, solve the collective action problem and opt to cooperate. See Elinor Ostrom, “Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14, no. 3 (2000): 137–58. For paradigmatic examples of the importance of social ties and peer pressure on collective action and violence, see Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*; Doug McAdam, “Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer,” *American Journal of Sociology* 92, no. 1 (1986): 64–90.

18. John H. Aldrich, “Rational Choice and Turnout,” *American Journal of Political Science* 37, no. 1 (1993): 246–78; Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady, “Participation’s Not a Paradox: The View from American Activists,” *British Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 1 (1995): 1–36.

19. McCarthy and Zald, “Resource Mobilization.”

20. Rachel Einwohner, “Opportunity, Honor, and Action in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943,” *American Journal of Sociology* 109, no. 3 (2003): 650–75; Mark I. Lichbach, *The Rebel’s Dilemma* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Elisabeth Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action in El Salvador* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

21. Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York: Norton, 1999); Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).

22. Jeff Goodwin, “The Libidinal Constitution of a High-Risk Social Movement: Affectual Ties and Solidarity in the Huk Rebellion, 1946 to 1954,” *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 1 (1997): 53–69; Julia Strauss, *State Formation in China and Taiwan: Bureaucracy, Campaign, and Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

23. Perry, “Moving the Masses”; Valentino et al., “Election Night’s Alright.”

24. Theodore Kemper, “A Structural Approach to Social Movement Emotions,” in Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, eds., *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

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

26. Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act Up's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

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

28. Lichbach, *The Rebel's Dilemma*, 126–27.

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

30. Lee Ann Fujii, "Transforming the Moral Landscape: The Diffusion of a Genocidal Norm in Rwanda," *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, no. 1 (2004): 100.

31. Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychological Review* 108, no. 4 (2001): 814–34.

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

33. On the concept of boundary work, see Lamont, *Dignity of Working Men*; Lamont and Molnár, "Study of Boundaries"; Charles Tilly, *Identities, Boundaries, and Social Ties* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005); Tilly, *Collective Violence*; Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*.

34. Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

35. Lamont, *Money, Morals, and Manners*, 4.

36. As Brewer argues, traditional social identity theory tends to assume that in-group identities necessitate hostility toward an out-group. See Marilyn B. Brewer, "The Psychology of Prejudice: Ingroup Love and Outgroup Hate?," *Journal of Social Issues* 55, no. 3 (1999): 429–44. For the classic articulation of social identity theory, see Henri Tajfel, Michael G. Billig, Robert P. Bundy, and Claude Flament, "Social Categorization and Intergroup Behavior," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 1, no. 2 (1971) 149–78; Henri Tajfel and John Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (Monterey, CA: Wadsworth, 1979).

37. Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*, 9.

38. The classic articulation of this argument in the ethnic conflict literature is Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). In social psychology, see Sherif's famous "robbers cave" field experiment. Muzafer Sherif and Carolyn W. Sherif, *Groups in Harmony and Tension* (New York: Octagon Books, [1953] 1966).

39. Lamont and Molnár, "Study of Boundaries."

40. Lamont, *Money, Morals, and Manners*, 11.

41. Gould, *Insurgent Identities*, 18.
42. Gould, *Insurgent Identities*, 27.
43. Alexander, *Drama of Social Life*.
44. Stets, “Current Emotion Research,” 330.
45. Crockett, “Moral Outrage.”
46. Valentino et al., “Election Night’s Alright.”
47. Lerner and Keltner, “Fear, Anger, and Risk.”
48. As Petersen explains, “[Anger is a] cognition that an individual or group has committed a bad action against one’s self or group; [with an] action tendency toward punishing that group.” See *Western Intervention*, 35–37. Also see Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
49. Goldberg et al.’s experimental work on outrage demonstrates the importance of morality in provoking and *sustaining* a desire for retributive reprisal. They find that priming outrage through the revelation of unpunished “normative violations” triggers an “intuitive prosecutor” mindset, whereby affected individuals will more readily accept and propose harsh punishment, not just of the original transgressors but future, unrelated transgressors as well. Significantly, they do not find this effect when they prime anger without embedding it in a moral frame. See Goldberg, Lerner, and Tetlock, “Rage and Reason.”
50. Following Davenport, I treat the state’s belief in the efficacy of moral mobilization and the actual efficacy of this strategy to build popular solidarity as separate hypotheses to be tested in my analysis of the Maoist state. See Christian Davenport, “State Repression and Political Order,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 10 (2007): 1–23.
51. Singer et al., “Empathy for Pain.”
52. Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, 15.
53. Conversely, outrage *attenuates* empathy across boundaries to justify violence.
54. Viterna, “Radical or Righteous,” 191.
55. Li Lifeng, “From Bitter Memories to Revolutionary Memory: On *Suku* in Northern China During the Land Reform of the 1940s,” *Chinese Studies in History* 47, no. 1 (2013): 77.
56. For Jasper’s definition of “moral shock,” see James Jasper, “The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions in and around Social Movements,” *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 3 (1998): 409.
57. Wendy Z. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
58. David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
59. Gould, *Insurgent Identities*, 15.
60. This is similar to Frantz Fanon’s argument about the unifying function of violence. See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963). On violence and solidarity within political par-

ties, see LeBas, *From Protest to Parties*; Levitsky and Way, “Durability of Revolutionary Regimes.”

61. Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions*, 16–17.

62. Swidler, “Cultural Power.”

63. Hall, “Aligning Ontology and Methodology”; Hall, “Tracing the Progress.”

64. Kalyvas’s revenge-centric argument of civil war violence exemplifies this perspective. See Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

65. See Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*.

66. Collins, *Violence*.

67. See Liu Ruilong, “Liu Ruilong’s Report on Land Reform Work in East China” [刘瑞龙关于华东土地改革工作的报告], *CCPM*, March 19, 1951. Curiously, this is contradicted by the CCP’s own behavior in the region before 1949. Once the Communists returned to the region following the Japanese invasion in 1937, they mobilized locals *across* class lines and called for “class unity” against the Japanese, promising to help landlords collect rents from their tenants in exchange for their loyalty and a modest reduction in rent. See Liu Chang, “Making Revolution in Jiangnan,” *Modern China* 29, no. 1 (2003): 12–18.

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

69. These findings accord with what other scholars have argued about landlordism in Jiangnan. Namely, local landlords who lived in the countryside tended to be tied to the local community through kinship ties; and most landlords rarely were in direct conflict with their tenants because they lived in the cities. See Zhou, *Tradition and Change*, 151.

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

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

72. Oral history JD13, July 2015.

73. Southern Jiangsu Peasant Association, “Southern Jiangsu Peasant Association Investigation.”

74. Southern Jiangsu Peasant Association, “Southern Jiangsu Peasant Association Investigation.”

75. Baoshan County Party Committee, “The Concrete Process of the Anti-‘Black Field’ Struggle” [反黑地斗争具体过程], December 17, 1949, *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-001.

76. Baoshan County Party Committee, “Preliminary Summary of Autumn

Requisition Work in Baoshan County” [宝山县秋征工作初步总结], March 8, 1950, *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-063.

77. Bianco, *Peasants without the Party*, 234.

78. Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee, “The Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee’s March and April Two-Month Summary Report on Land Reform Work Submitted to the Center and the East China Bureau” [中国共产党皖北区委员会三、四两月份向中央及华东局关于土地改革工作的综合报告], *Tugai Tongbao*, no. 2-2-82, 19. Quoted in Ma Junya, *The Sacrificed Land: A Study of the Changes in the Society and Ecology of Huaibei, 1680–1949* [被牺牲的“局部”: 淮北社会生态变迁研究, 1680–1949] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011), 343.

