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Chinese Local Elites and Institutional Changes:

The Local Self-Government in Jiaxing 1905-1914

Master thesis

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**CHINESE LOCAL ELITES AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES:
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Abstract

This paper proposes a new perspective to understand the local self-government movement during the late Qing New Policies era. On the one hand, this new perspective moves beyond the common practice of interpreting the local self-government movement as failed state efforts to bridle the local elite by enlisting them into bureaucracy, and instead looks at it from the perspective of local society. On the other hand, it emphasizes the relations between local self-government institutions and other contemporaneous professional associations, like the chamber of commerce, education association, agriculture association, and the anti-opium bureau.

To facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the local self-government movement, this paper examines the case in Jiaying from 1905 to 1914. This period witnessed the whole process of the first wave of the local self-government movement from its start and preparation in the last years of the Qing to its abolition by Yuan Shikai in the Republic.

A clear understanding of local power structure is indispensable for researching local self-government. Previous scholars generally draw a line between upper-degree elites and lower elites, urban elites and countryside-based elites, suggesting that there were serious conflicts between upper urban elites and lower elites during the local self-government movement. My research on Jiaying shows provides corrective to this interpretation. Traditional degrees and lineage were still important, but they were no longer major factors for elite to form establishments, seek support, and construct identity. By participating in various professional associations, Jiaying elites gradually began to organize themselves along with associations and take action in the name of these associations.

The emergence of professional associations was a significant political development in modern Chinese history. They performed many local works independently and often advocated for public benefits, local self-government

and a constitutional government, either alone or together with other associations. There were numerous examples of the close cooperation between different professional associations and local self-government institutions. It were the members of professional associations who first promoted and dominated the self-government institutions. For the Jiaxing elites, local self-government was merely one among the many organizations for them to participate in local affairs and exert influence.

All these linkages and cooperation between different institutions and associations contributed to a power balance in Jiaxing society in the last years of the Qing dynasty. Public management functions were clearly delineated among various associations whose members were mainly New Policies activists who wished to make the country better and stronger by building local society. There were some peasant uprisings, but during this period the urban-rural conflict may not have been essential in Jiaxing.

The 1911 Revolution changed this kind of balanced local power structure among local officials, self-government institutions, and professional associations. Magistrates gradually lost their control of local society, while local assemblies and executive boards became the major decision-making institutions in the first years of the Republic. The clearly delineated functions among self-government institutions, professional associations and local governments were disrupted. Eventually in 1914, Yuan Shikai abolished all of the local self-government institutions.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In September of 1909, a group of five Japanese people headed by a merchant named Nakano Kumagoro entered Jiaxing *wenming* theatre (文明戲園). This theatre had been closed down for a month because several social disorder affairs had occurred there. In the night these Japanese people put up a Japanese commercial flag in the front door of the theatre and started business. Hearing this, Jiaxing Prefect Ying quickly sent Jiaxing county magistrate Zong to stop it. The Japanese merchant disregarded magistrate Zong's order and continued their opera performance.

The next day this aroused great indignation among Jiaxing gentry, merchants, and students (*shen shang xue* 紳商學). They quickly took action, first sending a letter to Jiaxing-born Beijing officials like Lao Jingxiang and appealing to the provincial assembly, then discussing with Prefect Ying for solutions. The Japanese merchants explained that they had loaned a large sum of money to Li Leshan, the owner of the theatre, who promised to transfer the theatre to him. Based on this, they declared ownership of the theatre and asked for its re-opening.

After receiving a telegraph from the provincial foreign affairs bureau, Prefect Ying had a meeting with Xiushui district magistrate Qin. Magistrate Qin then visited the anti-opium bureau and met with presidents of various associations. They then blocked the entrance of the theatre.

A few days later, Masaji Ikebe, the Japanese consul to Hangzhou, visited Jiaxing to solve the problem. The Jiaxing officials and gentry had a meeting with him in the government office. Masaji Ikebe admitted the fault of Japanese merchants but insisted that Nakano Kumagoro did not bring or put up the Japanese flag. This was refuted by gentry Ge (*Ge shen* 葛紳) who furthermore said that because they put a high value on diplomatic relations with Japanese, Jiaxing local officials had handed over the flag to Hangzhou foreign affairs bureau to return it to the Japanese consulate. Regarding the loan between the theatre owner Li Leshan and the Japanese merchant, gentry Ge, Tang and Fang pointed out that there was no indication of foreign investment in the *wenming* theatre. Even if the owner did borrow money from Japanese merchants, it

was their own business and Jiaxing would not take responsibility. Prefect Ying concluded that whatever the financial situation was, the theatre owner should be punished severely.

After the meeting, gentry Tang Jinlun, a member of the gentry, and others invited people of all the seven districts to attend the public conference held at the *minglun* academy (明倫堂). More than a thousand people presented. Among them were the magistrates of Jiaxing and Xiushui. Gentry Ge Muchuan was elected as the temporary president. After questioning several people from the *wenming* theatre, president Ge appointed Zhang Ximeng, one of the former stockholders of the theatre, to seek out Li Leshan. Afraid of misconduct and circumvention, Xiushui magistrate Qin required that someone came forward to act as the underwriter. The underwriter should be elected within two minutes and should be approved by all the attendees. Finally, gentry Tang and Gao were selected to be the underwriters of Zhang Ximeng. After this, the conference ended.

Later that year, people from the gentry, merchants and students organized several similar conferences to trace the arrest process. The next year the theatre owner Li Leshan was captured and sentenced to jail for three years.¹

I describe the above incident in detail because it represents a high degree of local self-government and reveals how decisions about important public incidents were made among gentry, officials and the people in local society like Jiaxing in the last decade of the Qing dynasty. Both societal and official influences were at work, and the former—especially endeavors from gentry, merchants, students, and various associations, was especially noteworthy in this important Japanese related incident. These Jiaxing local elites and the late Qing local self-government movement they participated in are the major focus of my research.

1. Local self-government: ideas and practices

Local self-government (*difang zizhi* 地方自治) was among the many political terms

¹ This incident was recorded in detail in the *Dongfang zazhi*, 1909, 6.11. See also in *Shen bao*, 1909/03/06, 10/30, 1910/05/07.

that were borrowed from western political theory and then quickly merged with Chinese political ideas. Yet it was unique in that the Qing government eventually embraced it and put it into practice in the New Policies era.

It was commonly believed that the Cantonese diplomat Huang Zunxian first introduced the term self-government (*zizhi*) to China after his study in Japan.² In 1897, Huang Zunxian delivered a speech at the Changsha-based Southern Study Society (*nansue hui* 南學會) and appealed to the Hunanese local elite to “govern your own persons and your own localities” (*zizhi qishen, zizhi qixiang* 自治其身，自治其鄉) and manage school reform, water control, commerce, agriculture, industry and security.³ Yet the idea of local self-government did not get popularized until 1902, when Kang Youwei published his important treatise “On Citizen Self-Government” (*gongmin zizhi* 公民自治).⁴ Kang proposed a multilevel deliberative assembly system from county administration and above. By participating in these self-government bodies, people could advance their learning and practice their political skills. Besides, local energies could be fully released for modernizing tasks and building the nation. Therefore local self-government, from Kang’s perspective, was an indispensable preparation for the establishment of a constitutional government in China.

Partly as a result of this, local self-government became a popular topic and catchword among constitutionalists between 1902 and 1911. A considerable body of literature on the topic appeared in various newspapers and journals. This popularity, directly and indirectly, facilitated its path towards state policy.

Local governance, especially below the district level, had been a major concern for the Qing government. To better govern local society, the Qing rulers followed previous practices of establishing decimal hierarchies, promoted lineages and delegated some power to the local gentry. The problem was that these efforts

² According to Kuhn (1975, pp. 270-272), Huang probably became acquainted with the term *zizhi* through his study of Yamagata Aritomo, the founder of the Japanese local self-government system who was influenced by German borrowing constitutional thoughts.

³ Huang Zunxian’s first speech at the Southern Study Society was reprinted in Liang Qichao’s *Wuxu zhengbian ji*, pp. 138-141.

⁴ Kang Youwei’s “*gongmin zizhi*” has three parts, they occur serially in *Xinmin congbao*. Later the complete version of this article was compiled in *Kang Nanhai guanzhi yi*, pp. 103-130.

sometimes did not work: the decimal systems were generally weak; lineage headmen and local gentry were constantly struggling with double commitments towards community and the state, they sometimes preferred the former (and their own interest) over the latter.⁵ In this context, the strongly advocated local self-government was adopted by the Qing government to further solve this problem.

In 1908, the Qing government released its constitutional program and included local self-government as part of the preparatory schedule. The schedule suggests that every district (*xian* 縣), municipality (*cheng* 城), market town (*zhen* 鎮), and township (*xiang* 鄉) should establish local self-government bodies by 1913 and 1914. One year later there followed specific regulations for the establishment of self-government on district and sub-district levels. According to the 1909 decree, local self-government was supplementary institutions to official government (*guan zhi* 官治) and should limit its role to managing local public welfare, for example, education, sanitation, road construction, promotion of agriculture, commerce and industry, public relief and so on. To better perform these tasks, each district and market town should establish its own council (*yishi hui* 議事會) and board of directors (*dongshi hui* 董事會) and the township level should also set up councils (*xiangdong* 鄉董) and deputies (*xiangzuo* 鄉佐).⁶

Like other New Policies projects, the 1909 self-government decree was in large part based on the pioneering Tianjin model initiated by Yuan Shikai. In August 1906, Yuan Shikai, the Zhili governor-general, established a self-government bureau in Tianjin. The bureau then drafted regulations for a deliberative assembly (*yishi hui*) and executive council (*dongshi hui*) on a hierarchy of levels.⁷ In 1907, a few months before Yuan left Tianjin for Beijing, the self-government bureau conducted its election.⁸

The mainly supplementary functions of the self-government organs as outlined by the Qing 1909 decree were different in nature from the mobilizational,

⁵ Kuhn, 1975, p. 259.

⁶ The detailed decree on local self-government could be found in this website: <http://dgggh.dg.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/dgggh/s32942/201512/987421.htm>

⁷ Thompson, 1988, p. 207.

⁸ MacKinnon, 1980, p. 179.

energy-releasing roles proposed by Kang Youwei and others. From the very beginning, the local self-government movement was designed to strengthen official control of local elites, and thus local society. So it was not strange that after realizing the discrepancy between intentions and outcomes, the Yuan Shikai government abolished the local self-government policy throughout the country in 1914. Although later it was occasionally picked up by Chinese governments in the twentieth century, it failed to develop further in Chinese society.

Due to its short time period (from 1909 to 1914), the late Qing local self-government movement has sometimes been overlooked and underestimated by scholars of modern Chinese history. Scholars who do research the local self-government movement usually tend to evaluate the local self-government movement from the perspective of the state, for example, whether the state succeeded or failed in controlling local elite through self-government bodies. But this is merely one side of the picture. For local society where state policies were actually practiced, the local self-government movement had more complicated meanings. Furthermore, because local society is not a vacuum, the movement was influenced by previous locality-related governmental practices and institutional changes. Once implemented it would also become part of the existing situations and then influence the development of local governance.

This paper examines the implementation of the late Qing local self-government movement in one prefecture and its relations with previous public management practices in detail, hoping to facilitate our understanding of the institutional changes of late Qing local society and the way local elites organized themselves. Local self-government, as part of the topic of local governance, is still relevant in today's Chinese society.

2. Literature review

The late Qing local self-government movement has attracted the attention of both Chinese and Western scholars. A large part of the literature has focused on its roots. The debate revolves around the question of whether the concept of local

self-government was a development and resonance of Chinese traditional political theory, or whether it was more influenced by Western political ideas. Most mainland Chinese scholars tend to emphasize the importance of the latter and draw a clear line between the two political ideas. Ma Xiaoquan argues that the late Qing local self-government movement was orientated toward modern capitalist democracy and thus was not the natural result of traditional Chinese political culture.⁹ Shen Huaiyu thinks that although some ancient Chinese local institutions implied autonomy, the idea of local self-government was very weak in China. Local self-government as a political term, therefore, was mainly western-imported. Shen's argument is shared by Chinese scholars like Wu Guilong.¹⁰

Foreign scholars, especially Min Tu-ki and Philip A. Kuhn, have also contributed to this topic. However, for Min and Kuhn (especially the former), the question whether the root of local self-government movement lay in traditional Chinese political thoughts or Western theories would generate few insights because most of the advocates of local self-government movement referred to both in their proposals. Instead, the real question should be whether local self-government theory can be deduced from China's own political traditions. This has been refuted by many mainland Chinese scholars as we have seen above. However, for Min and Kuhn, the answer is yes.

Translated into English and published in 1989, Min Tu-ki's *National Polity and Local Power: the Transformation of Late Imperial China* was finished before 1970. Min argues that there was an important resonance between the traditional *fengjian* system¹¹ and the program for local self-government in the last decade of the Qing and the latter grew directly out of the former. After comparing the arguments of *fengjian* advocates with those of later reformists such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, Min concludes that traditional *fengjian* system ideas facilitated the adoption of Western theories and paved the way for the rapid spread of Western theories like parliament

⁹ Ma Xiaoquan, 2000.

¹⁰ Wu Guilong, 2000.

¹¹ The *fengjian* system refers to feudal decentralization of authority. It was generally used together with *junxian* system which emphasizes bureaucratic centralization. For more information, see Min, 1989, pp. 89-112.

and local self-government in China.¹² Min then raises an important question: how did traditional debates about *fengjian* influence the constitutional programs of reform (before and after the 1898 Reform Movement) in the direction of local self-government, leading finally to the establishment of the provincial assemblies.¹³ This question is important because it points to the multi-leveled characteristic of Chinese local society and self-governance. Provincial assemblies, together with county and village level assemblies, constitute a major part of what we call local self-government. These local self-government institutions, according to reformist scholars, are the basis of and indispensable preparation for a constitutional government. Min's answer to this question is that the traditional debates about *fengjian* influenced major reformist scholars who regarded local self-government as an important means to achieve a constitutional government.

The process may have been a little more complicated than that, as Kuhn suggests in his famous article on local self-government in 1975. His answer to Min's question can be summarized as follows: the *fengjian* ideas and modern mobilization theory share the same psychological assumption, that is, "men can be induced to fuse their own particular interests with the general collective interest if only they are given a greater stake in running their own community affairs"; the *fengjian* ideas were therefore used by scholars like Kang Youwei as an "important transitional vehicle" in the development of mobilization ideas in modern Chinese history; and during that time an effective way to achieve popular mobilization and prepare for a constitutional government was local self-government.¹⁴

Here Kuhn reveals an important new element – mobilization – that reformist scholars like Huang Zunxian and Kang Youwei had introduced in their discussion and advocacy of local self-government. "Mobilization", for Kuhn, means both new techniques to enlist local political energy for a modern nation and the public responses these techniques stimulate.¹⁵ If for traditional *fengjian* system advocates,

¹² Min, 1989, p. 129, p. 95, p. 97.

¹³ Min, 1989, p. 113.

¹⁴ Kuhn, 1975, p. 269.

¹⁵ Kuhn, 1975, p. 269.

the question was to find out a solution to maintaining social and economic stability, then for late Qing reformist scholars the urgent tasks were to promote economic growth and national power and to build up a strong nationhood. Therefore, local energies needed to be stimulated, mobilized, and enlisted in national programs. This is clearly shown in the above-mentioned Huang Zunxian's appeal to the Hunan local elite to perform not only traditional tasks of water control and public security, but also the promotion of commerce, agriculture and industry. Kang Youwei's 1902 treatise "On Citizen Self-Government" further indicated this "thoroughly modern awareness of the necessity of popular mobilization for national survival".¹⁶

Another hotly discussed topic among scholars on the late Qing local self-government movement is its relations with the trend of power devolution from officials to local elites since post-Taiping years: whether the local self-government movement represented the devolution of power, or whether the local self-government movement was a new sort of institutional system in local society. This question is based on the generally accepted opinion, stated by Kuhn, that local elite gradually expanded their influence during the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion,¹⁷ although the extent of elite independence from various official power structures is hotly debated. The answer to this question is not simply yes or no. It is more about the discrepancy between intention and implementation. Most scholars agree that by launching the local self-government movement, the Qing government aimed at bridling the local elites and strengthening its control of local society. It is also admitted that this effort eventually failed and the cleavage between the gentry and the Qing government deepened. Problems developed regarding the actual implementation of the local self-government movement, which had much to do with the social nature of its practitioners. What social groups were they from? What were their relations with the officials on the one hand, and the gentry-managers during post-Taiping reconstruction decades on the other hand?

¹⁶ Kuhn, 1975, p. 272.

¹⁷ Kuhn, 1970.

Few Chinese scholars have carefully researched the actual practitioners of the local self-government. Their focus was on the people who advocated for local self-government, that is, revolutionaries, constitutionalists, and enlightened gentry and officials.¹⁸ In his research on Zhang Jian, Zhang Kaiyuan spends a whole chapter on local self-government in Nantong, but he does not include the activities of any other lower practitioners.¹⁹ More detailed researches on the practitioners come from western scholars. Most scholars have agreed that there are regional differences. But their approaches are sometimes similar. Some introduce a distinction between the upper elite and the lower elite into the bureaucrat-elite controversy around local self-government institutions. For example, Ichiko Chūzō believes the lower elite monopolized all the important posts of local self-government institutions. For those lower gentry who cared only about their status and interest, the local self-government institutions were the main platform for them to preserve their positions. The New Policies facilitated more control over local society by both the socially conservative lower gentry and officials. Therefore, the result was a local dynastic cycle pattern of autonomous oligarchies.²⁰

Kuhn further points out that the lower elite also dominated the gentry-managers apparatus in the late nineteenth century, and that the local assemblies of the self-government system represented another step in this same direction. These lower elites were the target of both the local self-government movement and reform advocates like Kang Youwei, who represented the benefits of the upper elite. Their dominance in the local self-government institutions thus indicated their success and the Qing government's failure, or to put in another way, the failure of the urban to regulate the rural. The negative influences of the lower elite extended into the Republic, when they formed the source of the infamous "local bullies and evil gentry" (*tuhao lieshen* 土豪劣紳).²¹

This kind of upper-lower elite approach has been challenged by Joseph Esherick

¹⁸ An example is Ma Xiaoquan's 2000 book on the late Qing local self-government movement.

¹⁹ Zhang Kaiyuan, 1986.

²⁰ Ichiko Chūzō, 1968.