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

80. *AHSTDGGZL*, 188.

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

82. Jiangsu Province People’s Committee Rural Forestry and Water Office, “An Introduction to the Situation of Land Reform Work in Jiangsu Province” [江苏省土地改革工作情况介绍], June 17, 1963, *JSPA*, no. 4068-001-0023.

83. Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Directive on Going All Out to Mobilize the Masses and Organizing the High Tide of the Land Reform Movement” [中共苏南区委关于放手发动群众组织土地改革运动高潮的指示], December 27, 1950, *JSTGYD*.

84. Qimen County Party Committee, “Summary of Land Reform Work in Qimen County” [祁门县土改工作总结], in *Qimen County Gazetteer* [祁门县志], 813.

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

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

87. Tan, *Diary of Tan Qixiang*, 3.

88. Fengyang County Party Committee, *Summary of Mass Movements*, 21.

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

90. Gao Feng, “A Basic Summary of the Land Reform Movement in the Northern Jiangsu Region over the Past Two Years” [苏北行政区二年来土地改革运动基本总结], Winter 1952, *JSTGYD*, 331.

91. Baoshan County Party Committee, “The Concrete Process of the Anti-‘Black Field’ Struggle” [反黑地斗争具体过程], December 17, 1949, *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-001.

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

93. Wu County Gusu Township Land Reform Classic Experiment Work Committee, “Initial Summary Report on Classic Experiment Work in Land Reform in Gusu Township, Wu County” [关于吴县姑苏乡土地改革典型试验工作的初步总结], August 21, 1950, *JSTDGGYD*, 70.

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

95. Anagnost, *National Past-Times*, 28.

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

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

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

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

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

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

102. Wu County Gusu Township Land Reform Classic Experiment Work Com-

mittee, “Initial Summary Report on Classic Experiment Work in Land Reform in Gusu Township, Wu County” [关于吴县姑苏乡土地改革典型试验工作的初步总结], August 21, 1950, *JSSTDGGYD*, 69.

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

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

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

106. Fengyang County Party Committee, “Notice on a Few Major Problems in the Present Land Reform Campaign” [对当前土改中几个主要问题的通知], August 28, 1951, *XCSSN*, 43.

107. Baoshan County Party Committee, “The Concrete Process of the Anti-‘Black Field’ Struggle” [反黑地斗争具体过程], December 17, 1949, *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-001.

108. Calculations made using the author’s county gazetteer data set.

109. *Fuqing County Gazetteer*.

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

111. Duara, *Culture, Power*.

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

113. Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “The General Office of the Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee’s Comments on the Huaiyin Prefectural Committee’s Directive on Defense Work during Land Reform.” [中共苏北区党委办公厅关于淮阴地委在土改中保卫工作指示的批示] *JSPA*, no. 7001-03-0008.

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

115. Si County Gazetteer Compilation Committee, *Si County Gazetteer* [泗县志] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe, 1990), 51.

116. Li Shinong, “Diligently Completing the Second Period of Land Reform Work” [认真做好二期土地改革工作], November 20, 1951, *AHSTDGGZL*, 29.

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

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

119. This is related to Kalyvas’s understanding of ethnic defection whereby members of the targeted ethnic group can, without changing their ethnic identity, defect across the political boundary that separates an oppositional ethnic group and the incumbent state. See Kalyvas, “Ethnic Defection.”

120. “Preparation Work Plans for Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu” [苏南土地改革准备工作计划], July 5, 1950, *SNTDGGWX*, 25.

121. East China Land Reform Committee, “A Detailed Explanation of Some Land Reform Policies” [土改中若干政策具体说明], *SHMA*, no. A71-1-23.

122. Baoshan County Party Committee, “The Concrete Process of the Anti-‘Black Field’ Struggle” [反黑地斗争具体过程], December 17, 1949, *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-001.

123. Strauss, “Morality, Coercion.”

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

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

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

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

128. Gao Feng, “A Basic Summary of the Land Reform Movement in the Northern Jiangsu Region over the Past Two Years” [苏北行政区二年来土地改革运动基本总结], Winter 1952, *JSTGYD*, 332.

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

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

131. Luo Ruiqing, “Luo Ruiqing’s Report on Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries Work and Land Reform Work in Southern Jiangsu” [罗瑞卿关于苏南镇压反革命工作土改工作的报告], March 18, 1950, *CCPM*.

132. The Rural Committee of the Chaohu Prefectural Party Committee, “An

Initial Summary of the Land Reform Movement in Chaohu Prefecture (Draft)” [巢湖专区土地改革运动初步总结 (草稿)], AHSTDGGZL, 126.

133. Gao Feng, “A Basic Summary of the Land Reform Movement in the Northern Jiangsu Region over the Past Two Years” [苏北行政区三年来土地改革运动基本总结], Winter 1952, *SBTGWX*, 54–58.

134. Photograph from *SBTGWX*.

135. “Initial Summary Report on Working with Women in the Southern Jiangsu Land Reform Campaign” [苏南土地改革运动中妇女工作的初步总结], May 10, 1951, *SNTDGGWX*, p. 469.

136. The Rural Committee of the Chaohu Prefectural Party Committee, “An Initial Summary of the Land Reform Movement in Chaohu Prefecture (Draft)” [巢湖专区土地改革运动初步总结 (草稿)], AHSTDGGZL, 126.

137. See Chapter 1 for fuller description of the psychological mechanism of moral outrage. Also see Goldberg, Lerner, and Tetlock, “Rage and Reason.”

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

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

140. Shanghai Shi Chuansha Xian Xian Zhi Bianxiu Weiyuanhui, *Chuansha County Gazetteer* [川沙县志] (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe: Xinhua Shudian, 1990).

141. The Rural Committee of the Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee, “Some Experiences from Going All Out to Mobilize the Masses with Leadership” [对有领导的放手发动群众的几点体会], AHSTDGGZL, 188.

142. Fengyang County Party Committee, “Report on the Situation of the Suppression of the Counterrevolutionaries” [关于镇压反革命情况的报告], July 31, 1951, *XCSSN*, p. 24.

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

144. *BSDA*.

145. Zhou Ziyin, “The Function of People’s Courts in the Land Reform Campaign of Feixi County” [肥西县人民法庭在土改运动中的作用], *AHSTDGGZL*, 38.

146. Xu, *Give Me Back My Freedom*.

147. A great example of privileging moral contemptibility over wealth in target sequencing comes from Hinton. When describing the first struggle target in Long Bow Village, Hinton wrote: “He was not the richest man in the village but he was one of the meanest.” Hinton, *Fanshen*, 133–34.

148. Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Directive on Going All Out to Mobilize the Masses and Organizing the High Tide of the Land Reform Movement” [中共苏南区委关于放手发动群众组织土地改革运动高潮的指示], December 27, 1950, *JSTGYD*.

149. Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Circular to All Prefectural Party Committees on Some Problems

in the Current Land Reform Movement” [中共苏北区委员会对当前土地改革运动中的几个问题向各地委的通报], January 4, 1951, *CCPM*.

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

151. The Rural Committee of the Chaohu Prefectural Party Committee, “An Initial Summary of the Land Reform Movement in Chaohu Prefecture (Draft)” [巢湖专区土地改革运动初步总结 (草稿)], *AHSTDGGZL*, 119–20.

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

153. Shanghai Shi Qingpu Xian Xian Zhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, *Qingpu County Gazetteer* [青浦县志] (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1990).

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

155. Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, *The Land Reform I Witnessed in Southern Jiangsu* [我所见到的苏南土地改革] (Shanghai: Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, 1951), 94–95.

156. Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, *The Land Reform I Witnessed in Southern Jiangsu* [我所见到的苏南土地改革] (Shanghai: Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, 1951), 94–95.

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

158. “Initial Summary of Classic Experiments in Land Reform in Juhua, Xinglong, Jihe Townships and Wugui Town (Draft)” [菊花, 兴隆, 集合乡, 五贵镇土改典型试验的初步总结 (草稿)], *JSPA*.

159. Fengyang County Party Committee, “Yaowan Township Land Reform Work Summary” [姚湾乡土改工作总结], October 1950, *XCSSN*, p. 44.

160. Collins, *Violence*. Also see Cushman et al., “Simulating Murder.” Chapter 1 presents a lengthy discussion of the role of morality and emotion in conditioning an individual’s propensity for violence.

161. Collins, *Violence*, 19.

162. Baoshan County Party Committee, “Matters to Pay Attention to in Grasping Land Reform Policy (A Letter from the County Committee to All District Committees)” [关于掌握土改有关政策上的注意事项 (县委给各区委的一封信)], November 14, year unknown, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-004-015.

163. For a discussion of how cadres encouraged civilians to use physical violence during struggle sessions, see Mo, “Bloody Struggles.”

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

165. The cadre’s use of psychological pressure to push participants to use violence against struggle targets bears an eerie resemblance to the lab coat-clad

experimenter's role in Milgram's famous shock experiments. See Stanley Milgram, "Behavioral Study of Obedience," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67, no. 4 (1963): 371–78.

166. Baumeister, *Evil*, 157–59.

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

168. Elizabeth J. Perry, "Rural Violence in Socialist China," *China Quarterly* 103, no. 1 (1985): 417.

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

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

171. *AHSTDGGZL*, 38.

172. Mo, "Bloody Struggles."

173. The category of "other" was annotated "the landlords' henchmen" (地主爪牙). See "Statistical Table of Punished Evil Tyrants, Unlawful Landlords, and Counterrevolutionaries in Gaoqiao Township, Jiangdu County," *SBTGWX*, 180.

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

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

176. The report notes that these are incomplete figures from Northern Jiangsu's land reform campaign as of February 1951. See Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, "Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Report on the Present Situation of Land Reform Work Submitted to the East China Bureau and Center" [中共苏北区委员会关于目前土地改革工作情况向华东局并中央的报告], February 27, 1951, *AHMCLR*, 716. According to a 1952 Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee report, 12,241 unlawful landlords and evil tyrants were arrested by July 1952, which is almost double the number of arrests reported in the February 1951 report; however, these numbers do not disaggregate by sentencing. Nevertheless, the point of these figures is to demonstrate the relative proportions of those arrested and executed, which likely remained roughly the same throughout the campaign. See Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Office, "Northern Jiangsu Situation Report" [苏北情况汇报], October 1952, *JSPA* 301–48; figures cited in Ma, *Sacrificed Land*, 360.

177. See Strauss, *State Formation*, 160.

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

179. Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Telegram on Strengthening Land Reform Work and Inspection” [关于加强土改工作检查的代电], November 15, 1951, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-001-052.

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

181. The Rural Committee of the Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee, “Inspection Report on the Situation of Land Reform in Eighteen Townships” [关于十八个乡土地改革的情况检查报告], n.d., *AHSTDGGZL*, 178.

182. Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee Land Committee Work Group, “Land Reform Conclusory Work Experiences in Dacheng Township (Third-Type Township)” [大成乡(第三类型乡)土改结束工作的经过], n.d., *AHSTDGGZL*, 211-12.

183. Mo Hongwei, *Research on Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu* [苏南土地改革研究] (Hefei: Hefei Gongye Daxue Chubanshe, 2007), 217.

184. Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Telegram on Strengthening Land Reform Work and Inspection” [关于加强土改工作检查的代电], November 15, 1951, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-001-052.

185. Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Telegram on Strengthening Land Reform Work and Inspection” [关于加强土改工作检查的代电], November 15, 1951, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-001-052.

186. Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee’s Response to Comrade Zhou Side’s Report on Problems in the People’s Courts” [中国共产党苏南区委员会 批转 周思德同志关于人民法庭问题的报告的通报], November 21, 1950, *SNTGWX*, 132-33.

187. Shi Wenqi, “Resolutely Crush the Voices of the Landlords” [坚决粉碎“地主之音”], *People’s Daily*, May 26, 1951.

188. Wuxi County Fangqian Township Land Reform Classic Experiment Work Committee, “Initial Summary of Classical Experiment Work during Land Reform in Fangqian Township, Wuxi County” [无锡县坊前乡土地改革典型试验工作委员会关于无锡县坊前乡土地改革典型试验工作的初步总结], August 20, 1950, *JSTGYD*, 46-55.

189. Shi Wenqi, “Resolutely Crush the Voices of the Landlords” [坚决粉碎“地主之音”], *People’s Daily*, May 26, 1951.

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

191. Liu Woyu. “The Reconstruction of Rural Power Relations: The Case of Land Reform in Northern Jiangsu” [农村权力关系的重构: 以苏北土改为例 1950-1952], *Jiangsu Shehui Kexue* 2 (2012): 221.

192. Ma Tianshui, “Report on Problems in Land Reform” [关于土改问题的报告], May 25, 1951, *AHSTDGGZL*, 22.

193. Fengyang County Party Committee Inspection Group, “A Comprehensive Inspection Report on the Land Reform Work Situation in Changhuai District, Fengyang County” [检查凤阳县长淮区土改工作情况综合汇报], October 2, 1951, *XCSSN*, 46.

Chapter 4

1. Mao Zedong, “A Letter from Mao Zedong to Huang Yanpei” [毛泽东给黄炎培的信], February 17, 1951, *CCPM*.

2. Evan S. Lieberman, “Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research,” *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 3 (2005): 435–52. Also see Evan S. Lieberman, “Nested Analysis: Toward the Integration of Comparative-Historical Analysis with Other Social Science Methods,” in *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*, ed. James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 240–63.

3. I include counties from Anhui, Fujian, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang Provinces. I do not include counties from Shandong, which was also part of the East China Bureau, because a majority of its counties experienced land reform before 1949.

4. Philip C. C. Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

5. Most notably, I gathered struggle target data for all of southern Jiangsu from Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Statistical Table of Mass Struggles in the Land Reform Period in the Southern Jiangsu Region” [苏南区土地改革时期群众斗争情况统计表], August 28, 1952, *SNTGWX*, 801. Also available at Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Summary of Southern Jiangsu Land Reform Work” [苏南土地改革工作的总结(附表)], August 28, 1952, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-001-066. I cross-checked these data with gazetteer data for all counties in southern Jiangsu; the discrepancies were nonexistent or extremely small. In cases with discrepancies, I used the number reported in the gazetteers, as they are presumably written on the basis of local documentation. In most cases, the numbers reported in the gazetteers were slightly higher than those from the southern Jiangsu regional report.

6. For more on the historical genealogy of the county gazetteers, see Eduard B. Vermeer, “New County Histories: A Research Note on Their Compilation and Value,” *Modern China* 18, no. 4 (1992): 438–67.

7. Huang notes that southern Jiangsu’s post-1949 land reform campaign tended to use the township as the level of policy implementation, often pooling together struggle targets from multiple villages within the same township and struggling against them at township-wide struggle sessions. In my own archival research in northern Anhui and southern Jiangsu I also observe that most land reform reports report statistics at the township level with only passing reference to individual villages under the township’s jurisdiction. This suggests that in the

post-1949 era, villages in the same township carried out political struggle together, most likely, as Huang suggests, to deal with the difficulty of identifying struggle targets in every village. See Philip Huang, "Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution," *Modern China* 21, no. 1 (1995): 116-17.