²¹ Kuhn, 1975, p. 278, p. 268, p. 275, p. 281.

in his work on the 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei where he coined a new term – “urban reformist elite” (or “new elite”) to replace the distinction between “upper” and “lower” gentry. After carefully studying the degrees and official status of provincial assemblymen from Hunan and Hubei, Esherick finds out that examination degrees tell us little or nothing about the socio-economic class of an individual. What mattered more was their urban residence. According to Esherick, this “urban reformist elite” group emerged in the early twentieth century. They were “urban” in that they gradually detached from the affairs of the countryside, and their “reformist” characteristic can be seen in their concern for local self-government. Besides, the urban reformist elite were different from the previous Tongzhi elite with their concern with modern industry and the New Army instead of agriculture and the rural militia. These urban reformist elite were vital in late Qing politics because on the one hand they dominated the provincial assemblies; on the other hand they trained “subordinate reformist elites” for smaller places throughout the province. This second level of elite dominated the local self-government institutions, which represented the continuity between traditional gentry institutions and reform institutions. The problem was that the gentry of the self-government associations did not perform their task dutifully. This aroused criticism from urban reformers, which gradually alienated themselves from local self-government practitioners. Therefore, there emerged a bifurcation of the elite: on the rural side, there were irresponsible subordinate local self-government elite; on the urban side, reformist elite sought to further their autonomy and political interests through provincial assemblies, while they simultaneously identified themselves with the interests of the nation and promoted modern industry.²²

Stephen MacKinnon, in his studies of the New Policies in Zhili province, argues that in Zhili there did not emerge new urban reformist elite or urban/rural splits, like in Hunan and Hubei. The overall implementation of the new policy was successful in Tianjin, and there were few differences between rural areas and urban areas. This success could be attributed to both district magistrates and local elites. MacKinnon tends to view the local elite as a whole and emphasizes their cooperation

²² Esherick, 1976, p. 66, p. 68, p. 110.

with—instead of opposition to—the district magistrates. In fact, there emerged a select new group of elites who were “directly tied to the *xian* (district) magistrates”. Their newness resides in their difference from the local elites who built up informal power structures since the Taiping and Nian Rebellions. Therefore the New Policies forged a symbiotic relationship between the state and the local power structures.²³

To some extent, the approaches of Kuhn, Ichiko, Esherick and MacKinnon are similar. They all discuss the implementation of the local self-government movement from the perspective of how elite structures—whether it was based upon upper-lower difference or urban-rural difference—influenced the implementation of state ambitions. But this is merely one side of the picture, on the other side there is also social mobilization. This is what Keith Schoppa and Mary Backus Rankin focus on when they talk about elite and political transformation. Their focus on social mobilizations also introduces a different categorization of the elites.

Schoppa, in his studies of Zhejiang province, argues that for elites the first three decades of the twentieth century were not merely a period of failed state goals, but rather a time of “substantial political transformation and development”. The local self-government bodies, together with political associations and professional associations like the chambers of commerce and the agricultural associations, were a major platform for these elites. Thus the local self-government movement represented the long-term trend from official to private in the performance of public functions in China. Regarding to elite structures, Schoppa first divides Zhejiang into four parts - inner core, outer-core, inner-periphery, and outer-periphery - and discusses elite formation there separately. He follows the distinction between upper and lower-degree holders, and points out that there is no available evidence that either conclusively supports or disproves Ichiko Chūzō’s assertion that lower elites virtually monopolized important self-government posts. The actual career basis of the upper and lower elite had much to do with the level of economic development of an elite’s native place. In the inner core, highly qualified elites tended to pursue their career beyond their native place. For those who stayed in their native place, local self-government was simply

²³ MacKinnon, 1980, p. 178, p. 151.

one institution among many to exert influence, so many of them chose not to participate in these bodies. Thus, the self-government elites “without recorded social or other functional credentials” sometimes constituted a new group. In the outer zones, in comparison, more degree-holders – both upper and lower — served as self-government elites. Based on these findings, Schoppa refutes the dubious distinction of the lower elite as the major source of *tuhao lieshen*.²⁴

Similar to Schoppa, Rankin analyzes the New Policies in Zhejiang mainly from the perspective of social mobilization. Rankin puts much emphasis on the continuity and consistency of elite activism between post-Taiping reconstruction years and the New Policies decade. Social relief and schools were the major areas for these elite to exert influence. With the implementation of the New Policies, more and more new institutions were established. This partly changed the local structure of organization and power. But generally speaking the New Policies institutions were dominated by the same “broad segment of the elite involved in public affairs” who worked outside the bureaucracy long before the announcement of state regulations. Rankin tends to view these elite as a whole group without distinctions of upper and lower or urban and rural. There was a considerable degree of mobility among the reformist managers of various institutions. As such, differing with many other scholars, Rankin depicts a rather positive image of the elites in Zhejiang.²⁵

By now we have seen two different perspectives to evaluate the significance of local self-government in late Qing: state strengthening versus social mobilization. Due to regional differences, the elites were depicted as either self-interest-driven conflicting groups or responsible autonomous public affair activists. In both approaches, peasant uprisings were overlooked and deemed insignificant.

Regarding the structure of the elite as a group, MacKinnon tends to view the local elite as a whole group which was different from previous post-rebellion elites. Kuhn’s upper and lower elite correspond to urban and rural elite respectively. His argument of the relations between the two can be illustrated as two parallel lines: there was little

²⁴ Schoppa, 1982, p. 5, p. 54, p. 55.

²⁵ Rankin, 1986, p. 229, p. 206.

regular communication, let alone upward and downward mobility between the two clearly-defined groups. Esherick's interpretation can instead be visualized as two concentric circles, where the internal circle represents urban reformers and the external circle represents subordinate gentry in the local self-government institutions. The former had certain control over the latter and there was regular communication between the two groups. Schoppa focuses on the influence of core-peripheral differences on local elites and their activities. Rankin emphasizes the long-established structures and public management activism of the Zhejiang elite.

This paper furthers Schoppa and Rankin's focus on associations and proposes an organizational approach to research into the implementation of local self-government in Jiaying and local elites' participation in it. I also include peasant uprisings in the whole picture. By doing this, I hope to integrate state penetration and social mobilization and present a multi-leveled picture of the local self-government movement, from villages to districts and then the province.

Jiaying is a prefecture in the northern part of Zhejiang province, bordering Hangzhou to the Southwest, Huzhou to the West, Shanghai to the northeast, and the province of Jiangsu to the north. It is necessary to first mention that Jiaying was the name of both a prefecture and a district. Jiaying belongs to the "inner-core" area as defined by Schoppa²⁶; most of its districts are highly commercialized. There were few core-periphery differences within Jiaying prefecture, which contributed to frequent interaction among different districts. Many lineages had their family branches scattered across different districts. Therefore, for my research on local power structures, I will focus on Jiaying prefecture as a whole. Closely related to its economic prosperity were its success in producing degree holders and the presence of many prestigious families, which equipped Jiaying with a strong elite basis. It suffered heavily in population and property during the Taiping Rebellion. Jiaying elite actively participated in the reconstruction work and their activism. This enthusiasm toward public affairs continued in the twentieth century. A public benefit bureau (*gongyi hui* 公益會) was established in Jiaying in 1906, considered by some scholars

²⁶ Schoppa, 1982, p. 18.

as an earlier form of local self-government.²⁷ After the end of the Qing dynasty, the Nationalist government also launched some local self-government practices in Jiaxing.

3. Research questions and concepts

My major research question is: how the local power of Jiaxing elites was influenced by the late Qing local self-government movement. To answer this question, I will study the implementation of the movement in Jiaxing and the relations between the movement and post-Taiping reconstruction.

An important part of my research on the local self-government movement in Jiaxing is its practitioners, people who dominate local society. They were mainly referred to as “gentry”, “merchants”, “gentry-merchants” and sometimes “gentry-managers”. For my purpose of researching local power structure, neither is quite successful in relating to status or power. “Gentry” was always associated with education and degrees, but degrees did not necessarily lead to status. So were wealthy merchants. “Gentry-managers” had some status and power, but they were mostly referred to during the post-Taiping Reconstruction period (see chapter three). Therefore, in this paper I will use the functional term “local elites” instead, following Joseph W. Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin’s definition: “any individuals or families that exercised dominance within a local arena”.²⁸ By “local” I mean administrative levels below the prefecture: districts, market towns, and villages.

4. Chapters

In the current chapter, I have introduced the relevance of late Qing local self-government in Chinese society and the ideas and practices of local self-government movement. Then I conduct a literature review of the late Qing local self-government movement. Chapter two will deal with the socioeconomic backgrounds of Jiaxing, its scholarship, prestigious families, economic development,

²⁷ Rankin, 1986, p. 209; Liang, 1999, p. 158.

²⁸ Esherick and Rankin, 1990, p. 10.

and situation during the Taiping Rebellion. The aftermath of the rebellion and the reconstruction work in Jiaying will be further researched in chapter three. The major part of this essay will be covered in chapter four where I look into the implementation of the late Qing local self-government movement in Jiaying from two perspectives: first the emergence of professional associations, their activities and their relations with the government, then the formal implementation of the local self-government institutions. In chapter five, I will focus on the peasant uprisings the New Policies incurred in Jiaying, participation in provincial politics by the Jiaying elite, especially the Zhejiang railway controversy, and finally the 1911 Revolution in Jiaying. In the last chapter, some tentative concluding remarks will be given.

5 Sources

For materials on the post-Taiping reconstruction in Jiaying, I will mainly use local gazetteers from both Jiaying prefecture and its seven districts. For the implementation of the New Policies, newspapers—especially *Shi bao* 時報, and *Shen bao* 申報—are the major sources. *Dongfang zazhi* 東方雜誌 will also be used.

Chapter 2: Socioeconomic Context of Local Self-government: Scholarship, Prestigious Families, Commercial Development, Industrial Modernization, the Taiping Rebellion and the Tan family

The local self-government movement was promoted by the Qing government on the national level with specific regulations, but its actual implementation was heavily influenced by the socioeconomic context of particular localities. Here I will sketch out a number of interlinking elements that constantly affected the power structure of Jiaxing in early twentieth century: the intellectual establishments and prestigious families, commercial developments, market towns and industrial modernization, and the Taiping Rebellion. To show how these factors linked with each other and influenced specific individuals, I will carry on a case study of the Jiaxing Tan family in the end of this chapter.

1. The Jiaxing scholarship and prestigious families

Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang, was the imperial capital of the Southern Song dynasty. This made Zhejiang part of the cultural center of China since then. The academic prominence of the southern half of the province gradually declined since late Yuan (1280-1368), but the wealthy districts of the north remained distinct throughout the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing for their scholarship and their number of the *jinshi* degree holders. Among them, Hangzhou produced the most *jinshi* among all prefectures in China, and Jiaxing, Huzhou, and Shaoxing were also among the top nine Chinese prefectures during the Qing.²⁹ Jiaxing was distinct in the number of upper-degree holders; during the Qing dynasty there were 503 *jinshi* degree holders who had their origin in Jiaxing.³⁰

Table 1: *Jinshi* Degree Holders from Jiaxing, Huzhou and Shaoxing during the Qing
1644-1905

²⁹ Chang, 1974, p. 123.

³⁰ There is no exact number of *jinshi* degree holders from Jiaxing during the Qing. Chen (2007, p. 20) indicates that there were 638 *jinshi* degree holders, while Xia (2001, p. 25) concludes that there were 503, which is very close to the number Rankin (1986: Appendix A) gives. Considering this, this paper will adopt the number 504.

Jiaxing

Native place	Jiaxing	Xiushui	Jiashan	Pinghu	Tongxiang	Haiyan	Shimen	Total
Number of <i>Jinshi</i>	86	82	85	74	65	78	33	503
Percent	17.1%	16.3%	16.9%	14.7%	12.9%	15.5%	6.6%	100%

Huzhou

Native place	Wucheng	Gui'an	Deqing	Changxing	Wukang	Anji	Xiaofeng	Total
Number of <i>Jinshi</i>	110	157	67	36	7	7	0	384
Percent	28.6%	40.9%	17.4%	9.3%	1.9%	1.9%	0	100%

Shaoxing

Native place	Shanyin	Guiji	Xiaoshan	Yuyao	Zhuji	Shangyu	Cheng	Xinchang	Total
Number of <i>Jinshi</i>	141	140	89	60	34	32	9	12	517
Percent	27.3%	27.1%	17.2%	11.6%	6.6%	6.2%	1.7%	2.3%	100%

Source: Rankin, 1986: Appendix A.

We can see from the above table that there is a noticeable evenness in the distribution of upper-degree holders in Jiaxing. Apart from Shimen County, the other six counties had very similar numbers of *jinshi* degree holders. Only 33 percent of *jinshi* came from two capital districts—Jiaxing and Xiushui. This is in clear contrast with the situation in other prefectures, where most *jinshi* came from districts where the chief administrative city was located. For example, in Huzhou and Shaoxing, which also belong to Schoppa's "inner-core" area, the number of degree holders was intensely concentrated in the administrative cities, resulting large core-periphery difference. In Huzhou almost 70 percent of *jinshi* came from the two districts sharing the prefectural capital. In Shaoxing, two counties out of eight produced more than half of the overall *jinshi* degree holders. These core-peripheral differences as revealed in the "inner-core" area were not obvious in Jiaxing. This might have much to do with the fact that most of the districts of Jiaxing were highly commercialized.³¹

³¹ Rankin, 1986, p. 46.

However, there was another kind of concentration in Jiaxing: most of the *jinshi* degree holders came from groups of closely related prestigious families. In the 1930s, Pan Guangdan carried out an extensive study on ninety-one prestigious families in Jiaxing. A quick glance at the findings reveals that the ninety-one prestigious families were very evenly distributed among the different districts. The numbers of prestigious families in the six out seven districts – Jiaxing, Xiushui, Haiyan, Jiashan, Pinghu, and Tongxiang—were very close. Only Shimen fell behind with only one prestigious family on record. This is in accordance with the even distribution of *jinshi* degree holders throughout the Jiaxing region.

Another characteristic of these Jiaxing prestigious families is their long duration. In Jiaxing, every lineage can last 8.3 generations, 210 years on average, if we say 25 years constitutes a generation. The longest one, the Qian family, lasted 21 generations and was the largest and longest lineage in Jiaxing. The Qian family had their ancestral base in Jiashan and was influential from the Zhengde reign (1506-1521) of the Ming Dynasty to the last years of the Qing regime. Besides, by the end of the Qing regime, there were at least 17 influential and active prestigious families in Jiaxing.³²

Both caused by and resulting in this kind of long lineage duration was that many *jinshi* degree holders came from the same prestigious families. There were several *jinshi* families in Jiaxing. For example, the Jiaxing Qian family was famous for producing twelve *jinshi* degree holders.

Table 2: Incomplete list of the *jinshi* families from Jiaxing during the Qing

Native place	Jiaxing		Jiashan		Pinghu		Haiyan	
Family	Qian	Jin	Yu	Cao	Lu	Zhang	Gu	Yu
Number	12	5	3	5	5	3	6	5

Source: Chen, 2007: 20-23; also see “Ming Qing liangdai Jiaxing fu jinshi mingdan” (A list of the jinshi degree holders from Jiaxing in Ming and Qing dynasty), in *Jiaxing lidai beike ji*, pp. 191-230.

Pan, after carefully researching the lineage genealogy and local gazetteers, constructed a lineage network of the Jiaxing prestigious families (嘉興望族血緣網絡

³² See Pan, 1991, table of the duration of Jiaxing prestigious families.

圖). If we can say that Jiaxing is a cradle of talents, then this kinship network is exactly where the cradle is located and rests upon. According to Pan, among the nine hundred and sixty *weike* (魏科) figures during the Qing dynasty, forty were from Jiaxing area. And twenty-seven in these forty *weike* people were part of this kinship network, amounting to 67.5 percent.³³

Prestigious families in Jiaxing were famous not only for their success in the imperial examinations, but also for their emphasis on lineage education. For a long period in imperial China, education was conducted mainly at the household level. This kind of *zuxue* (族學 lineage academies), also called *yixue* (義學 charitable schools), was the common practice for prestigious families to educate their children. The funding for these lineage academies was in a large part derived from the family *yitian* (義田 charitable land). Jiaxing had a long tradition in establishing these lineage academies. Generally speaking, the elders in a prestigious family would provide much support to cultivate the family young men of the family, including: organizing the young men together in a lineage academy, giving financial support for imperial examination candidates; some degree holders also acted as instructors themselves.³⁴ Prestigious families' enthusiasm towards lineage education sometimes extended beyond their families members to include other young men in the locality. Some wealthy prestigious families actively participated in establishing local academies and promoting local education. This tendency emerged in the post-Taiping reconstruction period and continued in the last several years of the Qing.

The prestigious families and their success in the metropolitan examination produced many officials and equipped Jiaxing with a strong gentry group. The major source of their wealth was land. Nonetheless, commercial wealth became more and more important, especially after 1905 when the civil examination was abolished. As I

³³ Pan, 1991, p. 98; *Weike* (魏科) refers to the five figures who ranked topmost in Chinese imperial examination system. It includes *huiyuan* (會元, literally means “top conference examinee”, the *gongshi* who ranked first in national exam), *zhuangyuan* (狀元, literally means “top thesis author”, the *jinshi* who ranked first overall nationwide), *bangyan* (榜眼, literally means “eyes positioned alongside”, the *jinshi* who ranked second overall just below *zhuangyuan*), *tanhua* (探花, literally means “flower snatcher”, the *jinshi* ranked third overall), and *chuanlu* (傳臚, literally means “being called upon and sung”, the *jinshi* ranked first in the second rank).

³⁴ Chen, 2007.

mentioned above, by the end of the Qing regime, there were at least 17 influential and active prestigious families in Jiaxing. The Tan family even stretched to the 1930s.³⁵ Most of them retained their status and wealth through commercial activities. I will elaborate on this later in my case study of the Tan family.

2. Commercial development, market towns and industrial modernization

Like its wealthy northern Zhejiang and southern Jiangsu counterparts, Jiaxing was a place with strong commercial tradition. Engaging in business was common if not encouraged. This also applied to prestigious families. The lineage academy of the Jiaxing Yao family encouraged its students with little indication of talent in learning to convert to practicing business when they reached the age of fifteen or sixteen.³⁶ There were many wealthy market towns in Jiaxing, which was an important aspect of the urban development in Jiaxing since early Ming and late Qing. These market towns generally had their specialization and professional product. For example, Puyuan town and Wang Jiangjing town had a long history of producing silkworm and silk, Chenzhuang town was famous for bamboo and wood, while Lu town and Qianjia yao town specialized in smelting iron and producing pottery. Besides, there are many lakes in Jiaxing, which made the transportation between different districts and broader regions like Shanghai very convenient. Many market towns had steady trade relations with Shanghai. Storekeepers in Jiaxing often sold agricultural products and fish to Shanghai and at the same time purchased goods like cloth and silk from there.³⁷

Among commercial activities in Jiaxing, silk was the most popular one. Jiangnan, where Jiaxing belongs to, had been a major commercial silk-producing area since the Ming dynasty. Compared with traditional grain cultivation, breeding silkworm was “at least three times more lucrative” yet cost less labor and investment in the early Qing Jiaxing.³⁸ The circulation process was generally like this: peasant households sold self-made raw silk to urban weaving households; urban weaving households wove the

³⁵ Pan, 1991, p. 74.