8. While nearly all localities finished land reform by 1952, those hit by natural disasters or that were conquered particularly late were allowed to delay the campaign. In East China, the region under study, northern Anhui was allowed to delay land reform because of the massive flood that devastated the region in 1950, affecting nearly ten million residents, or about half of the region's population. Nevertheless, many localities still pressed on with land reform despite the urgent need for continuing disaster relief. In Fengyang County, which was hit again by a flood in 1951, the county Party committee argued that because land reform and disaster relief were fundamentally campaigns concerned with improving agricultural production, cadres should not suspend land reform work but rather conduct land reform and relief work simultaneously. See Fengyang County, "Directive on Current Work" [对当前工作的指示], July 27, 1951, XCSSN. For an overview of the impact of the 1950 flood in northern Anhui, see Zeng Xisheng, "August 1, 1950, Telegram to the East China Bureau and Forwarded to the Center" [1950年8月1日致华东局并转中央的电报], *The Collected Works of Zeng Xisheng* [曾希圣文选], 78-79.

9. Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*.

10. Xinhua Shudian Huadong Zong Fendian, ed., *Land Reform Handbook* [土地改革手册], (Shanghai: Xinhua Shudian Huadong Zong Fendian, August 1950), 117.

11. Collins, *Violence*.

12. See Chapter 3 for a more in-depth discussion of this point.

13. For more on guerrilla or "irregular" war, see Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency"; Stathis N. Kalyvas and Laia Balcells, "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 3 (2010): 415-29.

14. Tongling County Gazetteer Compilation Committee, *Tongling County Gazetteer* [铜陵县志] (Hefei: Huangshan Shushe, 1993) 430-31, 98.

15. Fengxian County Gazetteer Compilation Committee, *Fengxian County Gazetteer* [奉贤县志] (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1987).

16. See Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*, chap. 7. Also see Stathis N. Kalyvas and Matthew A. Kocher, "The Dynamics of Violence in Vietnam: An Analysis of the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES)," *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 3 (2009): 335-55.

17. As has been repeatedly emphasized in the literature on political violence, indiscriminate state violence tends to diminish support for the state because it fails to shield supporters from the arbitrary use of violence. Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*; Mason and Krane, "Death Squads."

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

19. East China Bureau, “CCP Center Forwarded from the East China Bureau: Regarding Problems with the Definition of ‘Local Tyrant’” [中共中央转发华东局关于恶霸定义问题的电报], November 14, 1949, *CCPM*.

20. Rao Shushi, “Summary of the Experience of Classic Land Reform Experimental Sites in East China” [华东土地改革典型试验经验总结], December 20, 1950, *People’s Daily*.

21. Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee’s Directive on Carrying Out Work in New and Recovered Areas in the Countryside” [苏北区党委关于开展新恢复区与新区农村工作的指示], May 24, 1949, *JSPA*, no. 7001-001-0004.

22. Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Directive on Going All Out to Mobilize the Masses and Organizing the High Tide of the Land Reform Movement” [中共苏南区委关于放手发动群众组织土地改革运动高潮的指示], December 27, 1950, *JSTGYD*, 125–26.

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

24. Chuxian Prefectural Party Committee, “Emergency Notice from the Prefectural Committee on Protecting Land and Assets and Preventing the Flight of Landlords and Rich Peasants during Land Reform” [地委关于保护土产防止地富逃避土改的紧急通知], September 29, 1950, *CCDC*, no. 1950XW03_32.

25. Huang Yanpei. “Report Inquiring into Southern Jiangsu’s Land Reform (Excerpt)” [访察苏南土地改革报告(节录)], February 13, 1951, *JSTGYD*, 152–53.

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

27. Indeed, Kalyvas questions the extent to which researchers can label violence as “political” when such a large proportion of it is private, or at least a mixture of political and private. Since the Chinese Party-state mobilized most of the violence in this analysis—and it is truly difficult to imagine this violence occurring in the absence of state mobilization—I think it is fitting to describe violence during land reform as “political,” even if it sometimes had private motives. See Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*; Stathis N. Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence’: Action and Identity in Civil Wars,” *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003): 475–94; Kalyvas, “Ethnic Defection.”

28. It is true that superior levels of government supplied additional Party members through dispatching work teams comprised of urban intellectuals to some “key point” (重点) townships and villages, but these work teams could not substitute for the lack of local Party members who understood local conditions.

29. Dali Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change since the Great Leap Famine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

30. Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, *The Land Reform I Witnessed in Southern Jiangsu* [我见到的苏南土地改革] (Shanghai: Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, 1951), 94–95.

31. Du Runsheng, “The Experience of the Entire Central South Region’s Land Reform Last Winter and This Spring, Its Main Lessons, and the Plan for the Future” [中南全区去冬今春土地改革的经过与主要经验及今后计划], April 9, 1951, *CCPM*.

32. Changjiang Daily Editorial, “Readdressing Going All Out to Mobilize the Masses” [再论放手发动群众], December 14, 1950, *Changjiang Daily*, *CCPM*.

33. Because the focus of this study is on state-sanctioned violence, I define violence as the infliction of harm on civilians with the intention to cause suffering, by state actors or social actors who engage in such behavior with the encouragement of the state. This definition of violence includes both lethal and nonlethal forms of violence, which differs from much of the civil war and genocide literature that focuses exclusively on lethal violence. While this focus on lethal violence makes sense for the study of genocide, there is little theoretical justification for looking exclusively at lethal violence when considering state-sanctioned violence.

34. For more on “relative deprivation,” see Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*.

35. One *mu* equals one-fifteenth hectare.

36. A cursory comparison of grain yields across the four regional jurisdictions in Anhui and Jiangsu reflects well-known regional differences in terms of agricultural development and commercialization. Southern Jiangsu, the wealthiest region in this part of East China, had an average of 144.40 kg/*mu*, followed by southern Anhui (105.60 kg/*mu*), also located in the fertile Lower Yangzi region. Northern Anhui and northern Jiangsu had significantly lower grain yields, at 75.03 kg/*mu* and 62.64 kg/*mu*, respectively. Calculations made using author’s county gazetteer data set.

37. This is the same logic as in James Kai-sing Kung and Shuo Chen, “The Tragedy of the Nomenklatura: Career Incentives and Political Radicalism during China’s Great Leap Famine,” *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 1 (2011): 27–45, and Yang, *Calamity and Reform*.

38. Chalmers A. Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).

39. Most counties in Anhui and Jiangsu Provinces were occupied by the Japanese and hit by their mopping-up campaigns; only around 10 percent of counties did not experience Japanese occupation.

40. Northern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Directive Given to Each Prefectural Committee Regarding Land Reform Propaganda Work” [关于土地改革宣传工作给各地委的指示], October 1950, *SBTGWX*, 69.

41. See Lieberman, “Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy” and “Nested Analysis: Toward the Integration.”

42. Fengyang County Party Committee. “Table of Various Statistics on Land Reform in Fengyang County, Anhui Province” [关于安徽省凤阳县土地改革各种统计表格] 1951, *CCDC*, no. 1951XW13.

43. Fengyang County Public Security Office, “Fengyang County Public Secu-

rity Office Summary Work Report on the Campaign to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries” [凤阳县公安局镇反工作总结报告], 1954, *XCSSN*, 20.

44. Chuxian Prefectural Party Committee, “Emergency Notification on Strengthening Work on Bandit-Spy Extermination and the Protection of Granaries and Grain” [关于加强清匪特护仓护粮工作的紧急通知], March 18, 1950, *CCDC*, no. 1950XW04_12-13.