³⁶ Chang Jianhua, *Zongzu zhi*, 1998, pp. 401-402.

³⁷ See *Jiaxing new gazetteer*, 1929, p. 87 Shangmugang town; p. 89 Wangdian town; p. 95 Qizhenshi town; p. 96 Tanghui town; p. 109 Puyuan town; p. 113 Zhongdi town.

³⁸ Liu, 1987, p. 9.

raw silk; merchants then collected the woven silk and sold them to customers.³⁹ During this process, collection centers emerged and became important market towns. Some market towns became very wealthy and important and had trade relations with many places of the country. For example, Puyuan Town had merchants from more than fourteen provinces and many shop-keepers there were extremely wealthy.⁴⁰ This prosperity was depressed in the 1860s when the Taiping Rebellion brought a huge loss of labor force and massive destruction to peasant plantations and urban weaving establishments. Silk production was revived in the 1870s after the rebellion and began to orient itself to the more profitable foreign trade. This was mainly achieved through trade with the international port Shanghai.⁴¹

Among the market towns in Jiaxing, the above-mentioned Puyuan town provides an excellent example of the development of professional silk market towns.⁴² During the Southern Song dynasty, Puyuan was still a random market. With the emergence of silk weaving handicraft, it became a market town in Yuan dynasty. And by the first year of the Wanli reign (1573-1620), Puyuan had become a town with more than ten thousand households and a widely known specialization in producing *puchou* 濮綢 (literally meaning ‘silk from Puyuan town’). Business in Puyuan was heavily diminished during the Taiping Rebellion, but it quickly revived in the 1870s and became even more prosperous.

In the late nineteenth century, some factories using Western techniques and machines began to emerge in the market towns of Zhejiang province. However, as Li Guoqi points out in his extensive research on industrial modernization in Zhejiang, the development of Zhejiang’s modern industry in the early twentieth century failed to match its success in scholarship and commerce. During that time, Zhejiang remained one of the leading provinces in China, yet because of its lack of large coal or iron deposits, it fell behind in establishing heavy and military industry. And because of its close geographical and commercial relations with Shanghai, it had neither advantage

³⁹ Chen, 1991, pp. 95-96.

⁴⁰ See *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, volume 34 Custom.

⁴¹ Rankin, 1986, p. 63.

⁴² The following information about the Puyuan Town was taken from *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, volume 34 Custom and Liu, 1987.

nor ambition in further developing large silk filatures and shipping companies. As a result, changes in production techniques were often achieved through modifying handicraft technology.⁴³

Partly because of its disadvantage in developing heavy and military industry, there was “relatively little government investment” in Zhejiang.⁴⁴ Most of the modern livelihood industries were merchant-managed, not government-managed.⁴⁵ This provincial situation also applied to Jiaxing prefecture. Below is a table of the industries and businesses in Jiaxing district in the twentieth century.

Table 3: Industries and business in Jiaxing district in 1929

Place	Industry	Business	Description
Jiaxing County	/	668 shops	
Wangdian Town	Rice mill; Lighting; Manufacturing	284 shops	Imported sugar and foreign products from Shanghai
Zhongdai Town	Weaving; sock-making; Bamboo products; Wood products	268 shops	Influenced by foreign cloth, weaving industry declined rapidly.
Xincheng Town	Electric lighting; Rice mill; Irrigation machine; oil-pressing	81 “big” shops 315 “small” shops	Annual turnovers of “big” shops range from 2000 to 1,066,750
Xinhuang Town	Electric lighting; Rice mill; Weaving; Sock-making	52 “big” shops 174 “small” shops	Annual turnovers of “big” shops range from 2000 to 960,500
Xinfeng Town	Rice mill; weaving; Bamboo products; Electric company	34 “big” shops 116 “small” shops	Annual turnovers of “big” shops range from 1000 to 100,000
Puyuan Town	Electric lighting; Rice mill; Weaving; paper mill	64 “important” shops	“Important” shops vary from foreign product shops to a coffin shop.

Source: *Jiaxing new gazetteer* (Jiaxing district, p. 49; market towns, pp.58-86), 1929. The gazetteer listed 33 market towns. Because different investigators had conducted the survey and presented the information in different ways, so there was no constant layout and the extent of documentation was different. It’s also unclear how the investigator defines “big shops”, “small shops” and “important” shops.

We can see from the above table that while modern industries like electric lighting

⁴³ Li Guoqi, 1982, p. 335, p. 298, p. 308, p. 310.

⁴⁴ Rankin, 1986, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Li Guoqi, 1982, p. 299.

emerged, traditional industries like rice mills, weaving, bamboo and wood were still important. Machine-powered enterprises were mainly consumer-oriented, producing goods like electricity, paper, socks, containers, and oil and meeting the demands of the daily life of city dwellers. So like many other Chinese cities, a large part of the merchants in Jiaying consisted of urban shopkeepers. They formed the majority of the city residents and sometimes dominated collective actions.⁴⁶ Besides, due to competition from foreign cloth, the silk industry in Jiaying gradually declined.

3. The Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864) in Jiaying

Before the arrival of foreign competition, commercial activities within Jiaying experienced a heavy blow during the Taiping Rebellion period. Zhejiang province was a major battlefield for the Taiping army and the Qing army during that time. A vast number of Zhejiang people died from starvation and disease. Jiaying, together with Huzhou and Hangzhou, suffered the most.

This was first manifested in the population loss. The recorded population declines of Jiaying districts were as high as 58 to 74 percent (see Table 4). Both cities and countryside were heavily affected; as we can see the households in the district towns of Pinghu and Haiyan were halved after the rebellion. However, the time needed to recover differed from district to district, and there were also differences between cities and market towns. Some districts recovered quite quickly. By 1888, the population of Jiashan had returned to 226,572. However, the effects of depopulation effect lasted quite long in Xiushui, where the population in 1912 was still only 182,618. The field was barren, the city was sparsely populated, few gentry returned after the rebellion, and merchants migrated to other places.⁴⁷ In contrast, the above-mentioned Puyuan Town revived soon after the rebellion and became even more prosperous because of its silk industry and trade relations with Shanghai. A similar situation also occurred in the Qing Town in Tongxiang district.⁴⁸ This seems to indicate a new pattern of urbanization in Jiaying (and several other prefectures in Zhejiang) in the second half

⁴⁶ Sang, 1990.

⁴⁷ *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936.

⁴⁸ *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic), *shihuo zhi* 食貨志: renkou 人口.

of the nineteenth century. Many people moved from countryside; however, their destination was not district cities but market towns. As we know, like many previous dynasties, the stretch of the Qing administrative structure rarely extended below the district level. Wealth and dense population placed these market towns in a quite special position during the post-Taiping reconstruction period and later local self-government years. We shall return to this later.

Table 4 Population changes in Jiaxing before and after the Taiping Rebellion

District	Early Qing	Daoguang	Tongzhi	Late Qing	District town household
Jiaxing	153,734 (1616)	619,577 (1800)	158,714 (1874)	/	1569 (1880)
Xiushui	100,190 (1616)	502,860 (1800)	133,973 (1874)	182,618 (1912)	1091 (1880)
Jiashan	110,878 (1616)	277,013 (1800)	96,478 (1874)	226,572 (1888)	776 (1880)
Haiyan	48,659 (1616)	523,461 (1800)	180,849 (1874)	/	1191 (original) 409 (1880)
Pinghu	36,919 (1616)	304,306 (1800)	109,390 (1874)	/	607 (original) 325 (1880)
Shimen	66,447 (1616)	379,422 (1800)	158,376 (1874)	196,801 (1911)	398 (1880)
Tongxiang	49,282 (1616)	327,125 (1800)	114,354 (1874)	/	365 (1880)
Total	566,109 (1616)	2,933,764 (1800)	952,134 (1874)	/	/

Sources: Jiaxing Prefecture Gazetteer and district gazetteers, population section.

Death was not the only factor contributing to the population loss. Many wealthy people escaped to Shanghai for safety and survived. In Shanghai, they developed new contacts and started new businesses. Some stayed there after the rebellion. But those who returned to Jiaxing brought with them huge wealth and broader regional commercial contacts.

Accompanying this depopulation was property damage. Almost all of the district gazetteers had records of destroyed public buildings (temples, schools, bridges, and so on), urban residences and fields.⁴⁹ This presented urgent tasks of social relief and reconstruction which greatly influenced the power relations between merchants, gentry, and local officials. I will elaborate on this in the next chapter.

⁴⁹ This kind of information repeatedly appears in the *jianzhi* 建置 (establishments) part of Jiaxing's gazetteer.

4. The Tan family⁵⁰

The rise and fall of the Tan family presents a vivid picture of how the above socioeconomic factors intermingled and shaped local societies, the interchanged relations between different sources of wealth, the linkages between gentry and merchant, and their activism in local education.

The Tan family in Jiaxing emerged during the mid-Ming. Soon in its sixth generation, it diverged into two parts—Tan Kexian and Tan Kejiao. The Kexian lineage gained more prominence in the late Ming and early Qing with its success in the civil examinations, while the Kejiao lineage gradually declined with its bad luck in practicing business. However, after the successful official career of Tan Changyan and Tan Zhenmo (the Kexian lineage), the whole Tan family declined in the mid-Qing. The turning point for the Tan family occurred in the fifteenth generation. The Kejiao lineage, after generations of failure in managing business, accumulated much wealth after Tan Zhisong started up a garment business in Jiaxing. Relying on Jiaxing's well-developed silk industry, the Tan family's garment business grew very quickly and expanded to other cities such as Suzhou. Tan Zhisong's five sons, among whom Tan Guangxi was the most capable one, all followed their father and participated in the family garment business.

During the Taiping Rebellion, like many other prestigious families in Jiaxing, the Tan family escaped to Shanghai for safety. As an experienced merchant, Tan Guangxi detected business opportunity in collecting antiques and garments and opened a pawnshop in Hankou with his four brothers. By buying cheap and selling dear, they earned a substantial amount of money. After the rebellion, a part of the Tan family returned Jiaxing, while others remained in Hankou and Shanghai and continued their business. The Jiaxing branch of the Tan family then built a grand ancestral hall in the city and conducted lineage education there.

Although Tan Guangxi regained family status and honor through commercial activities, he pitted himself for not being able to receive solid education and encouraged his sons to pursue a scholar career. His endeavors bore fruit. Guangxi's

⁵⁰ The following materials about the Jiaxing Tan family mainly come from Hua (1996) and Pan (1991).

eldest son Tan Risen (1862-1918) became a *juren* in Jiawu year of the Guangxu reign and acted as Qing ambassador in European countries. Later, Tan Risen went to Japan to further his study. He returned to Jiaxing in 1905 and actively participated in local education and new learning since then. In 1906, under Tan Risen's instruction, the Tan academy began to accept students outside their family and gradually changed their lineage academy into a private primary school. During that time, this was one of the largest primary schools in Jiaxing. With his double education background, Tan Risen was also selected to be the principal of the Jiaxing prefecture middle school during 1906 and 1909. This middle school was originally the Jiaxing Prefecture Academy and was renamed after the abolition of the civil examination system in 1905. As an influential figure in Jiaxing, Tan Risen also involved himself in other public issues. For example, in 1908 he was elected as a member of the executive board of the Jia-Xiu foundling home.

Apart from Tan Risen, his two nephews (Tan Xinbing and Tan Xinjia) were also active promoters of new learning and contributed much to the modern education of Jiaxing. The former established Zongzheng academy and encouraged new learning as early as the 1898 reform, while the latter set up the Biyi preliminary school in 1904. Later during the New Policies era, Tan Xinjia was elected as Jiaxing district assemblyman.

In sum, both caused by and resulting in the existence of many prestigious families, Jiaxing was very successful in the civil examinations and had strong gentry base. These prestigious families were quite evenly distributed across different districts. In the long duration of their lineage, they developed multiple approaches to wealth and social status. Promoting local education was still the major channel. But more and more branches of the family converted to practicing business in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. At the same time, wealthy merchants who purchased scholar degrees gained new prominence. Through this “push and pull” effect, there emerged a new group—the gentry-merchants. The Taiping Rebellion destroyed many people's business, but it also provided new opportunities. Some

merchants started new businesses and became even more wealthy and influential. Together with the gentry, they took part in reconstruction and local management and became part of the local power structure. Besides, because of its economic structure, there were few core-peripheral differences in Jiaying. Most of the districts were highly commercialized. Like many other regions in Zhejiang, Jiaying had few modern industries and instead had a large amount of regular merchants. The participation of these merchants and gentry in post-Taiping reconstruction and local self-government constitutes my concern in the following chapters.

Chapter Three: Post-Taiping Reconstruction, Social Relief and the Compilation of Local Gazetteers in Jiaying

The Taiping rebellion caused heavy population loss and property destruction in Jiaying, which urged great pressure for reconstruction and social welfare. The major reconstruction activists came from local elites. They became so important and influential that it was commonly believed that the rebellion and its reconstruction work facilitated the devolution of power from officials to local elite members.⁵¹ But the extent of elite independence from bureaucracy has been much debated. Besides, modern scholars generally use local gazetteers as the primary source for studying the endeavors of reconstruction activists without paying enough attention to the fact that these reconstruction activists were usually also the people who compiled the gazetteers.

This chapter has two parts. Using local gazetteers as a primary source, I will first research the reconstruction bureaus, foundling homes, reconstruction activists and their motivations. Then I discuss what the gazetteer as a primary source tells us and does not tell.

1. Reconstruction bureaus

Generally speaking, the reconstruction work in Jiaying was directed by various levels of government. However, due to a lack of money and human resources on the government's side, the actual performers of the reconstruction tasks came from the society, especially gentry and merchants.

Local gazetteers compiled during this period have indicated the importance of local elite in the whole reconstruction process. Many gentry and merchants escaped to Shanghai for safety at the beginning of the rebellion. As soon as the rebellion was put down, they began to organize relief work for their native places. Shen Baoyue, a native of Tongxiang, quickly called upon other Tongxiang natives in Shanghai and collected a large amount of rice. He then returned to Tongxiang with the rice and

⁵¹ Kuhn, 1970; Schoppa, 1982; Rankin, 1986.

brought relief for the people there.⁵² Influential people who had been active outside Jiaxing also came back for the reconstruction work.

After a series of initial relief efforts, there emerged further need of reconstruction: promoting education and social welfare. Most of these reconstruction works in Jiaxing were conducted under the leadership of reconstruction bureaus and similar organizations. According to fragmentary gazetteers, there were at least four reconstruction bureaus in Jiaxing—one in Jiashan, one in Pinghu and two in Tongxiang, and these bureaus were mostly established and dominated by the gentry. The one who proposed the establishment of Tongxiang reconstruction bureaus was Yan Chen. He was a *jinsi* and Hanlin scholar, and he had spent almost twenty years in Beijing before returning to Tongxiang. In 1862 he retired from office and dedicated his life to education, literature, and local public management.⁵³ After the Taiping Rebellion, he immediately asked for a tax remission for Tongxiang district from Governor-General Zuo Zongtang.⁵⁴ Besides, Yan Chen wrote several letters to Zhejiang officials and went to Hangzhou in person to ask for formal permission of founding a relief and reconstruction bureau. To ensure success, Yan Chen listed sixteen regulations for the reconstruction bureaus, including matters regarding financial sources, composition of the executive board, and several entry and behavior requirements for the gentry managers involved:

1. The bureau is established to manage reconstruction, and all reconstruction works need to be organized together under its leadership. One bureau is in the Tongxiang district city, which concurrently manages Puyuan town and Tu town. One bureau is in the town of Qing, which also looks after Chen village and Lu town. Apart from these two, no reconstruction bureaus are to be established, no organizations are to be set up in the name of public offices.
2. Things like fund-raising and taxation must be reported to the prefect and magistrate and managed by them. To avoid suspect and slander, gentry managers (*shendong* 紳董) in the bureau must not assign [tax] in person.
3. Bureau expenditure should practice economy and thrift, and [it] particularly needs to caution against corruption. Therefore, [the bureau] definitely cannot have many employees, and the salaries cannot be meager. When there are a few employees, expenditures will naturally be reduced;

⁵² *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 7: *juanxu*, 13b.

⁵³ *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 6: 4a.

⁵⁴ *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4: *jianzhi zhi zhong*, 13a–14a.

when salaries are generous, corruption will naturally disappear.

4. The bureau should raise its public funds, and to avoid worries the funds should be managed by and stored in rich households. District funds should be handed to Cao Hongsheng, while Qing town funds should go to Xu Duanben. When public funds are occasionally not enough for some unforeseen expenditure, the programs should be suspended and wait for more money if the shortage is more than five or six hundred. If the shortage is merely two or three hundred the bureau could issue a loan voucher to large households and lend money [from them]. Once there are some incoming public funds, the loan should be paid back immediately.
5. The income and expenses of the bureau should be reported to the prefect (*daxian* 大憲) on a seasonal basis and be announced across the district.
6. If a person himself or his father, son, grandfather, grandson, or brother has records of fake position, management or education, he should never be allowed to participate in the bureau.
7. According to regulations, gentry members (*shenjin* 紳衿) are prohibited from involving themselves in lawsuits. If gentry managers (*shendong* 紳董) entrusted and interceded local officials for bureau issues, it would particularly cause suspicions of intending to threaten and fear of starting the road of bribery in the name of visiting. This was probably the origin of the bad reputation of bureau gentry (*jushen* 局紳). Here it is regulated that bureau gentry (*shendong* 紳董) should only be focused on local due public affairs and benevolent deeds and never interfere with district office litigations.
8. Degenerate bureau managers (*dongshi* 董事) who play tricks to mislead the public in the name of the bureau shall be banished immediately after the bureau gets wind of it.
9. To avoid fake and excess and to reduce expenditure, apart from one general gentry (*zongban shenshi* 總辦紳士), the bureau should only employ two board members (*dongshi* 董事), one secretary and one bookkeeper. Everyday meals should be limited to one table of dishes.
10. All benevolent deeds—whether existing ones or planned ones—shall be managed by the reconstruction bureau.
11. Reconstruction issues need a large sum of money, so undoubtedly it will be tough to manage [the issues] concurrently at one time. Distinctions and priorities should be made so that money can be raised bit by bit and [projects] can be managed one after another.
12. Apart from the salaries they deserve, gentry managers (*shendong* 紳董) should never gain any advantages. If local officials and commissioners have any needs or demands, (gentry managers) shall never conduct social interactions with them.
13. Last year the Tangbei area of our district was attacked by Hubei bandits, houses were burned and farm tools were also destroyed. Water wheels are very important among all the farm tools. So it is decided that the reconstruction bureau will raise money, purchase and manufacture hundreds of water wheels. During the farm work period, the bureau will rent these water wheels to peasants on credit and demand their return to the bureau after harvest.

14. The bureau shall send investigators to every township and interview people with virtues of loyalty, righteousness, moral integrity, and filial piety, recording their names and facts in a detailed list. These lists shall be submitted to the district for examination and be reported to the province bureau.
15. Among all the local temples, only the sacrificial ceremonies of existing Confucius temple and the city god temple are financed and maintained by our bureau. Other temples are not the bureau's business.
16. When performing their tasks, gentry managers (*shendong* 紳董) should never rely on minor officials of the government. Considering the fact that the construction of government offices could not carry on without the involvement of government minor officials, it is decided that the government should be in charge of the construction process to avoid involvement and restriction.

These strict regulations could help us understand the image that Yan Chen wanted to create for the reconstruction bureau. It should be a responsible, gentry-led organization, free from the interference of government underlings and negative misconduct. Provincial officials were very satisfied with Yan Chen's proposal and approved it immediately. They also ordered that the Tongxiang model should be promoted in other places. The result was the establishment of two reconstruction bureaus in Tongxiang: the Tongxiang district reconstruction bureau headed by Xiao Yibin and the Qing town reconstruction bureau headed by Shen Baoyue.⁵⁵

Little information can be found in the gazetteers regarding to the establishing process of the other two reconstruction bureaus, but the information of the bureau directors is quite clear. Biographies of these directors often list their activities and performance in the reconstruction bureaus. It seems that during that time managing reconstruction bureaus was considered to be an honorable career choice.

The reconstruction bureau was in charge of all reconstruction and social welfare projects, ranging from rebuilding bridges and prisons⁵⁶, interviewing righteous person, producing water wheels, to founding academies⁵⁷ and foundling homes. Some academies in Pinghu district city and two market towns grew directly out of the

⁵⁵ The sixteen regulations and replies from provincial officials could be found in *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4: *jianzhi zhi zhong*, *shan tang*, 13a – 15b.

⁵⁶ *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4: *jianzhi zhi zhong*, *shan tang*, 13a. *Reconstructed Jiashan district gazetteer*, 1892, 4: *qiao liang*; 5: *jianzhi zhi shang*, *gong shu*, 2b, 4a. *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 13: *qiao liang*, 16a.

⁵⁷ *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 24: *jiao yu*, 5b, 10a; *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4: *jianzhi zhong*, 6b.

reconstruction bureau. They also used the bureau buildings as classrooms. The Tongxiang reconstruction bureau later managed rice taxation.⁵⁸ Its influence on certain projects was reflected in the whole process, from planning, financing, to implementing and maintaining.

Establishing and operating these public projects required money. Like previous public institutions, the reconstruction bureaus had various financial sources: official treasuries, individual or community donations, business taxes and so on. Business taxes on rice, houses, tea, salt and silk business were probably the most stable source of money as suggested many times in the local gazetteers.⁵⁹ Merchant contribution outside Jiaxing was also an important source. Pinghu silk merchants in Shanghai annually contributed 1.8 copper cash from the sale of each *bao* unit of silk to welfare in their home district.⁶⁰

There are few records regarding to the later development of the reconstruction bureaus. Considering their temporary nature, it is understandable that many bureaus were eventually phased out or converted to other social welfare agencies. In the *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer* constructed in the fifth year of the Guangxu reign, reconstruction bureaus were rarely mentioned. Instead, the foundling homes stood out as the major reconstruction institutions.

2. Homes to nourish foundlings

The foundling home was an important public institution in imperial China. Before the Qing, such homes had been popping up regularly for centuries. In the Southern Song dynasty, there had already been similar organizations—“homes to elders and children” (*ciyou ju* 慈幼局). The importance of such homes peaked in the second half of the nineteenth century when in 1866 imperial rulers announced an edict, ordering the establishment of homes for foundlings. This probably had much to do with the

⁵⁸ *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4: *jianzhi zhi zhong, shan tang*, 13a.

⁵⁹ *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, 8: *xue xiao*, p. 863 (in the *Zhongguo fangzhi ku* system, same below). *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic), *xue xiao*, p. 1066-1068; *ren xu*, p. 1098-1107, p. 1111, p. 1112-1113 (in the *Zhongguo fangzhi ku* system, same below). *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4: *shu yuan*, 1b, 5a, 12a; *shan tang*, 1a, 6b.

⁶⁰ *Continued Pinghu district gazetteer* (Republic), 4: 22b.

population loss and rampant female infanticide during and after the Taiping Rebellion. Zhejiang province, where there were many waterways and drowning was a common way for poor families to abandon their babies, was singled out by the edict as one of the worst provinces.⁶¹ Therefore the 1860s and 1870s witnessed the emergence of many foundling homes. By the end of the nineteenth century, almost all of the districts in Zhejiang had such homes. Jiaxing was no exception. For reconstruction activists in Jiaxing, foundling homes were a significant part of the reconstruction program. Established in the reconstruction years, these homes also undertook some new roles.

According to Rankin the name foundling homes was a generic term for three types of homes: “homes to nourish foundlings” (*yuying tang* 育嬰堂) accommodated and took care of homeless babies, “bureaus to protect foundlings” (*baoying ju* 保嬰局) made cash payments to poor families in the early years of the child’s life, and “offices to receive foundlings” (*jiaying suo* 接嬰所) accepted babies and then sent them to other homes.⁶²

During the reconstruction years, the first type of home was the most popular. Almost every district in Jiaxing had its homes to nourish foundlings, so did some market towns like Puyuan, Qing, and Fengjing. Local gazetteers have many records of the existence and activities of such homes. Biographies of officials and local notables also highlight their participation and contribution to the foundling homes.⁶³ This is especially the case in districts where the reconstruction bureaus were barely mentioned. It seems that in these places the foundling homes were a serious organizational endeavor. Their tasks had transcended traditional roles of acting as a subsidiary welfare agency, housing and caring for children. In fact, some homes had become large and independent enough to have their own institutional hierarchies and had in large part undertaken all the reconstruction projects as the reconstruction bureaus had done in other districts like Tongxiang. In Jiashan, due to lack of money, the united welfare agency (*tongshang tang* 同善堂) was merged into the home to

⁶¹ Rankin, 1986, p. 96.

⁶² Rankin, 1986, p. 96.

⁶³ See the *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, volume 42, 43, 53, 55, 57.

nourish foundlings in 1865.⁶⁴ The Pinghu home to nourish foundlings was also in charge of the public relief home (*puji tang* 普濟堂).⁶⁵ Besides, some homes to nourish foundlings also helped managing schools and temples.⁶⁶

More often, founders and managers of the foundling homes were prestigious local reconstruction activists, who also participated actively in other institutions. For example, Shen Baoyue, the head of Qing town reconstruction bureau, was also in charge of the homes to nourish foundlings of Tongxiang district and Qing town. Shen also established bureaus to protect foundlings in Qing town and offices to receive foundlings in distant villages.⁶⁷

Unlike the transitional reconstruction bureaus, the foundling homes extended well into the last years of the Qing dynasty. To better illustrate the development of the homes, I will use the Jia-Xiu homes to nourish foundlings as an example.

As I have mentioned above, Jiaxing prefecture had two capital districts—Jiaxing and Xiushui. Originally, there were two homes to nourish foundlings in the Jiaxing prefecture capital—the East home and the West home. The East home was first established in the early years of the Kangxi reign (1662-1722), while the West home was created in the sixth year of the Daoguang reign (1826). Both homes were destroyed in the tenth year of the Xianfeng reign (1860) during the Taiping rebellion. In the fifth year of the Tongzhi reign (1866), Jiaxing prefect Xu Yaoguang ordered their reconstruction and merged the two homes into one—the Jia-Xiu home. Like previous homes, the new Jia-Xiu home was established and managed mainly by local gentry. A large building was bought for the home with five thousand *yuan* donated by silk merchants, while regular expenses came mainly from taxation on shopkeepers.⁶⁸

The Jia-Xiu home grew rapidly and expanded its influence in other areas of reconstruction and social relief. In 1870, it began to manage the public relief home (*puji tang*).⁶⁹ Two years later, upon an order from the government, the home to

⁶⁴ *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, 24: *juan xu*, p. 2496-2499.

⁶⁵ *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, 24: *juan xu*, p. 2515-2516.

⁶⁶ *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, 9: *xue xiao*, p. 943; 11: *tan miao*, p. 1112, p. 1152-1154.

⁶⁷ See *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4: *shan tang*, 1b. *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 23: *ren xu*, 4b, 8a.

⁶⁸ *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, 24: *yang yu*, 2b-5b.

⁶⁹ *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, 24: *yang yu*, 5b-7b.

nourish foundlings undertook more foundling reception and protection work.⁷⁰ The home also took over the responsibility of *renxu ji* (任恤集), an organization dedicated to assist orphans, widows, and homeless people from previously prestigious families.⁷¹ Later its roles extended well beyond social welfare to include financing schools and maintaining temples.⁷²

The Jia-Xiu home to nourish foundlings was probably ill-managed during the 1870s because in the sixth year of the Guangxu reign (1880) Prefect Chen directed gentry members Du Wenlan and Yin Runlin to reorganize the home. Previous managers were replaced by new ones. Ten clear-defined regulations were formulated, which were later followed by another twenty-three regulations.⁷³

Later in the New Policies era, the Jia-Xiu home to nourish foundlings continued its existence and adopted new organizational approaches. In 1908, the home established an organization to research the protection of foundlings (保嬰研究會 *baoying yanjiu hui*) and held a public election. Ge Wenrui was elected to be the president, while Tang Jinglun and Shi Yuji acted as assistant president. An executive board was also established, with sixteen members including New Policies activist Chu Fucheng and Tan Risen,⁷⁴ a member of the Tan family I discussed in chapter two. He was also the principal of the Jiaxing prefecture middle school.

3. Reconstruction activists and their motivations

We've seen two major institutions during the post-Taiping reconstruction years: the reconstruction bureaus and foundling homes. More often these institutions were established and dominated by gentry-managers (*shendong* 紳董) who were propelled and enticed into public activities by the needs and opportunities of the period. Several questions follow: who did these gentry-managers consist of? How did they rise to the positions?

According to Yan Chen's proposal, the reconstruction bureau should be under

⁷⁰ *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, 24: *yang yu*, 5a.

⁷¹ *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, 24: *yang yu*, 9a-9b.

⁷² *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879, 9: *xue xiao*, p. 943; 11 *tan miao*, p. 1112, p. 1152-1154.

⁷³ *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic): *xu ren xu*, p. 1100-1105.

⁷⁴ *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic): *xu ren xu*, p. 1105.

direct official control, managed by gentry-managers (*shendong* 紳董, used interchangeably with bureau managers 局董), and avoid using government underlings (*lixu* 吏胥).⁷⁵ Table 5 shows a list of reconstruction bureau managers of Jiaying.

Table 5 Jiaying reconstruction bureaus and their directors

Districts and towns	Directors	Additional information
Pinghu	Xu Guang	Retired official (outside Jiaying); appointed by the magistrate
Jiashan	Yu Yihan Chen Yuan	<i>Gongsheng</i> <i>Juren</i>
Tongxiang	Xiao Yibin	<i>Juren</i> ; merchant
Qing	Shen Baoyue	Shen was appointed to be an official of Jiangsu but he didn't take office; merchant

Sources: *Continued gazetteer of Pinghu district* (Republic); *Reconstructed Jiashan district gazetteer*, 1892; *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887; and *Wu-Qing Gazetteer*, 1936.

We can see from the above table that the actual situation of the reconstruction bureaus generally followed Yan's proposal: gentry-managers—including retired officials, upper-degree holders⁷⁶, and merchants—dominated Jiaying's reconstruction bureaus. On the one hand, this corroborates Rankin (1986) and Schoppa (1982)'s arguments about the fusion of gentry and merchants in Zhejiang since mid-nineteenth century; on the other hand, it indicates the importance of gentry in Jiaying. Similar situation could be found in the foundling homes. Shen Baoyue, gentry-manager of the Qing town reconstruction bureau, also managed the town foundling homes. Directors of the Jia-Xiu foundling home changed over time, but they were all gentry members.

There were two major ways for gentry and merchants to become gentry-managers of the reconstruction institutions: official appointment and recommendation from upper-degree gentry. For instance, Xu Guang, a former official of Fujian province, was appointed to be the manager of the Pinghu reconstruction bureau by the magistrate when he returned home.⁷⁷ Shen Baoyue and Xiao Yibin, in comparison,

⁷⁵ *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4: *jianzhi zhi zhong, shan tang*, 15b.

⁷⁶ Upper-degree holders refer to *jinshi*, *juren*, and *gongsheng*, see Chang Chung-li, 1974.

⁷⁷ *Continued Pinghu district gazetteer* (Republic), 8: *lie zhuan*, 11b.

entered the managerial position of the reconstruction bureaus upon recommendations by the influential *jinshi*-degree holder Yan Chen. As the local gazetteers suggest, official appointment was probably more frequent than recommendation. However, it seems that official appointment influenced merely the initial stage of assuming office. In the later operation of the institutions, official influence was nominal and sometimes could be overlooked as long as the public institutions performed their tasks well and did not overstep certain boundaries. It were the gentry-managers who were in charge of the institutions.

These gentry-managers were very professional, making public management their major career. There are few detailed records of the precise social categorization of the reconstruction managers. But as I listed above, they were generally degree-holders or wealthy merchants. They often occupied at least two different public institutions and acted as local opinion leaders. For example, the above-mentioned Yu Yihan was the man who managed the Jiashan reconstruction bureau and the united welfare agency in Fengjing town. He also reestablished the Fengxi academy.⁷⁸ Similarly, Shen Baoyue, the president of the Qing town reconstruction bureau, also contributed much to other relief and reconstruction works. He came from the Shen lineage which was quite influential in the Tongxiang district with several upper degree holders in the nineteenth century. Shen Baoyue's branch mainly focused on practicing business, operating family iron foundries in a small market center near the Qing town.⁷⁹ Apart from participating in the reconstruction bureau, Shen Baoyue also established several foundling homes, an orphanage, and a burial society in Qing. Education was another major concern. He rebuilt the academy in both the district city and the Qing town and founded the charitable school in Qing.⁸⁰

Influential reconstruction managers also exerted influences and maintained connections beyond their own locality. In fact, during the reconstruction years there emerged a network connecting local elites from different social hierarchies and

⁷⁸ *Reconstructed Jiashan district gazetteer*, 1892, 23: *xing yi*, p. 1751-1752.

⁷⁹ *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 14: 11a-12b; 29: 19b, 25a-b, 28a, 29b-30a, 33a-b, 34b-35a; *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 14: 15a, 15: *yi xing*, 6a-b, 10a-b, 22a.

⁸⁰ *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 23: 6a, 11a, 16a, 19b; 24: 10a-b; 29: 23b-24a; *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 7: *juan xu* 13a.

different institutions. Official appointment and degrees were important factors for the local elite networks, as I have shown many times above. However, two other factors played an important role.

Sometimes the network was based on personal ties with a core figure. Yan Chen was an example of such figures. He was probably the most important reconstruction manager in Tongxiang from the end of the Taiping Rebellion to the 1880s. Personally, Yan Chen proposed the establishment of reconstruction bureaus in Tongxiang district and the Qing town as soon as the rebellion ended. But he did not head the bureaus by himself. Instead, he recommended Shen Baoyue and Xiao Yibin to be the presidents. From the very beginning we can see Yan's influence on the bureaus. Yan kept a close contact with Shen and Xiao, especially the former. Their cooperation went beyond managing the reconstruction bureaus. In the district level, Yan Chen set up a foundling home, a home for old people, and a charitable school, and he reestablished the district academy, the granary, and the Confucian temple. In the Qing town, Yan joined Shen in establishing the town academy and a foundling home. Besides, he also reestablished and headed the academy of the Puyuan town.⁸¹ On the one hand, this reflects a strong relation between the district city and the market town reconstruction establishments; on the other hand, we can observe linkages between different public institutions.

Another important basis of the network was lineage. During that time, public management was probably a respectable occupation. It became a preferable career choice for prestigious families. As I show in chapter two, prestigious families had a tradition of managing local education. The Taiping Rebellion propelled them to engage in more reconstruction works. Yan Chen was a member of the prestigious family in Jiaxing and himself a *jinshi* degree holder. The Shen family Shen Baoyue belonged to produced several upper-degree holders. Later, a cousin of Shen Baoyue succeeded Yan Chen as the head of the Tongxiang district academy.⁸²

⁸¹ Yan Chen recorded his activities in detail in the gazetteer he compiled in 1881. *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4, 5, 6, 7. *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 29: 25b-26b; 38: 12b-13b, 72b.

⁸² Yan's successor was Shen Shandeng, also a *jinshi* and served the Hanlin Academy, *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 7: *juanxu* 13a.

The enthusiasm toward public management extended from the early 1860s to the 1880s, probably even longer, the reconstruction managers had clear, long-term motivations for their endeavors: to save the times (*jiushi* 救時).⁸³ This goal was shared by many people in the later part of the nineteenth century. However, the “times” they wanted to have saved were somehow different. For the reconstruction elite, foreign threat was still far away and not as serious as internal rebellion. For them the most urgent problems were the tendency of valuing business over study and population decline caused by the Taiping rebellion. Yan Chen wrote much about his ambitions in the *Tongxiang district gazetteer*. In an article recording the establishment of two charitable schools, Yan Chen proposed that to save their places and the country from post-Taiping degrading social morality, education needed to be restored to encourage young people to abandon business and go back to study, pursuing righteousness instead of profits.⁸⁴ In another article on the reconstruction of the Tongxiang district foundling home, Yan further pointed out that to recover from the heavy population loss, capable men should step forward to reestablish the foundling homes and enforce them with strong hands, just like Fan Li had assisted King Goujian to strengthen the ancient Kingdom of Yue.⁸⁵

4. Reconstruction and the compilation of local gazetteers

Local gazetteers are the primary source for my above studies of the post-Taiping reconstruction periods. Almost all of the seven districts of Jiaying prefecture had produced its own local gazetteers after the Taiping Rebellion. Here, I will focus on two gazetteers that I have referred to most often above: the (Guangxu) *Tongxiang district gazetteer* and the (Guangxu) *Jiaying prefecture gazetteer*. By comparing how the two gazetteers recorded the reconstruction activities, I hope to reveal what the gazetteer as a source does and does not tell us.