45. Fengyang County Party Committee, “Record of the Fengyang County Party Committee Meeting” [中共凤阳县委会议纪录], January 1, 1950, *XCSSN*, 19.

46. Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee, “Regarding the Northern Anhui Regional Party Committee’s Directive on Carrying Out the Severe Suppression of the Counterrevolutionaries” [关于中共皖北区党委关于执行严厉镇压反革命分子的指示], January 4, 1951, *CCDC*, no. 1951XW05_18-22.

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

48. Of course, the lessons of a model experiment in a single township in a single county would not necessarily apply to the situation of other townships. See “Preparation Work Plans for Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu” [苏南土地改革准备工作计划], July 5, 1950, *SNTDGGWX*, 25.

49. Wuxi County Fangqian Township Land Reform Classic Experiment Work Committee, “Initial Summary of Classical Experiment Work during Land Reform in Fangqian Township, Wuxi County” [无锡县坊前乡土地改革典型试验工作委员会关于无锡县坊前乡土地改革典型试验工作的初步总结], August 20, 1950, *JSTGYD*, 46-55.

50. Wuxi County Fangqian Township Land Reform Classic Experiment Work Committee, “Initial Summary of Classical Experiment Work during Land Reform in Fangqian Township, Wuxi County” [无锡县坊前乡土地改革典型试验工作委员会关于无锡县坊前乡土地改革典型试验工作的初步总结], August 20, 1950, *JSTGYD*, 46-55.

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

52. Zhou Jiasheng, “The Course of Mobilizing Struggle in Tongfu Township, Shipai District” [石牌區同福鄉發動鬥爭經過], *AHSTDGGZL*, date unknown, 201-2.

53. Zhou Jiasheng, “The Course of Mobilizing Struggle in Tongfu Township, Shipai District” [石牌區同福鄉發動鬥爭經過], *AHSTDGGZL*, date unknown, 202-4.

54. Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2015).

55. Su Yang, *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Chapter 5

1. Mao Zedong, “Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society,” in *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-tung*, ed. Committee for the Publication of the Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1971), 11.

2. Migdal, *Strong Societies*.

3. Within this category of land rent, Mao also included rent from managing communal land—e.g., lineage or temple land. Mao Zedong, “How to Differentiate the Classes in the Rural Areas” [怎样分析农村阶级], in *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), 137–39.

4. Mao Zedong, “How to Differentiate the Classes in the Rural Areas” [怎样分析农村阶级], in *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), 137–39.

5. Mao Zedong, “How to Differentiate the Classes in the Rural Areas” [怎样分析农村阶级], in *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), 137–39.

6. This logic also applied to middle peasants, though, as mentioned above, they were allowed to “unite” (团结) with the landless and land-poor peasants to participate in political life; being labeled a rich peasant had dire long-run social and political consequences, particularly in subsequent campaigns of mass violence.

7. Dong Zhikai and Chen Tingxuan, *A Brief History of Land Reform in China* [土地改革史话] (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxia Chubanshe, 2011), 109–10.

8. CCDC, no. 1983XC52–78.

9. Huang, *Yangzi Delta*, 149.

10. Gregor Benton, *New Fourth Army: Communist Resistance along the Yangtze and the Huai, 1938–1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 26.

11. The data presented here come from the author’s county gazetteer data set. Central Bureau refers to the central-level administrative region that governed the region or county. Japanese Occupation is an indicator of whether the region or county was hit by a mopping-up campaign by the Japanese army during the Second World War. Landholding Inequality was calculated using the ratio of landlord per capita landholdings to average per capita landholdings at the county level. Agricultural Productivity is the amount of grain produced per *mu* of land in 1949.

12. See Andrew Bennett, “Process Tracing and Causal Inference,” in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, ed. Henry Brady and David Collier (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 207–20.

13. Kanchan Chandra, “Cumulative Findings in the Study of Ethnic Politics,” *APSA-CP Newsletter* 12, no. 1 (2001): 7–25; Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*.

14. Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*.

15. Aliza Luft, “Toward a Dynamic Theory of Action at the Micro Level of Genocide: Killing, Desistance, and Saving in 1994 Rwanda,” *Sociological Theory* 33, no. 2 (2015): 148–72.

16. Kalyvas, “Ethnic Defection”; Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*.

17. Siu eloquently articulates this point: “Relationships permitting the extraction of agricultural surplus were embedded in rural social institutions, the rights and duties associated with which had historically been held legitimate in the popular mind.” Helen F. Siu, *Agents and Victims in South China: Accomplices in Rural Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 128.

18. For the full typology of moral foundations, see Haidt, *Righteous Mind*.

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

20. Though, as Madsen notes, there were similar expectations between wealthy and poor kin. See Madsen, *Morality and Power*, 60.

21. Fried, *Fabric of Chinese Society*, 104.

22. Thomas Buoye, “Litigation, Legitimacy, and Lethal Violence: Why County Courts Failed to Prevent Violent Disputes over Property in Eighteenth-Century China,” in *Contract and Property in Early Modern China: Rational Choice in Political Science*, ed. Madeleine Zelin et al. (Stanford University Press, 2004), 95–96.

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

24. Bianco, “Peasant Movements,” 275.

25. Quoted in Thornton, *Disciplining the State*, 53.

26. According to a well-known magistrate handbook from the early Qing period, “The position of *hsiang-chang* should be filled by a person of advanced age, noted for his virtue and respected by others,” while “Candidates for *pao-chang* should be well-to-do, vigorous and capable individuals, known for good behavior.” See Huang, *Complete Book Concerning Happiness*, 468–69.

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

28. Thornton, *Disciplining the State*, 65.

29. See Chapter 2 for a fuller description of the imperial state’s moralization of corruption and its influence on rural culture and rebellion.

30. Duara, *Culture, Power, Pepper, Civil War*.

31. C. K. Yang, *A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1959), 113–14.

32. The selection of targets during land reform, rooted in moral norms that governed authority relations before 1949, in many ways reflected regional patterns of pre-1949 rural unrest, as Chapter 5 discusses in greater detail.

33. The term “evil tyrant” was a modification of the term “local tyrant” (土豪), whose linguistic predecessors trace as far back as the Western Han period (206 BCE—9 CE). For example, the terms 豪强 and 豪猾, which refer to local despots or bullies from powerful families, appear in Sima Qian’s *Records of the Grand Historian* (史记) and later in the *Book of Han* (汉书), written in the Eastern Han period. See Guo Yingde and Guo Changbao, *Ancient China’s Evil Tyrants* [中国古代的恶霸] (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan Guoji Youxian Gongsi, 1995), 2–5.

34. Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 10, 16.

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

36. Huang, *Peasant Economy*, 255.

37. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries*, 12–14.

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

39. Ma, *Sacrificed Land*, 339.

40. This is the essence of what Ma Junya describes as Huaibei's "dumbbell-shaped social structure" (哑铃型的社会结构). See Ma, *Sacrificed Land*, 335–44.

41. See Huang's study of prerevolutionary Hebei. Huang, *Peasant Economy*, 255–56, 261.

42. Huang, *Peasant Economy*, 268.

43. Elizabeth J. Perry, "Implications of Household Contracting in China: The Case of Fengyang County," in *China's Reform Politics: Policies and Their Implications*, ed. Sang-Woo Rhee (Seoul: Sogang University Press, 1986), 195.

44. John Lossing Buck, *Statistics*, vol. 3 of *Land Utilization in China: A Study of 16,786 Farms in 168 Localities, and 38,256 Farm Families in Twenty-Two Provinces in China, 1929–1933* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), 74.