The (Guangxu) *Tongxiang district gazetteer* was published in the thirteenth year of the Guangxu reign (1887). It has twenty scrolls, which adds up to 3080 pages in the

⁸³ *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4: *shan tang*, 3b.

⁸⁴ *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4: *shu yuan*, 13a-b.

⁸⁵ *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1887, 4: *shan tang*, 3a-4a.

database of Chinese local gazetteers (*Zhongguo Fangzhi Ku*, 中國方志庫). The gazetteer was special in that its major author Yan Chen recorded the post-Taiping reconstruction works he had conducted in great detail.

According to its preface, the compilation of prefecture and district gazetteers was ordered by the Zhejiang officials in 1873. The magistrate of Tongxiang then entrusted the work to Yan Chen (1822 - 1893) who at first invited several scholars to write the gazetteer, and eventually decided to do it by himself. Yan Chen conducted the gazetteer work mainly in the gazetteer reconstruction bureau which was located in the Tongxi Academy. The whole construction work took about ten years, and the first four years were mainly occupied by preparation works. The financial source came mainly from silk tax, which was an important source of money for the Tongxiang district government.

Yan Chen recorded the reconstruction activities of the Qing district in detail in the “establishment record”(*jianzhi zhi* 建置志) part of the gazetteer he compiled. The “establishment record” part has three volumes with a total of 453 pages, accounting for nearly fifteen percent of the whole gazetteer. The first volume of the “establishment record” part is about public buildings like the city walls, government offices, granaries, shops, and temples. The second volume talks about Confucius schools, academies, charitable schools, welfare agencies and organizations. More information on the bridges, temples, gardens, and graves could be found in the third volume. When reading these three volumes, one frequently encounters Yan Chen’s name, activities, articles and poems. The second volume has the most to do with the reconstruction endeavors, among which the Tongxiang reconstruction bureau was probably the most important. In the gazetteer, the reconstruction bureau was mentioned as many as 17 times and was depicted as the primary institution that governed the reconstruction and social relief of Tongxiang.

Considering the importance of reconstruction bureau, it is rather strange that it only appeared once in the (Guangxu) *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer* compiled in the fifth year of the Guangxu reign (1879): volume 79 makes a rare reference to the Tongxiang reconstruction bureau’s regulations about chaste women. Other

reconstruction bureaus were never mentioned. Yan Chen's name appeared ten times: six times in volume 9 (schools) about Yan's requests of reconstructing academies, one time in volume 24 (social relief) about Yan's activities in the Tongxiang foundling home, and three times in volume 86 (inscriptions) mentioning three articles of Yan.

It is necessary to point out that a prefecture gazetteer generally first introduced the prefecture situation as a whole, and then specified the situations of all individual districts. With this in mind, the rare occurrence of the Tongxiang reconstruction bureau even in the Tongxiang district part of the gazetteer is still confusing. Publication time may be a factor. When the prefecture gazetteer was completed in 1879, the Tongxiang district gazetteer had not been finished yet to provide systematic information on the Tongxiang reconstruction bureaus. From the fact that Tongxiang reconstruction bureau helped set regulations regarding chaste women and its various other activities, we can see its influence in many aspects of Tongxiang society. There might be some other reasons for its absence. Here it seemed to be the tensions between local elites and officials over the post-Taiping reconstruction.

The stated major editor of the prefecture gazetteer was Xu Yaoguang who served as the Jiaxing prefect from 1864 to 1881. The gazetteer further listed nine pages of contributors, among whom the compilers were mainly officials and the authors were mainly degree-holders. For the Tongxiang part, the major compiler was the incumbent magistrate Gong Fengqi, the major author was a scholar named Yan Wenhao. It was unclear whether this Tongxiang native Yan Wenhao had any lineage relations with Yan Chen. According to Rankin's research, Yan Chen seemed to have had a dispute with the district magistrate. It is not clear whether the accused magistrate was Gong Fengqi since Yan Chen stayed in Tongxiang for more than twenty years while the magistrate changed location quite often. Using his ranks and connections with provincial officials, Yan Chen sometimes went over the magistrate's head when handling immediate problems.⁸⁶ These activities could easily incite the district magistrate's hostility to Yan Chen and the reconstruction bureau he proposed and managed.

Yan Chen, in the district gazetteer compiled by himself, summarized his and his

⁸⁶ Rankin, 1986, p. 132.

colleagues' reconstruction activities in a very systematic, favorable way. This is another example of how local elites and officials used local gazetteers to strengthen their status in local power structure.⁸⁷

The participation of local elites in social relief was not a new thing in imperial China. However, there were some new characteristics during the post-Taiping reconstruction era. First, there emerged specific reconstruction bureaus and foundling homes undertook new roles. Second, from overlapped membership in these closely-related organizations we can see the emergence of a local elite managerial establishment which had its own principles and networks. These networks, which were often based upon degree, lineage, personal ties, and wealth, had to some extent strengthened the dominance of local elites in local power structure after the Taiping Rebellion.

Jiaxing's case shows a high degree of elite-official cooperation. When establishing local public institutions, official permission and approval were indispensable procedures. Sometimes the officials also appointed the head of these institutions. Officials did not directly interfere with the organizations' internal issues, but the Jia-Xiu foundling home's case shows that governments sometimes would conduct reforms and reorganizations in the homes, replacing previous managers with new ones. This indicates a large extent of official control and suggests that despite the fact that some regulations were formulated, there still lacked effective internal systems to hold the managers accountable.

However, there were also tensions between officials and local elites over reconstruction issues. Local gazetteers were often used to consolidate power. Nevertheless, these tensions did not necessarily mean state-society conflicts because usually the tensions were between local elites and a specific stratum of the government, not the whole state.

There remains a central question—how did early twentieth-century local elites differ from these post-Taiping elites? I will deal with this question in the following chapters.

⁸⁷ Dennis, 2015.

Chapter Four: The Local Self-Government Movement in Jiaxing 1905-1911

We have seen the vivid public management tradition and the mainly cooperative relation between officials and local elites in Jiaxing. This situation extended well into the early twentieth century. A special moment came in 1902 when the Qing government decided to embark on a series of constitutional reforms, the New Policies (*xinzheng* 新政). The reform was (or at least intended to be) a very comprehensive one, ranging vertically from the structure of local governments and the central bureaucratic structure, to a constitutional central government, and ranging horizontally from education, commerce, and agriculture, to social norms and morality.

Local institutions to prepare for self-government, as part of the New Policies, were not formally authorized until 1909. Therefore most researchers of the late Qing local self-government movement tend to start their inquiries from 1909 onwards. This periodization is rather misleading because it fails to reflect the local self-government endeavors and local institutional context before 1909.

In the last years of the Qing dynasty, there were three general kinds of organizations in Jiaxing: professional associations like chambers of commerce, agriculture associations, and education associations; local self-government assemblies and executive boards; and voluntary associations promoting things like physical fitness. To research the local self-government movement in Jiaxing, one needs to pay special attention to the functional delineation and interaction between these three kinds institutions. In fact, it was the competition and cooperation among them that constituted and to a large extent shaped the movement. From 1905 to 1911, professional associations were probably the most important one, because they performed many of the mobilization tasks that advocates of local self-government like Kang Youwei had expected from formal self-government organs like the district assemblies and executive boards. In this sense, the local self-government movement had in fact partly realized some of the aspirations of Kang Youwei and others. The 1911 Revolution brought a major change to the local self-government movement. I will return to this later.

In this chapter, I will first introduce the emergence of professional associations, self-government organs, and voluntary associations in Jiaying, followed by their interactions with each other and with the officials. To illustrate the multi-leveled nature of the late Qing local self-government, in the next chapter I will discuss peasant uprisings the New Policies incurred and Jiaying elites' participation in provincial politics.

1. New institutional context: the emergence of professional associations

As part of the New Policies, the Six Boards in the capital were replaced by Western-style ministries of commerce, agriculture, education, and so on. Accordingly, in the local level there emerged a series of professional associations, such as the chamber of commerce, agriculture association, and education association. These associations were often called *fatuan* (法团). Their emergence was an important political development in late Qing China. Jiaying, as an important prefecture of Zhejiang province, was quick and active in responding to state policies and establishing such associations.

1.1 The chamber of commerce

In 1902, upon proposals by influential merchants of Shanghai and support from central officials, the Shanghai Commercial Consultative Association (SCCA, Shanghai Shangye Huiyi Gongsuo) was established. This was the prototype of the Shanghai General Chambers of Commerce. One year later, the Ministry of Commerce was established in the central government. It soon included the promotion of chambers of commerce as a part of the New Policies program. In 1904, the ministry launched a specific decree on the establishment of chambers of commerce. According to the decree, the goals of Chinese chambers of commerce were to strengthen the relations among Chinese merchants and between merchants and officials, thus making China richer and stronger. The ministry's decree allowed merchants to plan and establish chambers of commerce by themselves as long as the founders obeyed several restrictions: on the one hand, they should submit chamber regulations to the

ministry for approval and accept supervisions from local officials; on the other hand, the elected chamber leaders should be recognized by the ministry.⁸⁸

Such an encouraging decree contributed to a nation-wide wave of establishing general, affiliated, and branch chambers of commerce at various levels in China. In 1904, the SCCA changed its name to the Shanghai General Chambers of Commerce (Shanghai GCC, *Shanghai shangwu zonghui*). This was the earliest chamber of commerce in modern Chinese history. In Zhejiang province, there were two general chambers of commerce, the Hangzhou one and the Ningbo one. As to Jiaxing prefecture, market towns took a quicker action than district cities. The twin town of Qing and Wu (Jiaxing and Huzhou) established a chamber of commerce in 1904 immediately after official approval, while Jiaxing prefecture Affiliated Chamber of Commerce (Jiaxing ACC) was not established until 1906. However, administrative hierarchy mattered. Once established, the Jiaxing Affiliated Chamber of Commerce was to be in charge of all lower-leveled ones. By 1908, all the seven districts of Jiaxing had been equipped with at least one chamber of commerce.

Some scholars have described connections between the chambers of commerce and guilds.⁸⁹ This is partly because the chamber of commerce adopted some guild structures and many of its members were also participants of previous guilds like silk, salt, rice, and pawnshops. However, established in twentieth-century, the chamber of commerce had many new characteristics. First, the chambers were obviously inspired by Western organizations. Sheng Xuanhuai, the major promoting official of the Shanghai GCC, gradually developed his ideas on the chamber of commerce through his connections with foreigners.⁹⁰ Second, as an important professional association in late imperial Chinese politics, the chambers drew its membership far more broadly than the merchant guilds. Merchants were certainly the majority, but gentry were also important members. This was understandable because more and more gentry involved themselves in commercial activities since the civil service examination was abolished

⁸⁸ The 1904 decree on the chambers of commerce could be found in the *Da Qing fagui daquan*, 1972, volume 7, 1a-1b.

⁸⁹ One of the pioneering works comes from Shirley S. Garrett, 1974.

⁹⁰ Chen, 1998, p. 15.

in 1905, and the chambers of commerce became so important that it began to undertake some public roles. The result was that many members of the gentry were elected to be the presidents of the chambers of commerce.

Table 6 Presidents of the Jiaxing prefecture ACC before the 1911 Revolution

Names (degrees)	Activities
Sheng Pingzhi (unclear)	Not clear
Zhang Youqi (unclear)	Because of his expertise in giving lectures, he acted as Jiaxing representative in various occasions, especially the Zhejiang railroad meetings.
Gao Baoquan (<i>gongsheng</i>)	Came from a prestigious family of Xiushui; Reconstructing schools and managing lineage schools; pawn business
Gao Zixin (unclear)	Temporary director of the Xiushui district assembly
Chu Fuchen (Japanese returnee)	A member of the revolutionary <i>Tongmeng hui</i> Established schools and promoting girl schools; Founded anti-opium bureaus and the competition physical fitness association in Jiaxing; Silk business; Participated the Zhejiang provincial assembly

Sources: *Shen Bao*; *Jiaxing prefecture gazetteer*, 1879; *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic).

Table 7 Presidents of the Wu-Qing town chamber of commerce (1904-1936)

Names (degrees)	Activities
Lu Jingchang (<i>ju ren</i>)	Magistrate of another place; Compiled gazetteers; Reconstructed the founding homes of Qing town; Lectured in the Lizhi Academy; promoted girl schools
Wu Baoqing (<i>gongsheng</i>)	Established homes to the elders and burying bureaus
Xu Richang (<i>gongsheng</i>)	Magistrate of a district in Anhui; President of Qing town self-government office
Zhang Xueqian	Not clear

Source: *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936.

Table 8 Presidents of the chambers of commerce in Pinghu district

Names (degrees)	Activities
Lu Zengquan (unclear)	A merchant came from a prestigious lineage;
Pinghu district chamber of commerce	In charge of the finance of Pinghu middle school;

	Managed public granary
Ji Zhaolin (<i>juren</i>) Pinghu district chamber of commerce	Magistrate of a locality in Jiangxi; Participated the compilation of district gazetteer; Established schools and headed a middle school; Established a craftsmanship bureau
Tang Tingrong (<i>gongsheng</i>) Pinghu district chamber of commerce	Participated the compilation of district gazetteer; Headed a school; Established a craftsmanship bureau;
Xu Yingliang (<i>gongsheng</i>) Zhapu town chamber of commerce	A member of a prestigious lineage; Repaired destroyed dams; Performed traditional literary tasks such as recording the reconstruction of an academy; Promoted new education and local defense; Reconstructed Zhapu foundling home; Founded an anti-opium bureau
Lin Zhaochun Zhapu town chamber of commerce	Vice director of the Zhapu town assembly

Source: *Continued Pinghu district gazetteer* (Republic).

We can see that many chambers of commerce presidents in Jiaying were local elites with a double background of degree ownership and wealth. This is consistent with the findings of previous researchers. What is also noteworthy is the close link between these elites and previous reconstruction managers. On the one hand, important figures like Lu Jingchang of the Qing town, were the contemporary of Yan Chen and Shen Baoyue, Tongxiang's most prestigious reconstruction managers. Although Lu was three years older than Yan, he did not obtain his *juren* degree until the year of 1873. By that time, Yan had already managed Tongxiang reconstruction works for almost ten years. Like Yan Chen, Lu Jingchang returned to Tongxiang after holding office in the capital. In 1894, he succeeded Yan Chen as the chief lecturer of the famous Lizhi Academy. He also reconstructed the Qing town foundling home which was originally managed by the late Shen Baoyue.⁹¹ On the other hand, the presidents of the chambers of commerce undertook, either before or after their presidency, similar public management tasks that their predecessors had performed, such as establishing and managing academies and schools, reconstructing foundling homes, compiling

⁹¹ Detailed information about Lu Jingchang's activities could be found in the *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 9: 27a; 23: 5a; 24: 11b, 14b.

gazetteers, and repairing facilities.

These similarities should not draw our attention too far away from the uniqueness of the chambers of commerce. The newly-established chamber of commerce was an important “innovation” because it brought private commercial organizations into the areas of public management.⁹² As a powerful representative of economic interests, the chamber had its major tasks of promoting trade, compiling economic statistics, ensuring the benefits of merchants, and communicating merchants’ opinions to officials. For example, in 1907 the Jiaxing ACC proposed to the Xiushui magistrate the elimination of a Japanese shop. Several months later, Zhejiang provincial government released a regulation prohibiting foreign merchants from opening and operating shops in port city.⁹³

However, in practice, its roles went well beyond these. In fact, in the last years of the Qing dynasty, Jiaxing’s chambers of commerce became involved in many other aspects of local affairs. As an association it played an important role in conducting social relief, such as contributing money, selling goods at cost, and providing relief in cases of flood.⁹⁴ They were at the forefront of nationalistic or anti-governmental activities, which drew them into wider political movements.⁹⁵ An example of such nationalistic activities was the anti-American goods boycott movement. Jiaxing’s chambers of commerce quickly responded to the boycott call made by the Shanghai GCC in 1905. Another example is the Zhejiang railway controversy which I will discuss in detail later. The chamber of commerce also organized its militias and patrols in periods of social disorder. For instance, the Wu-Qing town chamber of commerce immediately conferred a conference and established a security group after the 1911 Revolution.⁹⁶

Their involvement in commercial lawsuits was also common. Chinese gentry were often accused of arbitrarily interfering in local lawsuits. In light of this, it is not strange that Yan Chen specifically ruled that members of the reconstruction bureaus

⁹² Rankin, 1986, p. 209.

⁹³ *Shen bao*, 1907/04/30, 1907/11/26, and also 1910/05/18.

⁹⁴ *Shen bao*, 1911/09/05.

⁹⁵ *Shen bao*, 1907/02/23, 1907/11/07, 1907/11/09, 1910/10/04.

⁹⁶ *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 40: 12b.

should not engage themselves in litigations.⁹⁷ The Jiaxing ACC frequently assumed adjudicative roles in business cases.⁹⁸ Sometimes it also tried to influence civil and even criminal cases. In 1910, Gao Baoquan, the former president of the Jiaxing ACC, was summoned to court by the Jiaxing prefect for a suicide case. Gao allegedly had pressured a certain Shen Xiaohe to pay his debts so fiercely that Shen eventually drowned himself. Chu Fucheng, the incumbent chamber president, quickly organized a meeting with other chamber directors and decided that Gao need not appear in the court for trial. He also sent a telegraph to the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce for support.⁹⁹

Perceived by the Qing government as a means to better control local elite, the chamber of commerce was subordinate to the government, but it was not always clear exactly to which level of government. Sometimes, there could emerge contradictions between the chamber of commerce and local government. In 1910, leaders of the Affiliated Chamber of Commerce in Jiaxing prefecture (Jiaxing ACC) issued an open letter addressed to Dong Jiyou, the Zhejiang *daotai* for industrial affairs (*quanye dao* 勸業道), as well as to the Hangzhou and Ningbo General Chamber of Commerce (GCC). In the letter, the Jiaxing ACC accused Dong of attempting to stand in the way of the regular communication between local chambers of commerce and the central government by using bureaucratic formalities and thus turning respectable chamber gentry-merchants into official runners. The letter then urged the two GCC to oppose the *daotai*'s order immediately, or organize a general meeting of chambers of commerce in the whole province to discuss countermeasures. It turned out that a few days before, the Jiaxing ACC received from Dong an order (*zha*) in red ink¹⁰⁰ in which Dong claimed that the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce had granted him the right to supervise all chambers of commerce in Zhejiang province. Therefore, the regular correspondence of the chambers of commerce with the ministry had to go through his office. This order made the Jiaxing ACC leaders very indignant

⁹⁷ *Tongxiang district gazetteer*, 1936, 4: *jianzhi zhi zhong*, *shan tang*, 15a.

⁹⁸ *Shen bao*, 1908/01/06.