45. Because not all localities possessed a comparative advantage in grain production before 1949, I use a measure of grain productivity—the amount of grain produced per *mu* of land—to capture agricultural development-related factors like soil quality, human capital, technological inputs, weather, etc. For more on the use of agricultural productivity as a measure of rural development, see Debraj Ray, *Development Economics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

46. Fengyang County Gazetteer Compilation Committee, *Fengyang County Gazetteer* [凤阳县志] (Beijing: Fangzhi Chuban She, 1999), 2.

47. Perry, "Implications of Household Contracting," 197.

48. Zeng Xisheng, "Northern Anhui Administrative Region Work Situation Report" [皖北行政区工作情况的报告], February 5, 1950, *CCPM*.

49. Quanjiao County Party Committee, "February Summary Work Report" [二月份工作综合报告], February 1951, *QJCA*, no. 1-1-26-70.

50. Author's calculations using data from the *Fengyang County Gazetteer*.

51. Ji Kedong, "Survey of Classes in Tangtian Bao, Qipan Township in Feng District No. 1" [凤一区棋盘乡汤田保阶级调查], November 12, 1948, *XCSSN*, 56.

52. Fengyang County Party Committee Inspection Group, "A Comprehensive Inspection Report on the Land Reform Work Situation in Changhuai District, Fengyang County" [检查凤阳县长淮区土改工作情况综合汇报], October 2, 1951, *XCSSN*, 57.

53. Buck, *Statistics*, 61.

54. Buck, *Statistics*, 61.

55. Huang, *Yangzi Delta*, 149.

56. Ma, *Sacrificed Land*, 341–44.

57. Ma, *Sacrificed Land*, 361.

58. Quoted in Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries*, 10.
59. *Fengyang County Gazetteer*, 7.
60. Perry, "Implications of Household Contracting," 197-98.
61. John Lossing Buck, *Land Utilization in China*, vol. 1 of *Land Utilization in China: A Study of 16,786 Farms in 168 Localities, and 38,256 Farm Families in Twenty-two Provinces in China, 1929-1933* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), 326-28.
62. Bianco, *Peasants without the Party*, 81, 95.
63. *Fengyang County Gazetteer*, 447.
64. Fengyang County Party Committee Inspection Group, "A Comprehensive Inspection Report on the Land Reform Work Situation in Changhuai District, Fengyang County" [检查凤阳县长淮区土改工作情况综合汇报], October 2, 1951, XCSSN, 57.
65. Fengyang County Public Security Bureau, "Regarding the Annual Public Security Work Report (1950)" [关于年度公安工作总结报告1950年], 1950, XCSSN, 20.
66. Thornton, *Disciplining the State*, 104.
67. Ma, *Sacrificed Land*, 340.
68. Yu Wanpei, *Guangxu Fengyang County Gazetteer* [光緒鳳陽縣志], 16 juan (1887): 500-501.
69. Fengyang County Party Committee, "Record of the Fengyang County Party Committee Meeting" [中共凤阳县委会议纪录], January 1, 1950, XCSSN, 19.
70. Fengyang County Party Committee, "Report on the Situation of the Suppression of the Counterrevolutionaries" [关于镇压反革命情况的报告], July 31, 1951, XCSSN, 19.
71. Gao Feng, "A Basic Summary of the Land Reform Movement in the Northern Jiangsu Region over the Past Two Years" [苏北行政区二年来土地改革运动基本总结], Winter 1952, *JSTGYD*, 331.
72. Northern Jiangsu Party Regional Committee Land Reform Work Committee, "Directive on the Problem of Mobilizing the Masses to Bring Back Unlawful Landlords Who Sabotage and Transfer Wealth" ["关于发动群众追回不法地主破坏·转移财产等问题的指示"], February 1951, *JSTGYD*, 293.
73. Zeng Xisheng, "The Current Situation of Northern Anhui and Its Tasks" [皖北当前情况和任务], in *Zengxi Sheng Wenxuan: 1939-1961* [曾希圣文选: 1939-1961], (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2008), 75.
74. Fengyang County Party Committee, "Report on Rent Reduction and the Antityrant Campaign in Fengyang County" [凤阳县减租反霸报告], July 5, 1949, XCSSN, 20-22.
75. For an exhaustive description of the village compact system and the ledgers of merit and demerit, see Brokaw, *Ledgers of Merit and Demerit*; Hsiao, *Rural China*; and Terada, "Nature of Social Agreements," 321-23.
76. Fengyang County Party Committee, "Statistical Table on Local Evil Tyrants, Landlords, and Former Officials in Lao Feng Fourth District" [老凤四区地方恶霸, 地主顽干概况统计表], June 26, 1949, CCDC, no. 1949ZL04_17-20.

77. Note that according to these same statistics, there were 463 struggle targets during Fengyang's land reform campaign; however, further information only exists for 336 of these targets. See Fengyang County Party Committee, "Table of Various Statistics on Land Reform in Fengyang County, Anhui Province" [关于安徽省凤阳县土地改革各种统计表格], 1951, *CCDC*, no. 1951XW13.

78. Unlike Baoshan, localities in Fengyang did not use the category "ordinary landlords" (一般地主).

79. Fengyang County Party Committee, "Table of Various Statistics on Land Reform in Fengyang County, Anhui Province" [关于安徽省凤阳县土地改革各种统计表格], 1951, *CCDC*, no. 1951XW13.

80. Fengyang Party County Committee Inspection Team, "Summary Report of the Land Reform Investigation in Guangou Township, Lushan District, Fengyang County" [凤阳县芦山区官沟乡土改调查总结报告], 1950, *XCSSN*, 22.

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

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

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

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

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

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

87. Fengyang County Party Committee Inspection Group, "Summary Report on the Inspection of the Land Reform Work Situation in Changhuai District, Fengyang County" [检查凤阳县长淮区土改工作情况综合汇报], October 2, 1951, *XCSSN*, 45.

88. Fengyang County Party Committee, "Notice on a Few Major Problems in

the Present Land Reform Campaign” [对当前土改中几个主要问题的通知], August 28, 1951, XCSSN, 44.

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

90. Wu Qiang, Fan Yulin, and Chen Yi, quoted in Benton, *New Fourth Army*, 27–28.

91. Huang, *Yangzi Delta*, 41–43.

92. Huang, *Yangzi Delta*, 26–27, 29.

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

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

95. Li, “Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu,” 4.

96. Oral history JD13, July 2015.

97. It is unclear how long the *juese tian* system existed, but it was particularly prevalent during the years between the Japanese occupation and 1949. Locals do not know the origin of the phrase *juese tian* or its Mandarin pronunciation because they only heard the term used in Shanghainese (Wu dialect). See Pan Guangdan and Quan Weitian, “An Analysis of Two Kinds of Rent Systems in Southern Jiangsu” [苏南农村两种租佃制度的分析], in *The Land Reform in Southern Jiangsu I Witnessed* [我所见到的苏南土地改革], ed. Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui (Shanghai: Sunan Renmin Xingzheng Gongshu Tudi Gaige Weiyuanhui, 1951), 23–24. For more on Baoshan’s rent system, see Shanghai Shi Baoshan Qu Difang Zhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, ed., *Baoshan County Gazetteer* [宝山县志] (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1992), 151–52.

98. Pan and Quan, “Two Kinds of Rent Systems,” 24.

99. *Baoshan County Gazetteer*, 152.

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

101. Bernhardt, *Peasant Resistance*, 191–92, 205. This distinction helps clarify how officials and landlords were overlapping yet separate categories; as Bernhardt notes, despite their history of collusion beginning in the late Qing, there were still significant antagonisms between officials and landlords in the Nationalist era.

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

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

104. Notably, sixty of these former officials, or around 20 percent of all targets, were former district, township or *baojia* heads, or officials above the district level (区长以上). See Baoshan County Party Committee, "Statistical Table on the Struggle Situation during the End of Land Reform Work in Baoshan County" [宝山县结束土改工作斗争情况统计表], November 18, 1951, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-011-034.

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

106. Baoshan County Party Committee, "Statistical Table on Mass Struggle during Land Reform" [土改中群众斗争统计表], 1950, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-011-019.

107. *Baoshan County Gazetteer*, 152.

108. Oral history BS09, May 2015.

109. Oral history BS11, May 2015.

110. Oral history BS11, May 2015.

111. Holding struggle sessions around the time of the state's requisition of grain in the fall appears to have been a popular strategic move. One could surmise that the timing of these struggle sessions was meant to deter possible resistance to the state's grain collection efforts. It also happens to coincide with the Qing practice of the autumn assizes, when the imperial government would render verdicts on criminal cases.

112. *Baoshan County Gazetteer*, 152.

113. This figure is based on the data presented in Table 19 in Appendix B.

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

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

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

117. The original text reads as follows: "讲究斗争情况策略,对不同情况的地主,进行不同对待。应该是'镇压破坏反抗,宽大处理一般,正确照顾开明,不能一般化。" Baoshan County Party Committee, "Points for Attention Regarding Grasping Land Reform Policy (a Letter Sent to Each District Committee from the County

Committee)” [关于掌握土改有关政策上的注意事项（县委给各区委的一封信)], November 14, year unknown, *BSDA*, no. 1-2-004-015.

118. *Baoshan County Gazetteer*, 153.

119. Oral History BS09, May 2015.

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

121. “Basic Summary Report on Land Reform Work in the Suburbs of Wuxi Municipality” [无锡市郊区土地改革工作的基本总结], May 12, 1951, *SNTGWX*, 453.

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

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

124. This logit regression uses the data presented in Table 19, Appendix B.

125. Robert H. Bates, “Modernization, Ethnic Competition, and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa,” in *State versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas*, ed. Donald Rothchild and Victor A. Olunsorola (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983); Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Russell Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Michael Hechter and Dina Okamoto, “Political Consequences of Minority Group Formation,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, no. 1 (2001): 189–215; Steven Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

126. Compare this to Posner’s institutionalist approach to “identity repertoires.” See Daniel N. Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

127. Kalyvas, “Ontology of Political Violence,” 486.

Chapter 6

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2. Li Lifeng, “Land Reform and Joining the Army: A Historical Examination from a Rational Choice Perspective” [土改与参军:理性选择视角的历史考察], *Fujian Luntan (Renmin Shehui Kexue Ban)* no. 11 (2007): 72–78.

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

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8. Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee Rural Work Committee, "Report from the Meeting of Land Reform Inspection Group Leaders" [关于土地改革检查队组长会议的报告], *SNTGWX*, 226.

9. LeBas, *From Protest to Parties*; Levitsky and Way, "Durability of Revolutionary Regimes."

10. Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890 to 1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 40.

11. Gould, *Insurgent Identities*, 15.

12. Cohen, "Ties That Bind"; Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*; Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros, and Zimbaro, *Violence Workers*.

13. Fujii, "Talk of the Town." Also see Checkel, "Socialization and Violence."

14. Swidler, "Cultural Power."

15. Cohen, *Rape in Civil War*, 27.

16. Joseph Esherick, "Deconstructing the Construction of the Party-State: Gulun County in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region," *The China Quarterly*, no. 140 (Dec. 1994): 1072–73.

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

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

21. Guo Mingxiao, "Summary of Land Reform Experiments in Huchang Township" [胡场乡土地改革试验总结], September 1950, *JSSTDGGYD*, 226.

22. Wu County Gusu Township Land Reform Classic Experiment Work Committee, "Initial Summary Report on Classic Experiment Work in Land Reform in Gusu Township, Wu County" [关于吴县姑苏乡土地改革典型试验工作的初步总结], August 21, 1950, *JSSTDGGYD*, 69, 78.

23. Wu, "Speaking Bitterness," 14.

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

25. Jin-Cha-Ji Military District Political Department, ed. *Speaking Bitterness and Seeking Vengeance* [诉苦复仇] (n.p., December 1947), 44–45.

26. 1951XW11_82-85—县委关于凤临区六个重点乡土改，生产工作计划总结简报。

27. This requirement appears throughout documents on struggle sessions, with some using it as a sign of a successful struggle session. See, for example, “Baoshan County Changxing District Panshi Township Summary Report on the Anti-Black Field Struggle” [宝山县长兴区潘石乡反黑田斗争汇报总结], January 19, 1950, *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-060.

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

29. “Initial Summary Report on Land Reform Work in Suzhou Prefecture” [苏州专区土地改革工作的初步总结], March 15, 1951, *SNTGWX*, 430-33.

30. Ellen R. Judd, “Revolutionary Drama and Song in the Jiangxi Soviet,” *Modern China* 9, no. 1 (1983): 147.

31. “Initial Summary Report on Land Reform Work in Suzhou Prefecture” [苏州专区土地改革工作的初步总结], March 15, 1951, *SNTGWX*, 439.

32. Stefan Landsberger, *Chinese Propaganda Posters: From Revolution to Modernization* (Amsterdam: Pepin Press, 1995).

33. “The Situation of Land Reform in the East China Region” [华东区土地改革情况], March 27, 1951, *CCPM*.

34. Southern Jiangsu Regional Party Committee, “Directive on Going All Out to Mobilize the Masses and Organize the High Tide of the Land Reform Movement” [关于放手发动群众组织土地改革运动高潮的指示], December 27, 1950, *SNTGWX*, 153-54.

35. “Initial Summary Report on Land Reform Work in Suzhou Prefecture” [苏州专区土地改革工作的初步总结], March 15, 1951, *SNTGWX*, 429.

36. Fengyang County Party Committee, “Report on the Situation of the Suppression of the Counterrevolutionaries” [关于镇压反革命情况的报告], July 31, 1951, *XCSSN*, 24.

37. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of my case selection for the gazetteer data set, and see Appendix A for more information on the nature of these data and potential biases.

38. See Appendix A for descriptive statistics for the gazetteer data set.

39. See, for example, Baoshan County Party Committee, “The Concrete Process of the Anti-‘Black Field’ Struggle” [反黑地斗争具体过程], December 17, 1949, *BSDA*, no. 1-1-001-001.

40. Tuong Vu, *Paths to Development in Asia: South Korea, Vietnam, China, and Indonesia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 90-91.

41. “From Resisting Communists to Resisting America: Civil War and Korean War in Southwest China, 1950-1951,” in *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People’s Republic of China*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Paul G. Pickowicz (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 105-29.

42. Ning Wang, *Banished to the Great Northern Wilderness: Political Exile and Re-education in Mao’s China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 22.