⁹⁹ This case is taken from *Shangwu guanbao*, 14 (1910) by Chen Zhongping. See Chen Zhongping, 1998, p. 198.

¹⁰⁰ In imperial Chinese politics, "red ink" was often associated with authority and urgency.

because during that time the national chambers of commerce were all directly in the charge of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, instead of the local government, so they thought they were supposed to receive plain “orders” from the Zhejiang government rather than ones in red ink. They also feared that this move was the beginning a more intense official control and a loss of autonomy.¹⁰¹

Jiaxing ACC’s confrontation with provincial officials indicates its relative independence and autonomy, which had much to do with its financial sources. Generally speaking, the money of the chambers of commerce came from member merchants instead of public funds.¹⁰² Sometimes there were also other sources. For example, the Wu-Qing town chamber of commerce inherited several confiscated houses after a notorious robber was arrested.¹⁰³

1.2 The education association and education promotion office

In 1905, a specific Ministry of Education was established to supervise educational affairs. This was also the year in which the civil examination system was abolished. One year later in 1906, to pacify disgruntled degree-seekers and promote education reform, the Qing government issued a decree on establishing education promotion offices (*quanxue suo* 勸學所). Two months later, another decree appeared regarding the transformation of various educational organizations into a single education association (*jiaoyu hui* 教育會). These two were the most important local level education reform organizations in late Qing China.

The exact establishing dates of Jiaxing’s educational associations varied from place to place. What I have learned from the gazetteer is that in Xiushui district the famous Zhenxiu Academy was transformed into an education promotion office in 1905.¹⁰⁴ Three years later in 1908, Jiaxing district and Xiushui district together established an education association and had its office in a temple.¹⁰⁵ Then in 1910,

¹⁰¹ This story of the Jiaxing Affiliated Chamber of Commerce is taken from *Huashang lianhehui bao*, 6 (1910) by Chen Zhongping. See Chen, 1998, p. 200.

¹⁰² *Continued Pinghu district gazetteer* (Republic), 2: 52.

¹⁰³ *Shen bao*, 1908/05/29.

¹⁰⁴ *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 9: 15b.

¹⁰⁵ *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic), p. 1066.

Jiashan district established its branch education association.¹⁰⁶ The town of Qing did not establish its education association until the year of 1923.¹⁰⁷

According to the 1906 decrees, the responsibility of the education promotion office was to initiate and supervise school development, while the education association was to assist the education promotion office, foster the idea of education and popularize modern school system. Like the chambers of commerce and other professional associations, the education association and education promotion office had to seek money for themselves. In practice, there were several financial sources for the educational associations of Jiaying: tuition fees, rent from school-owned lands, taxes on tea, silk, rice and so on.¹⁰⁸

The money was to be used for several purposes. A basic function of the educational association was encouraging, founding, financing and running new schools. Many of these schools were created out of existing academies. Gazetteers have recorded many endeavors made by educational associations to transform academies into primary schools and girl schools.¹⁰⁹ This was where the endeavors of educational associations and local prestigious families converged, as the latter had already assumed similar tasks for several years. Many prestigious families had their lineage academies transformed into modern schools in early twentieth century. This was mainly voluntary, probably driven by the ambition of promoting new learning in Jiaying. For example, the Tan family I introduced in chapter two transformed their lineage academy into a private primary school in 1906. The major promoter was Tan Risen, who might have been influenced by his experience in Japan. Tan Risen was not alone in promoting new learning in his big family. His two nephews—Tan Xinbing and Tan Xinjia—were also very active in Jiaying's modern education circle.¹¹⁰

More often, organizers of lineage schools were also members of the education associations. Most of them were gentry with scholarly interests and credentials. Presidents and vice presidents of educational associations often were upper-degree

¹⁰⁶ *Shen bao*, 1910/08/24.

¹⁰⁷ *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic), p. 1093.

¹⁰⁸ *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic), p. 1071; *Shen bao*, 1910/08/24.

¹⁰⁹ *Continued Pinghu district gazetteer* (Republic), 1: 10b-11a, 11b, 12a.

¹¹⁰ See Hua, 1996 and Pan, 1991.

holders, graduates of new schools, or Japanese returnees. This was the result of both official instructions and societal choices. According to the 1905 decrees, heads of these educational associations were to be appointed by officials and should be someone “more than thirty years old, with righteous character and action, and well-nurtured with foreign education or normal education”.¹¹¹ In practice, some heads were elected by local elites. The education promotion office of Xiushui district, for instance, first selected Shen Junru as their president. Shen obtained his *jinshi* degree in 1903 and later spent several years studying politics in Japan. But during 1906 Shen worked mainly in Beijing and promoted a national constitutional movement, so he did not assume office. The president replacing Shen was Zhang Wengao, a *juren*. The president succeeding Zhang was Li Shikai, also a *juren*.¹¹² In 1909, Chu Fucheng, as the representative of Jiaying prefecture education association, attended the annual meeting of Zhejiang General Education Association.¹¹³

At the same time, a large part of the members were school principals and teachers, people who had long been involved in local education. The newly established education association and education promotion office set up new tasks for them. One such task was to regulate and set standards for local schools. The Jia-Xiu education association, for example, organized an education research office to set up educational standards and a physical culture association to encourage a martial spirit in 1911. Later it also sponsored a federation of township schools to set standards for various newly-established private schools.¹¹⁴

Another new task of the educational associations was social education, alternatively referred to as social enlightenment. This was clearly required by the Ministry of Education in the 1906 decree. Among the people a special target was the district assemblymen. As I will elaborate below, the Qing government set some criterion regarding wealth and educational background for the candidates of district assemblies. For candidates who were qualified on the basis of property but were

¹¹¹ “Ministry of Education’s regulations on establishing the education promotion offices”, see *Da Qing fagui daquan*, 1972.

¹¹² *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic), p. 1071-1074.

¹¹³ *Shen bao*, 1909/10/20.

¹¹⁴ *Shi bao*, 1911/04/13; 1911/05/07, 13, 27.

illiterate, the education promotion office would formulate short reading courses for them.¹¹⁵ From here, we can see the close linkage between the self-government organs and educational associations. More widespread influence was achieved through social education. During the last years of the Qing dynasty, the lecturing office was a major channel for the circulation of knowledge and ideas from the elite to the general public.¹¹⁶ Some lecturing offices were set up by individuals, while quite many were organized by the educational associations and conducted by their members. In Xiushui district, members of the education promotion office were also responsible for giving public lectures. Later the office specially assigned several members to deliver touring lectures in temples, ancestral halls and other public spaces.¹¹⁷ These activities directly put its educated members into contact with the general public.

Because of the significance of educational issues and the high status of their presidents and vice-presidents, the educational associations sometimes also involved themselves in non-educational issues. One of these issues was social relief. During the 1910 famine in Jiaying, the Jiaying education promotion office organized a meeting with other associations to discuss relief. Leaders of the education promotion office also joined other gentry in organizing a price equalization society.¹¹⁸ Another issue that occupied much of their attention was the preparation and establishment of the district assemblies. In 1908, the Jiaying district education promotion office called upon other associations and organized several preparation meetings.¹¹⁹ Jiaying educational associations were later also drawn into national political issues, such as the anti-American goods boycott and the Zhejiang railway controversy.

Because of their close relations with officials, some researchers tend to view the educational associations as part of the bureaucratic structures (Takada, 1996; Gao, 2015).¹²⁰ In all matters, the educational associations were in the charge of the government. When unrest occurred in the Jiaying prefecture middle school in 1910,

¹¹⁵ Schoppa, 1982, p. 32.

¹¹⁶ Li Xiaoti, 1992, p. 60.

¹¹⁷ *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic), p. 1092.

¹¹⁸ *Shi bao*, 1910/05/13.

¹¹⁹ *Shen bao*, 1908/10/25, 1908/10/27, 1908/11/07.

¹²⁰ Takada, 1996; Gao, 2015.

Jiaxing Prefect Ying took action and punished some students without first discussing with the education promotion office.¹²¹ The *Shen bao* later commented: while the students were to blame for causing unnecessary disorder, Prefect Ying was also wrong in disregarding educational associations.¹²² It seems to me this reveals that some expectations of independence and autonomy had been placed upon the educational associations.

1.3 Agriculture association

The demands for organizing agriculture association had long existed before the establishment of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce. Scholars have traced these demands to advocates like Sun Yat-sen, Kang Youwei, and Zhang Jian.¹²³ As part of the New Policies, agriculture associations were formally authorized in 1907.

According to the 1907 decree, every province should establish its general agriculture association, every prefecture and district should establish a branch association, while towns, villages, and marketplaces could decide the exact time to set up branch associations based on their own situations. Therefore among the professional associations established in late Qing, the agriculture association was probably the only one that extended down to the village level. The decree also stipulated qualifications for the association directors: (1) extraordinary agriculture managers, researchers or inventors; (2) wealthy large landholders (在地方富有田業為一方巨擘者); (3) righteous, reasonable natives or officials who were familiar with local situations; (4) persons with outstanding reputation, morality and education. General associations shall have one president and one vice-president, while branch associations should only have one president. Below the president and vice-president was the executive board, whose size varied from twenty to fifty (general associations) or from ten to thirty (branch associations). Presidents, vice-presidents, and board executives were to be elected from the association members and then approved by

¹²¹ *Shen bao*, 1909/06/25.

¹²² *Shen bao*, 1909/06/26.

¹²³ Zhu, 1991; Chang & Wang, 1999.

upper associations.¹²⁴

Generally speaking, there are few detailed materials on the agriculture associations in the last years of the Qing dynasty. In Jiaying, the town of Qing established its agriculture association in 1910 together with the nearby Lu town. In accordance with the 1907 decree, association was dominated by local elites. The first president of the association was Shen Shanbao, a merchant with a purchased *gongsheng* degree. He was also the son of Shen Baoyue, one of the most notable post-Taiping reconstruction activists of the Qing town. Shen Shanbao had inherited his family's iron foundry and accumulated considerable wealth. Like his father, he was very enthusiastic about public management: he managed the local defense bureau in 1900, and contributed money to establish a primary school in Qing town in 1902. When the town of Qing established its local self-government bureau in 1909, Shen Shanbao was elected the vice President. He was also a member of the first provincial assembly organized by the Republic. In the 1930s, he acted as the president of the Qing town chamber of commerce.¹²⁵ Shen Shanbao was assisted by the vice president Zhang Xikang, who later acted as the association's second and third president. Zhang was also a *gongsheng* and was elected as a member of the executive board of the Qing town self-government bureau in 1909. After the establishment of the Republic, he managed local defense in 1916 and participated in the Tongxiang district assembly in 1922.¹²⁶ Zhang was followed by a poet and scholar named Zhu Tingui. The association had its base in the self-government bureau.¹²⁷ Judged by its presidents and location, we can see its close linkage with other professional associations and the local self-government movement.

According to the 1907 decree, there were three beneficial aspects to the establishment of agriculture associations: first, to educate and enlighten the people through promoting industry; second, to improve and upgrade agricultural activities; third, to solidify the people, release the energy of the general public for public

¹²⁴ The 1907 decree on agriculture association could be found in *Da Qing fagui daquan*, 1972.

¹²⁵ The above information on Shen Shanbao comes from the *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 9:18a, 21b, 27a, 27b; 24: 12b-13b; 27:30a.

¹²⁶ *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 9:18b, 21b, 27a; 27: 31a.

¹²⁷ *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 9: 26b.

benefits and transcend distinctions between different areas.¹²⁸ Because the agriculture association was directly associated with the rural society, the stated goals of educating, enlightening, and solidifying the people were probably aimed at the peasants. In this sense, the elite-dominated agriculture association failed to fulfill some expectations placed on it.

The actual functions and accomplishments of agriculture associations varied from district to district and from time to time. For the case of Jiaying, their major achievements were in managing practical agricultural issues and pacifying disgruntled peasants. Later, they were also involved in public affairs such as the provincial assembly.

The Jiaying district agriculture association was probably the most active one in Jiaying before the 1911 Revolution. Association members often gathered together and held meetings. It was reported that there were sometimes more than one hundred attendees. Their major concerns were practical agriculture issues, especially pest control and merchant rice-hoarding. Crops of Jiaying sometimes suffered a heavy loss from various pests. This was a serious problem both for the peasants and local elites because sometimes it could cause peasant uprisings. In the fall of 1907, a serious pest infestation struck all the seven districts of Jiaying. Peasants quickly reported to the magistrates. Frustrated with the magistrate's perfunctory replies, more than 160 peasants of Jiaying and Xiushui districts traveled to Hangzhou with destroyed rice and visited provincial officials, asking for help.¹²⁹ Probably surprised by the peasants' actions and afraid of further social disorders, a few days later Jiaying's elites organized together and sent telegraphs to the provincial government for help in dealing with the pest.¹³⁰ After Jiaying's agriculture associations were established, they began to undertake pest control tasks. In 1911, the Jiaying district agriculture association organized a special group to deal with the pests.¹³¹ In addition, to make the price of rice stable, the association assigned each township with one director to

¹²⁸ See *Da Qing fagui daquan*, 1972.

¹²⁹ *Shen bao*, 1909/07/09.

¹³⁰ *Shi bao*, 1910/03/15, 26.

¹³¹ *Shen bao*, 1907/10/10.

look into problems of merchant rice-hoarding in February 1910.¹³² Apart from specific agricultural problems, the agriculture association also participated in some general public affairs. For example, when the Zhejiang provincial assembly was suspended for three days in 1910, the Jiaxing district agriculture association, together with other professional associations like the chamber of commerce and the education association, sent a joint request for its reopening.¹³³

A few years later in 1918 the agriculture association went bankrupt. Problems probably resided in revenue sources.¹³⁴ According to the 1907 decree, the agriculture association should seek revenue sources for itself. There is little information on the revenue sources. As recorded in the local gazetteer, the Xiushui agriculture association sometimes received monies from other public institutions.¹³⁵

1.4 The anti-opium bureau

The anti-opium bureau was a unique organization. Because of its special purposes and importance, I include it as part of the professional associations. Opium abuse and the problems it caused had been around for centuries in China, but it was not until the very last years of the Qing that a nationwide campaign was initiated against them.¹³⁶ This campaign proved to be unprecedentedly successful, and its success had much to do with the close cooperation between officials and local elites.

Partly propelled by the United States government and the social problems brought by drugs, the Qing government enforced a set of strong policies against opium abuse.¹³⁷ With its goal of strengthening the body and mind of Chinese citizens, the anti-opium movement could also be regarded as part of the self-strengthening New Policies.

In 1906, the Qing dynasty issued an imperial edict condemning opium's bad influences on China and announced the inauguration of a nationwide movement to

¹³² *Shen bao*, 1907/10/09, 1907/10/15.

¹³³ *Shi bao*, 1911/03/09, 1911/04/13.

¹³⁴ *Shi bao*, 1918/09/24.

¹³⁵ *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic), p. 1124.

¹³⁶ Madancy, 1996, p. 1.

¹³⁷ Cui, 2012.

eliminate drug throughout China within ten years. From 1907 to 1909, the central government released another three Imperial Edicts on anti-opium issues.¹³⁸ In 1908, the Anti-Opium Commission was established within the central government by Imperial edict. Later that year, most provinces had established a General Anti-Opium Bureau in provincial capitals. Places below the provincial followed and established their anti-opium offices.¹³⁹

By June of 1907, all of the seven districts of Jiaying had probably already taken some actions against drugs.¹⁴⁰ An anti-opium bureau was established in Jiaying and Xiushui district by Chu Fucheng. To ensure its smooth operation, Tan, a member of the gentry, proposed eight regulations for the bureau based on the Tianjin model.¹⁴¹ One year later, Pinghu and Jiashan district also established their anti-opium bureaus.¹⁴²

The bureaus effectively closed opium shops of all sizes in Jiaying prefecture, which caused many people to lose their living and jobs. Protests from the opium shopkeepers soon emerged. In 1907, more than three hundred shopkeepers flocked to the Jiaying anti-opium bureau. Some clashes occurred between the shopkeepers and bureau members. To pacify the protestors, magistrate Qin quickly raised some money and purchased opium tools from them to reduce their losses, while he simultaneously set up an office to loan them money to practice other businesses.¹⁴³ The way these protests were tackled indicates the close cooperation between local elite and officials.

Like other organizations, all local anti-opium bureaus needed to seek funds for themselves, which was a touchy problem for them since the very beginning. Donations from local elites provided some initial money, but they were hardly enough nor sustainable. There was an urgent need for further revenue sources. For example, the Pinghu anti-opium bureau, after holding a meeting with representatives from gentry, merchants, and students, decided to follow the practices of the Jiaying

¹³⁸ See *Qingmo minchu de jinyan yundong he Wanguo Jinyan hui*, 1996, p. 15-18.

¹³⁹ See *Present day political organization of China*, 1912, p. 68-69. Some prefecture or district level organizations were also called anti-opium bureaus instead of offices.

¹⁴⁰ *Shen bao*, 1907/08/29.

¹⁴¹ *Shen bao*, 1908/08/06.

¹⁴² *Shen bao*, 1908/06/04, 1908/10/24.

¹⁴³ *Shen bao*, 1907/08/17.

anti-opium bureau, increasing opium tax and using these tax monies to fund the bureau.¹⁴⁴ This example reveals the decision-making process of the anti-opium bureau. We can see a certain extent of independence from the government in the bureau and its close relations with other influential circles.

There was little information regarding to actual leaders of Jiaying's anti-opium bureaus. However, scattered records suggest that members of the gentry were the major participants. For example, a director of the Jiashan anti-opium bureau, Sun Jiahu, was a *jiansheng* and acted as a magistrate in Anhui province for more than ten years.¹⁴⁵ Fei Zhen, a member of the Wu-Qing anti-opium bureau, was also a township assemblyman.¹⁴⁶ Influential figures sometimes also participated in the bureaus. The above-mentioned Shen Junru, for example, was a president of a Zhejiang provincial anti-opium bureau. Another Japan returnee, later Zhejiang provincial assemblyman Chu Fucheng also acted as the president of the Jiaying anti-opium bureau and later acted as an anti-opium representative of Jiaying and attended the meetings the provincial bureau organized.¹⁴⁷

In the social context of constitutional movement, the anti-opium bureaus sometimes also directly participated in the local self-government movement. For example, a director of the Jiashan anti-opium bureau, Sun Jiahu, invited other associations to gather together in the public benefit office to discuss election issues of the Jiashan district assembly in 1908.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, as the case I listed at the beginning of this paper shows, the Jiaying anti-opium bureau was a platform for leaders of various associations to gather together and discuss important issues, and served as the place where they met and communicated with local officials.

2. Public benefit offices, district assemblies and executive boards

The local self-government movement, as part of the New Policies, was officially initiated in 1909 with the release of two local self-government decrees. However, in

¹⁴⁴ *Shen bao*, 1908/06/04.

¹⁴⁵ *Four gazetteers of Yi district*, 1923, 4: 3a.

¹⁴⁶ *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, volume 38.

¹⁴⁷ *Shen bao*, 1911/06/14.

¹⁴⁸ *Shen bao*, 1908/11/16.

the local level, members of the elites began to prepare for it and established similar organizations as early as 1906, when the Qing government first listed the goal of local self-government into the schedule of constitutional reform. Created with a clear goal of promoting and preparing for local self-government, these organizations were often called public benefit offices (*gongyi hui* 公益會), or self-government offices (*zizhi hui* 自治會).

Partly a manifestation of such self-government enthusiasm, in the same year *Dongfang zazhi* opened a special column under “*neiwu*” (Internal affairs) for local self-government. Zhejiang province proved to be one of the most active provinces, while within Zhejiang province Jiaying took the lead in organizing preparatory self-government organizations.

One of the earliest such kind of organization in Zhejiang was established in the Xinli town of Jiaying district in September of 1906. Ji Tingba, a local member of the gentry with *juren* degree, was the major founder. At first, Ji Tingba, together with several other gentry members, submitted a quite ambitious proposal to the Zhejiang Provincial Governor, naming the organization a “local self-government office” (*zizhi hui* 自治會) and planning to divide Jiaying district into twenty electoral boundaries to facilitate local public management. The Provincial Governor gave an overall positive reply, yet suggested two major changes to be made. First, the organization should be called “public benefit office” (*gongyi hui* 公益會) like the Ningbo one instead of “local self-government office”, considering official regulations for local self-government had not been issued yet. Second, according to the Ministry of Education, the division of electoral boundaries was the responsibility of educational associations. Although the Japanese model showed that there might allow for multiple boundaries for different purposes, a unanimous agreement should be reached among the majority of Jiaying district’s gentry before an electoral boundary division proposal be sent to the government. It was doubtful whether Ji Tingba and several other gentry could represent other Jiaying gentry. Considering Ji was a native of the town of Xinli, the organization should be established in Xinli instead of Jiaying district. The Provincial Governor in the end ordered that the Xinli public benefit office shall be

authorized and supervised by the Jiaxing district magistrate.¹⁴⁹

The proposal made by local elites and the rather tricky reply from the Provincial Governor reveals some interesting points about the local self-government movement. First, Jiaxing local elites began to strive for local self-government in 1906 and their proposal was quite ambitious, demanding for self-government of the whole Jiaxing district. Second, by 1906 the future of local self-government was still largely unclear, which could partly explain the Provincial Governor's suggestion of calling the organizations "public benefit office" instead of "self-government office". The "public benefit office", which had been used for many years in describing local public institutions, was a much milder term. Third, the Japanese model seems to have been quite influential in late Qing Chinese politics.

Following the Xinli Public Benefit Bureau, the town of Wangdian and Wangjiangjin also established similar bureaus. It was not until 1908, when local self-government was officially included in the constitutional program, that the name "self-government office" (*zizhi hui* 自治會) was used as the name of such organizations.

Table 9 Early local self-government organizations in Jiaxing

Name	Founder	Date	Regulations and activities
Xinli town <i>gongyi hui</i> (public benefit bureau)	Ji Tingba (<i>Juren</i>)	1906	To prepare for the local self-government movement; Promote education and commerce, establish police, manage hygiene, and suppress gambling and drugs
Wangjiangjin town <i>gongyi hui</i> (public benefit bureau)	Gentry	1908	Proposed by members of the gentry, merchants, and students; Follow the Xinli town model and to prepare for the local self-government movement
Hangzhou-Zhapu <i>zizhi hui</i> (self-government office)	Gui Zhongquan Wen Xijiu	1908	Ten gentry members: eight from Hangzhou and two from Zhapu town; Member fee: eighty

Sources: *Dongfang zazhi*, 3. 11: *neiwu*, 269; *Shen bao*, 1906/09/26; Jiaxing district gazetteer, scroll 19. *Dongfang zazhi*, 5. 4: *neiwu*, 267; 5. 3: *neiwu*, 212.

¹⁴⁹ *Shen bao*, 1906/09/26.

As table 9 shows, these public benefit bureaus were mainly gentry-led voluntary associations. Their responsibilities—education, commerce, local security, hygiene, and social morality—were to a large extent within the traditional roles that local gentry had been performing through various formal or informal organizations, like the reconstruction bureaus in the post-Taiping years. However, established in the social context of constitutional movement, these organizations had special meanings for local society. They, together with other professional associations, represented a new development of elite organizations, adapting to new needs in new times. They were also precursors of the officially-authorized local self-government organs—assemblies and executive councils—that would assume a wide range of responsibilities in local public affairs and provincial politics.

From the very beginning, local self-government was closely related to provincial politics and the constitutional movement. With the opening of the Political Consultative Council in 1908, there emerged an urgent need for the establishment of provincial assemblies. This greatly promoted the development of local self-government because candidates for the Political Consultative Council needed to be selected within the provincial assemblymen, while provincial assemblymen came from district-level elections.

Since October of 1908, most of the seven districts of Jiaxing prefecture had begun to prepare for the elections. More often, it was mainly the professional associations that led and promoted this process. The education promotion office of Jiaxing district, for example, gave out leaflets and called upon members of the gentry, merchants, and students to hold a meeting for the elections. More than one hundred people attended the meeting at the education promotion office, discussing qualifications of the candidates and setting a time limit of forty days.¹⁵⁰ A few days later, convened by the chamber of commerce and the education promotion office, another meeting was held. More than two hundred representatives of various associations attended the meeting; among them were Chu Fucheng and the incumbent president of the Jiaxing Affiliated

¹⁵⁰ *Shen bao*, 1908/10/25.

Chamber of Commerce, Gao Zixin. The meeting ended with clear rules for the elections and qualifications for the candidates: first, all *shengyuan* had the right to vote; second, students of industry and police who entered primary schools could be regarded as middle school graduates; third, when calculating real estates, every *mu* of land equals to twenty *yuan* while the interest of houses is five *li*. It was also decided that Jiaxing and Xiushui district shall manage the investigation together. The former had its office in the government office while the latter managed the investigation in the chamber of commerce.¹⁵¹ It is noteworthy that these rules and arrangements were decided by the meeting attendees instead of government officials.

In Jiashan district, a director of the anti-opium office invited members of other associations to hold a meeting in the November of 1908.¹⁵² A few days later, an election-preparation meeting was held in the united welfare bureau with more than two hundred attendees.¹⁵³

For the local elites, the later part of 1908 was occupied by investigating households and conducting elections. These works extended to 1909 when the local self-government movement was officially launched with two decrees, one on local self-government, the other one regulating its election procedures. According to the decrees, each city, district, and township should be equipped with an assembly (*yishi hui* 議事會) and an executive board (*dongshi hui* 董事會) and these institutions should be established in the self-government office (*zizhi gongsuo* 自治公所).¹⁵⁴

Most self-government offices came from the investigation bureaus which were established in 1908, and they continued their election works. By July of 1909, all the seven districts of Jiaxing prefecture had already finished their elections (a full list of the result can be found in the Appendix). In July of 1909, eight district assemblymen were further selected to enter the Zhejiang provincial assembly.

Table 10 Information of Jiaxing provincial assemblymen

¹⁵¹ *Shen bao*, 1908/10/27. Here *mu*, *yuan*, and *li* are units of measurement, *mu* measures land, *yuan* for money, and *li* for tax.

¹⁵² *Shen bao*, 1908/11/07.

¹⁵³ *Shen bao*, 1908/11/16.

¹⁵⁴ *Shen bao*, 1909/01/28, 01/30..

Name	Age 1909	Birthplace	Degree	New education	Activities before the election
Shen Junru	39	Xiushui	<i>Jinshi</i>	Japanese Returnee	Served the Ministry of Justice; Participated in the provincial anti-opium bureau and was elected the president of Xiushui education promotion office
Zhu Qizhen	40	Jiashan	<i>Gongsheng</i>		
Zhang Di	60	Jiaxing			Served the Zhejiang Provincial Administration Commission
Chu Fucheng	39	Xiushui	<i>Shengyuan</i>	Japanese returnee	Participated in the chamber of commerce, the anti-opium bureau and education association
Yang Wentao	37	Shimen	<i>Gongsheng</i>		
Zhou Bin	32	Jiashan	<i>Shengyuan</i>		
Tao Baolin	39	Xiushui	<i>Shengyuan</i>	Japanese returnee	Participated in the Xiushui education promotion office
Lao Jiongzhang	36	Tongxiang	<i>Shengyuan</i>		

Sources: the list of names comes from *Dongfang zazhi* (1909, 6.11), which is a little different from the preliminary election results as reported by *Shen bao* (1909/07/20, 07/26). I suppose some candidates withdrew the election, such as the *jinshi*-degree holder Zhang Yuanji, who was busy with his works in Shanghai. Their backgrounds and activities are taken from various local gazetteers.

At the same time, the assembly and executive board of districts and towns also elected their directors.

Table 11 The Zhapu town assembly and executive board

Town assembly	Established in 1910 Twenty assemblymen President: Yang Xiao Vice President: Wang Rongdi (1910); Lin Zhaochun (1911)
Executive board	Established in 1911 Four board members Chief executive: Xu Wenzhao Vice executive: Xu Qingyang (Japanese returnee, <i>juren</i>)

Source: *Continued gazetteer of Pinghu district* (Republic), 2: 51.

Table 12 The Qing town assembly and executive board

Town assembly	Established in 1909 President: 1909 Shen Ruichang (<i>juren</i>); 1912 Xu Richang (<i>gongsheng</i>) Vice President: 1909 Shen Shanbao (<i>gongsheng</i>); 1912 Shen Minqian (<i>bingsheng</i>)
Executive board	Established in 1909

Chief executive: 1909 and 1912 Xu Tang (*juren*)
Board members: 1909 Zhang Xikang (*gongsheng*);
1909 and 1912 Lu Fuji (*gongsheng*)

Source: *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 9: 20b-22a.

As the tables above suggest, education and degrees were still important. However, degree ownership did not necessarily determine one's socioeconomic status. Jiaxing assemblymen consisted of both traditionally defined upper-degree holders (*jinshi*, *juren*, *gongsheng*) and lower-degree holders (*shengyuan*). Coming from a prestigious family mattered a lot. The provincial assemblyman Lao Jiongzhang, for example, was a *shengyuan*, but his father was the famous *jinshi*-degree holder Lao Naixuan who served the Committee for Drawing up Regulations for Constitutional Government (*xianzheng biancha guan* 憲政編查館) in 1908.¹⁵⁵ Tan Xinjia, a member of the Tan family, was also elected as the Jiaxing district assemblyman (see Appendix). Provincial assemblymen Shen Junru and Chu Fucheng also came from local prestigious families, although this fact was often overshadowed by their outstanding educational backgrounds.

New education was also an important factor. Three out of eight Jiaxing provincial assemblymen were Japanese school graduates. For upper-degree holders like Shen Junru, new education experience was like the icing on the cake. With his *jinshi* degree and education experience in Japan, Shen was later elected the vice president of the Zhejiang provincial assembly. For lower-degree holders like Chu Fucheng, experience in Japan could greatly enhance their chances of being elected.

There seemed to be few differences in education and degrees between assemblymen of town and district. Local self-government organs were not necessarily dominated by lower-degree holders as several scholars have suggested. *Shengyuan* could be elected provincial assemblymen. In a town assembly, there were *juren* and Japanese returnees.

Also noticeable is the fact that many assemblymen were also participants of the various professional associations I mentioned above. Before being elected the Jiaxing

¹⁵⁵ A short introduction of Lao Naixuan's career could be found in the Tongxiang Archives website: <http://daj.tx.gov.cn/web/xxmr/?type=2&filter=L>

provincial assemblymen, Shen Junru was the president of provincial anti-opium bureau and Tao Baolin actively participated in the Xiushui education promotion office. Chu Fucheng was even more active, involving himself with the Jiaxing anti-opium bureau and the Jiaxing education association. He was also the president of the Jiaxing Affiliated Chamber of Commerce in 1909.

An interesting episode occurred during the elections. A Jiaxing native, Zhu Songxiang, on the basis of the decree on provincial assembly, initiated a Zhejiang people's proposition organization (*quanzhe renmin jianyi xiehui* 全浙人民建議協會) in Hangzhou in 1909. The intention of Zhu and other co-founders was to assist and supervise the provincial assembly in the name of the people. It was quite popular and attracted many members. Zhu Songxiang then planned to found an affiliated organization in Jiaxing. Many people attended its first conference, among whom wealthy merchants and local gentry were the majority.¹⁵⁶ Zhu Songxiang seemed to be an enthusiastic constitutionalist. Three years later in 1912, he headed the Jiaxing branch of the Chinese republican constitutionalism association (*zhonghua gonghe xianzheng hui* 中華共和憲政會).¹⁵⁷ The organization did not last long: the Committee for Drawing up Regulations for Constitutional Government (*xianzheng biancha guan* 憲政編查館) abolished it a month later.¹⁵⁸

Apart from the elections, local assemblies and executive boards also began to carry on other tasks. Councils and assemblies began to supervise public functions. The Jiaxing district assembly, for example, discussed the problem of prostitution, improving public toilets, and methods of protecting crops from insects in 1911.¹⁵⁹ The assemblies of Xiushui district and Zhapu town also began to establish and finance primary schools in 1911.¹⁶⁰ Foundling homes were still very important organizations in the last years of the Qing dynasty. As I mentioned in Chapter three, the Jia-Xiu foundling home held a public election in 1908, with several New Policies activists

¹⁵⁶ *Shen bao*, 1909/10/05.

¹⁵⁷ *Shen bao*, 1912/01/29.

¹⁵⁸ *Dongfang zazhi*, 1909, 6. 13.

¹⁵⁹ *Shi bao*, 1911/02/18, 03/21.

¹⁶⁰ *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic), p. 1081; *Continued gazetteer of Pinghu district* (Republic), 1: 13b, 14a.

like Chu Fucheng and Tan Risen elected as board members. In 1910, the Qing town executive board began to manage the foundling home.¹⁶¹

These were all within the traditional elite concerns which had already been addressed by Jiaying elites in various other associations. Besides, the self-government organs were so recently established that they probably had little impact on Jiaying before the 1911 Revolution took place. These were the major reasons why scholars tend to neglect the impact of the late Qing local self-government movement on Chinese society. This is a misunderstanding of both the late Qing local self-government and local society. By the time the local self-government was formally implemented in Jiaying, public functions had already been clearly delineated among various professional associations from the chambers of commerce, educational associations, and agriculture associations to the anti-opium bureau. In other words, the tasks that the local self-government organs failed or had no enough time to carry out had to a large extent been performed by the professional associations with considerable enthusiasm for several years. With a substantial overlap in membership between the assemblies and councils and the existing professional associations, the former was more likely to cooperate than to compete with the latter, thus confirming the power structures, managerial methods, and social hierarchies.¹⁶² The Qing town agriculture association, for example, had its office space in the town self-government office.¹⁶³

In 1907, *Dongfang zazhi* published an article named “Explaining the meaning and category of local self-government” which originally appeared in the *Zhongwai ribao*. In this article, the author argued that social organizations were also part of self-government, as long as the regulations they drafted and the independent activities they carried out were acknowledged by the state. However, the author tended to distinguish organizational self-government from local self-government because unlike the latter, the former were often macro-regional endeavors beyond a certain

¹⁶¹ *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 23: 6a.

¹⁶² Rankin, 1986, p. 210.

¹⁶³ *Wu-Qing town gazetteer*, 1936, 9: 28b.

locality.¹⁶⁴ It is unclear whether and how this article reached and influenced the nation-wide local elites who were at the forefront of professional associations and local self-government. But its arguments are noteworthy for our analysis of the late Qing local self-government movement.

To sum up, although late Qing professional associations, as I illustrated above, followed the administrative hierarchy from prefectures to districts and towns, they were also part of their macro-regional networks. Their emergence was a significant political development in modern Chinese history. Although they were originally organized by the government, they had independent financial systems, systematic methods of running affairs, and free election rights for their heads who were mainly composed by local elites. They performed many local works independently and often advocated for public benefits, local self-government and a constitutional government, whether alone or together with other associations.

Participating in various associations greatly influenced the way elites organized themselves in Jiaying. Traditional degrees and lineage were still important, but they were no longer the major factors through which the elites formed establishments, sought support, and constructed identity. Local elites began to take action in the name of associations. When some public issues occurred, Jiaying elites often sent telegraphs in the name of their associations like the chamber of commerce, education association, and agriculture association. Sometimes they also sent joint telegraphs with other associations. In fact, during that time, newspaper reports were more likely to use the term ‘all associations in Jiaying’ (*Jiaying ge tuanti* 嘉興各團體) than the traditional ‘the gentry, merchant, and student circles of Jiaying’ (*Jiaying sheng shang xue jie* 嘉興紳商學界) to indicate the combined will of the Jiaying elites.¹⁶⁵

The close cooperation between professional associations and the local self-government institutions could be seen from the very beginning to the formal implementation period. When Jiaying prefecture was preparing for the provincial assembly in 1908, it was the professional associations that led and promoted the

¹⁶⁴ *Dongfang zazhi*, 1907, 4. 12: *neiwu*, 528-537.

¹⁶⁵ *Shen bao*, 1908/12/08, 1910/10/11, 10/30.

election process. For the Jiaying elites, local self-government was merely one among many organizations for them to participate in local affairs and exert influence. Some association members participated in the elections and got elected. They later performed both as association members and local assemblymen.

Furthermore, the close linkages between professional associations and local self-government contributed to a power balance in Jiaying, which influenced the peasant uprisings during the New Policies era, Jiaying elites' participation in provincial-level affairs, and the way the 1911 Revolution reached Jiaying.

Chapter Five: Peasant Uprisings, the Zhejiang Railway Controversy, and the 1911 Revolution in Jiaying

Mary Clabaugh Wright, in her introduction to the book *China in Revolution: The First Phase 1900-1913*, points out that for late Qing Chinese people the year 1900 was a dramatic watershed, witnessing great vitality and motion, a rising tide of nationalism and great enthusiasm toward rebuilding and strengthening the country. The local self-government movement and other New Policies appeared in this social context: they were first proposed by the elites, then adopted by the Qing government, and later put into practice by the elites. What is missing from this picture is the peasantry, a group of people who eventually paid a great price for the New Policies. An important question regarding the topic of local self-government is how “local” it was, and whether it reached to the province level, district level, town level, or one step further to village level. Most of the current research on local self-government has focused on districts and towns. In this chapter, I will follow the activities of the Jiaying local self-government activists and see how it influenced Chinese rural society and provincial politics, and eventually the 1911 Revolution.