43. Wang, *Banished to the Great Northern Wilderness*, 22.
44. Song Yongyi, ed. 反右绝密文件, 中共中央办公厅“情况简报(整风专辑)汇编,” vol. 1. 1957年6月30日—1958年4月29日.
45. Song Yongyi, ed. 反右绝密文件, 中共中央办公厅“情况简报(整风专辑)汇编,” vol. 1. 1957年6月30日—1958年4月29日.
46. Song Yongyi, ed. 反右绝密文件, 中共中央办公厅“情况简报(整风专辑)汇编,” vol. 1. 1957年6月30日—1958年4月29日.
47. Denise Y. Ho, *Curating Revolution: Politics on Display in Mao's China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
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49. Guobin Yang, *The Red Guard Generation and Political Activism in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).
50. Madsen, *Morality and Power*.
51. Tan Hecheng, *The Killing Wind: A Chinese County's Descent into Madness during the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
52. The origins of some of these techniques predate the Communists in peasant traditions of rebellion, but their usage in the context of Maoist class struggle was an innovation of the CCP that was first widely implemented in most parts of the country in the early 1950s.
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54. Ralph Thaxton, *Force and Contention in Contemporary China: Memory and Resistance in the Long Shadow of the Catastrophic Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 38.
55. Susan Trevaskes, “Yanda 2001: Form and Strategy in a Chinese Anti-crime Campaign,” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 36, no. 3 (2003): 273.
56. Thaxton, *Force and Contention*, 38.
57. Huangshan Shi Difang Zhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, *Huangshan Municipal Gazetteer* [黄山市志] (Hefei: Huangshan Shushe, 1992).
58. Perry, “Rural Violence.”
59. Quoted in Iza Ding and Jeffrey Javed, “Understanding ‘Red’ Memory in Contemporary China,” working paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Political Science Association (2016), 17.
60. Ding and Javed, “Understanding ‘Red’ Memory,” 17.

Conclusion

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

2. Yang, “Attempt and Possibility.”
3. Liu, “Question of Land Reform,” 11–28.
4. Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*, 9.
5. Huang, “Rural Class Struggle,” 111.
6. Lee Ann Fujii uses this term in reference to her observation that in Rwanda “people did not kill over ethnicity, they killed with scripted ethnic claims.” Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*, 180–85.
7. Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*, 125.
8. Thaxton, *Force and Contention*.
9. Susan Trevaskes, *Policing Serious Crime in China: From “Strike Hard” to “Kill Fewer”* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
10. Elizabeth Economy, *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
11. Thornton, *Disciplining the State*, 214.
12. “Visualizing China’s Anti-corruption Campaign,” *ChinaFile*, August 15, 2018. Available at <http://www.chinafile.com/infographics/visualizing-chinas-anti-corruption-campaign>
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14. Margaret L. Boitton. “New Perspectives from the Oldest Profession: Abuse and the Legal Consciousness of Sex Workers in China,” *Law & Society Review* 47, no. 2 (2013): 245–278.
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16. Lufeng has a strong revolutionary history, as it was part of Peng Pai’s ill-fated Hailufeng Soviet, one of the first Communist bases in China.
17. “After Guangdong Holds a Public Sentencing of 10 People, They Are Escorted to the Execution Site for Immediate Execution” [广东召开宣判大会 10人会后被押赴刑场执行死刑], *Zhongguo Wang*, December 27, 2017, <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/nd/2017-12-17/doc-ifyptkyk4975438.shtml>
18. Christian Sorace, “Extracting Affect: Televised Cadre Confessions in China,” *Public Culture* 31, no. 1 (2019): 145–171.
19. *RSDLMonitor*, 2018.
20. Tania Branigan, “Televised Confessions on State-Run TV Consolidate China’s Social Control,” *The Guardian*, August 11, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/11/televised-confessions-state-tv-china-social-control>
21. *Human Procuratorate’s Corruption Inspection Guidelines*.
22. Robert I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 109.
23. Moore, *Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 107.
24. Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 347.
25. Kamen, *Spanish Inquisition*, 393.

26. David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 239.
27. Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 87.
28. Peters, *Inquisition*, 90–91.
29. Kamen, *Spanish Inquisition*, 227–33.
30. Kalyvas has extensively documented the pervasiveness of revenge motives in civil war violence. See Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence*.
31. Peters, *Inquisition*, 92.
32. Peters, *Inquisition*, 94.
33. William E. Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy: The Spanish Inquisition from the Basque Lands to Sicily* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 322.
34. Peters, *Inquisition*, 93–94.
35. Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 322.
36. Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 62.
37. J. Arch Getty, “‘Excesses Are Not Permitted’: Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s,” *Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 117.
38. Pipes, *Communism*, 64.
39. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy*, 88.
40. Wendy Z. Goldman, “Small Motors of Terror: The Role of Factory Newspapers,” in *The Anatomy of Terror: Political Violence under Stalin*, ed. James R. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 246.
41. Goldman, “Small Motors of Terror,” 247.
42. David L. Hoffman, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 248.
43. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy*, 102.
44. Goldman, “Small Motors of Terror,” 249–52.
45. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy*, 257.
46. David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 87; emphasis added.
47. Pipes, *Communism*, 65.
48. Michael Mann, “The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results.” *European Journal of Sociology* 25, no. 2 (1984): 185–213.
49. For a critique of the limitations of an institutional approach to state building during the Qing, see Duara, *Culture, Power*.
50. Bernstein, “Problems of Village Leadership.”
51. Daniel Koss, *Where the Party Rules: The Rank and File of China’s Communist State* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 2018.
52. Compare this to Tilly’s definition of legitimacy, building on Stinchcombe, that “legitimacy is the probability that other authorities will act to confirm the decisions of a given authority.” Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985),

171. Also see Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). On state building as a function of quelling internal conflict, see Mark Dincecco and Yuhua Wang, “Violent Conflict and Political Development over the Long Run: China versus Europe,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (2018): 341–58.

53. Philip S. Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Mara Loveman, “The Modern State and the Primitive Accumulation of Symbolic Power,” *American Journal of Sociology* 110, no. 6 (2005): 1651–83.

54. See Duara, *Culture, Power*; Dan Slater, “Revolutions, Crackdowns, and Quiescence: Communal Elites,” *American Journal of Sociology* 115, no. 1 (July 2009): 203–54.

55. Perry, *Anyuan*; Strauss, *State Formation*.

56. Gorski, *Disciplinary Revolution*.

57. Gould, *Insurgent Identities*.

58. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*.

59. Lamont, *Money, Morals, and Manners*; Lamont, *Dignity of Working Men*.

60. Jasper, “Emotions of Protest.”

Appendix A

1. Vermeer, “New County Histories,” 446–47.

2. Vermeer, “New County Histories,” 451.

3. Vermeer, “New County Histories,” 443–44.

4. Vermeer’s assertion here was based on his analysis of a small number of gazetteers from Sichuan Province in the early 1980s, which may explain the divergence in our observations.

5. Vermeer, “New County Histories,” 456.

6. See Shue, *Peasant China in Transition*.

7. James Honaker, Gary King, and Matthew Blackwell, “Amelia II: A Program for Missing Data,” *Journal of Statistical Software* 45, no. 7 (2011): 1–47.

8. There is much debate about the proper m , or number of imputed values per cell of missing data, to use in multiple imputation. Because additional computational stress is not an issue with a data set of this size, I use an m equal the percentage of observations with missing data (~50 percent), as suggested in Paul T. von Hippel, “How to Impute Squares, Interactions, and Other Transformed Variables,” *Sociological Methodology* 39, no. 1 (2009): 265–91. For an extensive discussion on choosing an appropriate m for multiple imputation, see Ranjit Lal, “How Multiple Imputation Makes a Difference,” *Political Analysis* 24, no. 4 (2016): 414–33.

9. This is why I use oral history evidence so sparingly throughout this study. Most participants in land reform are no longer living or, at the time of this study, in their eighties at least. I encountered glaring issues in memory recall, self-censorship, retrospective rationalization, etc. This, of course, is a major pitfall of

interviewing past participants who are still living under the very regime that sanctioned the campaign of political violence.

10. Shue, *Peasant China in Transition*.

11. See Teiwes, “Establishment and Consolidation.”

Appendix B

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

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