1. Peasant uprisings in Jiaying

The implementation of the New Policies caused new financial demands and some disruptions which sometimes led to protests. Some protests consisted of merchants and elite members whose benefits and status were threatened by the New Policies. However, peasants were the major protestors. Their targets were mainly local government officials who levied taxes, whether these taxes were newly established or for traditional usage. Discontented with the magistrate’s tax increase proposal, more than one thousand Tongxiang villagers marched through the countryside to the district city and attacked the government offices there in 1908. The riot then spread to villages in Haining district (Hangzhou prefecture), where more than ten thousand people joined the disorder, destroying schools, railway, shops, and churches.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ *Shen bao*, 1908/01/11, 01/14, 01/15.

Things got even worse in 1909 and 1910 when taxes were accompanied by serious natural disasters like flood and insects. In the summer of 1909, a serious flood struck Jiaxing prefecture, and Tongxiang district was seriously affected. The district agriculture association quickly took action to pacify the peasants, but this could not change the fact that crops were largely destroyed.¹⁶⁷

Citing the tax remission precedent of the fifteenth year of the Guangxu reign (1889), Tongxiang peasants demanded grain and land-tax remission from the district government. These demands were either overlooked or declined by the district officials, which triggered an even more serious peasant protest in the January of 1910. On January 24, several thousand people protested outside the city gates for tax remission. They then marched through the district city and went directly to the government office. Realizing that their protest was disregarded by the magistrate, the peasants surrounded the office and plundered it. The next day, protestors cut off the telegraph lines, preventing the magistrate from calling in troops. Some fights between the soldiers and peasants continued on January 26. The riot was finally put down. This was probably the most serious peasant uprising in Jiaxing during the New Policies era. A few months later, the Zhejiang Provincial Governor submitted a detailed report about the peasant uprising to the central government.¹⁶⁸

In other cases, new institutions also became the targets of discontented peasants. There were various reasons why new institutions might be attacked. When preparing for the provincial assembly in 1908, members of the district investigation bureau were sometimes attacked because peasants thought that a census would be followed by new taxes. The appropriation of temples for schools could also provoke popular protests because, on the one hand, temples were very important for the peasants, while on the other hand the newly constructed schools were of little use for the peasants who were too poor to send their children to school.¹⁶⁹ Sometimes an irresponsible self-government leader might cause protests and illicit an attack on the self-government offices. In Jiashan district, when the executive board refused to deal

¹⁶⁷ *Shen bao*, 1909/07/09.

¹⁶⁸ See *Xinhai gemin qian shinian jian minbian dangan shiliao* (shangce B), 1985, pp. 384-386.

¹⁶⁹ Schoppa, 1976, pp. 508-509.

with the insect plague, peasants surrounded and destroyed the self-government office.¹⁷⁰

Generally speaking, peasant dissatisfaction was specific and economic in Jiaying, occurring when additional taxes for the New Policies were added. They were not as serious as in other provinces, not to mention the uprisings in the nineteenth century. Clearly aware of this, Jiaying gentry began to interfere and appeal to the officials for land tax remission for the peasants. The smooth operation of self-government institutions partly strengthened their voice. On September 1911, for instance, a member of Jiaying district assembly, Wu Wenxi, together with other gentry, requested the provincial assembly to approve the tax-remission proposal and then report to the Provincial Governor. A large part of crops of Jiaying district were destroyed by continuous stormy weather. Wu Wenxi and others feared that this might lead to peasant riots if the government continued their land and rice tax.¹⁷¹

2. Jiaying and the Zhejiang railway controversy

In the last years of the Qing dynasty, there emerged several waves of railway-rights recovery movement in China. Among them was the Zhejiang railway controversy, which occurred in 1907 and continued in the first years of the Republic.

In 1907, wide-spread agitation against the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway (later changed into Shanghai-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway) loan was triggered by the news from Beijing that an agreement was achieved between the British and Qing government. Regarding this controversy, Lee En-Han has presented a detailed introduction to the Sino-British railway loan agreement and the interactions between the central government, Zhejiang provincial government and the Zhejiang elites.¹⁷² Rankin provides more details about the actual political methods and political demands of Zhejiang elites.¹⁷³ Here my major focus is the anti-loan movement in Jiaying: how was it conducted, who participated, and what were the roles of the New Policies

¹⁷⁰ *Shi bao*, 1911/03/27, 08/22, 08/23.

¹⁷¹ *Shen bao*, 1911/09/17.

¹⁷² Lee En-Han, 1977.

¹⁷³ Rankin, 1986.

institutions.

Jiaxing was at the center of the Shanghai-Hangzhou-Ningbo area, linking Shanghai to the northeast and Hangzhou to the southwest. It could be said that the entire Jiaxing prefecture was surrounded by the projected railway line. Therefore, Jiaxing was at the forefront of the railway movement. Horizontally, almost all of the elitist social groups—gentry, merchant, and student—were involved in the movement. Vertically, protest activities could be seen in both district cities and market towns.

The typical political methods for Jiaxing elites, like those in other prefectures, were non-violent, organizing meetings, establishing relevant organizations, sending telegrams and letters to convey their opposition to the officials, and raising funds for the railway.

The news that a loan agreement on the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway was reached between the Qing government and the British spread to Jiaxing in late October 1907. To answer the call of the newly-established Zhejiangese Citizen's Association to Oppose the Loan Treaty (*Zhejiang guomin jukuan hui*), various meetings were organized by Jiaxing elites to discuss and elect representatives from gentry, merchants, and students. Professional associations provided convenient establishments for dealing with this controversy. Among them the education association and the chambers of commerce proved to be the most active. First the head of the Jiaxing normal school, Tao Huifu, called a meeting of students and scholars and elected two representatives on November 3. Then on the same day, Gao Baoquan, the incumbent president of the Jiaxing Affiliated Chamber of Commerce, convened another meeting during which three more representatives were selected. Among these three representatives were Ao Jiaxiong and Chu Fucheng.¹⁷⁴ Ao Jiaxiong was a revolutionary and a native of Pinghu district. I will introduce his activities and interactions with Chu Fucheng later in this chapter.

Further action was taken afterwards. The education association organized meetings to sell railway shares at the Jiaxing middle school and normal school on

¹⁷⁴ See *Jiang-Zhe tielu fengchao*, 1968, pp. 135-136.

November 8 and 10.¹⁷⁵ Besides, branch subscription bureaus were established in several places.¹⁷⁶

An anti-loan association was established in Jiaying by Gao Baoquan and others. It then organized a meeting with more than twelve hundred attendees from gentry, merchant, and student circles on November 15. An anti-loan association was also established in a market town of Jiashan district.¹⁷⁷

At the same time, various telegraphs were sent from Jiaying to the Zhejiang Provincial Governor, the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the name of “gentry, merchant, student circles”, “the chamber of commerce”, and “all associations”. For instance, Gao Baoquan sent a telegraph to the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce in the name of the Jiaying Affiliated Chamber of Commerce on November 9.¹⁷⁸ The chambers of commerce of Pinghu, Shimen and Haiyan also telegraphed either the Ministry or the provincial government.

During this 1907 Zhejiang railway controversy, Chu Fucheng stood out as the representative of Jiaying in the provincial-level politics, which proved to be an important step for his later day election as the vice President of the Zhejiang provincial assembly.

I have already mentioned Chu Fucheng and his activities in Jiaying several times in this paper. Here I will give a systematic description of his backgrounds and careers.¹⁷⁹

Chu Fucheng (1873 - 1948) came from a prestigious family of Nanmen, Jiaying. He went to study in Japan in 1904 when he was thirty-one years old. One year later in 1905 he joined the *Tongmeng hui*. He came back to China in December as the director of the Zhejiang branch *Tongmeng hui*. Unlike other Japanese returnees who preferred

¹⁷⁵ *Jiang-Zhe tielu fengchao*, 1968, p. 373, p. 423.

¹⁷⁶ *Shi bao*, 1910/05/02.

¹⁷⁷ See *Jiang-Zhe tielu fengchao*, 1968, p. 406.

¹⁷⁸ *Shen bao*, 1909/11/09.

¹⁷⁹ This following introduction to Chu Fucheng is based on a combination of various materials: the *Reconstructed Xiushui district gazetteer* (Republic), p. 1082, p. 1092; *Jiaying city gazetteer*, 1997, pp. 2100-2101; *Chu Fucheng xiansheng nianpu chugao* 褚輔成先生年譜初稿, see the Jiaying Library website: <http://www.jxlib.com/old/infodb/xinhaigemin/32.htm>; scattered reports in *Shen bao*; Zhang Pengyuan, 1969, pp. 166-171; *Rankin*, 1986, p. 374.

to pursue career in big cities, Chu returned to his hometown Jiaying. At first his major focus was on education. He raised money and established a primary school in Jiaying in 1905. In 1909 he established another primary school and a girl school. He also taught in the Jiaying middle school.

With the gradual implementation of the New Policies in Zhejiang, he actively participated in various associations and social endeavors. He established the Jiaying and Xiushui district anti-opium bureau and later headed the former bureau. He was also a member of the Jiaying prefecture agriculture association. We can also find his name on the executive board of the traditional public benefit organization—the Jia-Xiu home to nourish foundlings, not to mention the social relief work during the flood in 1909.

Because of his double education and great enthusiasm about public management, Chu gradually established his fame and status among gentry, merchant, and student circles of Jiaying. Later he acted several times as the representative of Jiaying's education association, anti-opium bureau, and the chamber of commerce. In 1907, as a delegate of Jiaying prefecture, he actively participated in the provincial anti-loan movement. When Jiaying prefecture was preparing for the local self-government movement in 1909, Chu Fucheng was elected provincial assemblyman, together with Shen Junru. One year later, Chu became the president of the Jiaying Affiliated Chamber of Commerce and the vice president of the Zhejiang provincial assembly.

At the same time, he kept in touch with Zhejiangese revolutionaries like Ao Jiaying, Chen Zhongquan, and the famous female revolutionary Qiu Jin. Qiu Jin visited Chu several times in the school Chu had established and headed. Chu established a Society for competition and physical education (*jingzheng tiyu hui* 競爭體育會) together with Ao Jiaying. When Ao returned to Jiaying from Shanghai in 1903. This society was an important revolutionary organization in Jiaying.

Probably because of his many years of experience as a New Policies activist, Chu Fucheng also developed good relations with the Zhejiang constitutionalists among whom the most famous was Tang Shouqian. On the eve of the 1911 Revolution, Chu was a key link between the Zhejiang provincial assembly and the revolutionaries. To

ensure that the power transfer went on smoothly and peacefully in Zhejiang, Chu strongly suggested that Tang Shouqian should be elected as the General Governor. This proposal was approved by the provincial assembly and Zhejiang declared its independence.

3. The 1911 Revolution in Jiaying

As I illustrated above, in the last years of the Qing dynasty, there emerged a wave of establishing associations in Jiaying. Apart from professional associations like chambers of commerce, agriculture associations, education associations, and anti-opium bureaus, there were also some voluntary associations aimed at specific purposes. Among these voluntary associations was the above-mentioned Society for competition and physical education (*Jingzheng tiyu hui* 競爭體育會), a revolutionary organization set up by Chu Fucheng, Ao Jiaying, and other Jiaying revolutionaries. In name, Chu Fucheng was the president of this society. But in reality it was Ao that was in charge.

Ao Jiaying was a native of Pinghu district. He was active in promoting education and improving agriculture during his youth. He went to Shanghai in 1903 where he befriended with Cai Yuanpei and became a revolutionary. This was also the year when the Qing government suppressed the revolutionary newspaper *Su bao*. Ao felt that during this tough period crowding in Shanghai may not be a good choice and it might be better for him to follow his friends in Jiaying and start the revolutionary work bit by bit from his hometown. So he returned to Jiaying later in 1903. The proclaimed goal of the Society for competition and physical education was to encourage new physical exercises and to strengthen the country. However, in reality, their activities went well beyond that. The society attracted many youths from different social groups. Members of the society gave lectures in the streets disseminating the negative effects of opium and gamble, set up newspaper-reading rooms, and actively participated in the anti-American goods boycott movement. However, the society never achieved

much prominence in Jiaying. In 1908, Ao died at a young age of 35.¹⁸⁰

It could be said that the 1911 Revolution happened in Jiaying by surprise. In the last years of the Qing dynasty, the various self-government institutions and professional associations contributed to a power balance in Jiaying society: public management functions were clearly delineated among them, members were building the local society in great enthusiasm in the hope of strengthening the country and in many places we could see the close cooperation between the elite and the officials.

The 1911 Revolution came to Jiaying in a largely peaceful manner. After hearing the news of the uprisings in Wuchang, Jiaying revolutionaries began to plot uprisings. They sent people to negotiate with the Jiaying officials. However, the Jiaying prefect Yang Zhaolin had already escaped to Shanghai. Later the Jiaying district magistrate Shen Siqi, who had some connection with the revolution, also left Jiaying, returning to his birthplace Songjiang. Eventually, without much violence, Jiaying declared independence. It is noticeable that few self-government institutions acted as pioneers during the 1911 Revolution. Gentry members organized security groups to patrol in the night. Merchants also formed their own militia units for security concern.¹⁸¹

However, the 1911 Revolution did change the local power balance among local officials, self-government institutions, and professional associations. Magistrates gradually lost their control of local society, while local assemblies and executive boards became the major decision-making institutions in the first years of the Republic. Because the Jiaying district magistrate had escaped to Songjiang, the Zhejiang provincial government appointed a magistrate to Jiaying. However, the Jiaying district assembly rejected the appointment and elected a new one.¹⁸²

With the growing influence of self-government institutions, especially the district assemblies, the once clearly delineated functions among these institutions, professional associations, and local governments were also disrupted. This is

¹⁸⁰ See *Jiaying city gazetteer*, 1997, p. 2084; the article “Ji Ao Jiayingong” (A record of Ao Jiayingong) in the Jiaying Library website: <http://www.jxlib.com/old/infodb/xinhaigemin/9.htm>.

¹⁸¹ See the article “Xinhai Jiaying guangfu ji” (Records of Jiaying during the 1911 Revolution) on the Jiaying Library website: <http://www.jxlib.com/old/infodb/xinhaigemin/25.htm>.

¹⁸² *Shi bao*, 1912/01/04.

indicated by my earlier observation that professional associations had performed many tasks that were first intended for the self-government institutions. Soon, there were also conflicts among the self-government institutions.¹⁸³ As Kuhn has pointed out, this was probably because there were no workable systems whereby local elites “might be disciplined in the public interest, much less brought into a system of mobilization appropriate to a modernizing nation”.¹⁸⁴ Schoppa observes that from 1912 to 1914 district assemblies in Zhejiang had showed “little evidence of national sentiment”.¹⁸⁵ However, judging from the information I have gathered, the situation was not that as bad as Schoppa has indicated. As I have mentioned in the last chapter, many New Policies activists continued their participation in various institutions in the early Republican era. Like his predecessors, the newly emerged elite Chu Shenzhi came from a Jiaying prestigious family.¹⁸⁶ In 1912, Jiaying elites established an organization to protect national rights to prevent an English merchant from opening a cigarette shop in Jiaying.¹⁸⁷

In any case, the 1911 Revolution strengthened the position and dominance of local elites in Jiaying. Eventually in 1914, Yuan Shikai abolished all local self-government institutions.

¹⁸³ *Shi bao*, 1913/06/29.

¹⁸⁴ Kuhn, 1975, p. 280.

¹⁸⁵ Schoppa, 1976, p. 513.

¹⁸⁶ Chu Shenzhi's information could be found in this website:

http://www.china.com.cn/culture/weekend/2009-06/12/content_17937589_3.htm

¹⁸⁷ *Shen bao*, 1912/06/19.

Chapter Six: Concluding Remarks

By now, it seems fair to assume that much of the social history of Jiaxing from the mid-nineteenth century to early twentieth century consisted of dynamic interactions between strategy and structure: local elites tried hard to adapt to new environments and institutional changes and to maintain their dominance over local society when the Qing government embarked on a series of state building initiatives.

Despite great loss and suffering, local elites in Jiaxing survived the Taiping Rebellion. They took the lead in managing reconstruction and social relief after the rebellion. In the process, they formed their own networks and managerial establishment, which were often based upon degrees, lineage, personal ties, and wealth. These networks and establishment, on the one hand, helped local elites to maintain and strengthen their status, while on the other hand they contributed to a generally cooperative relation with the officials. Philip A. Kuhn argues in his pioneering work that local elites began to exercise power within the formal government apparatus after the Taiping Rebellion.¹⁸⁸ This was probably not true in Jiaxing. Despite their growing influence over local society, Jiaxing elites in large part managed public affairs outside the government after the rebellion.

These situations extended well into the first years of the twentieth century when the Qing government embarked on a series of New Policies. Among them were the establishment of professional associations and local self-government institutions. Although these organizations needed to be authorized by the government, they were mainly social endeavors. Local elites once again dominated, embracing new political languages and using these new organizations to perform existing tasks.

Apart from the social continuity of local elites, Jiaxing's case has also shown a continuity of elite personnel. Many influential activists from the reconstruction period to the New Policies era came from the same prestigious families. Lineage did not get outmoded as more and more new elements were incorporated into Chinese society. Its members were very quick to adjust to new situations and maintained their status

¹⁸⁸ Kuhn, 1970, p. 215.

successfully.

In this sense, the local self-government to some extent served as a major way for local elites to maintain status and advance their political objectives. This is partly true. With the abolition of the civil examination system, local elites were in desperate need of new channels to maintain their dominance.

However, the late Qing local self-government movement was way more than this. First, for practitioners of the newly established professional associations and self-government institutions, traditional degrees and lineage were still important, but they were no longer major channels for them to form establishments, seek support and construct identity. By participating in various professional associations, Jiaying elites gradually began to organize themselves along with associations and take action in the name of these associations. Second, generally underestimated by researchers, the late Qing local self-government movement had in fact fulfilled many modernizing tasks and aspirations of local self-government advocates like Kang Youwei. Third, maintaining their dominance may be not the single major concern of local elites. In the context of the early twentieth century, Ao Jiaxiong's ambition of strengthening the country through building his hometown was probably shared by many of Ao's friends and other Jiaying elites. The case of the Jiaying people's proposition organization (嘉興人民建議協會, see chapter four) was another example.

The 1911 Revolution changed the balanced local power structure among local officials, self-government institutions, and professional associations. The process of state-building was interrupted. Magistrates gradually lost their control of local society. More and more self-mobilized local elites were incorporated into the formal government apparatus. The once clearly delineated functions among self-government institutions, professional associations, and local governments were disrupted. Besides, there were no workable systems to supervise or discipline local elites in the direction of public interest modernizing tasks, which led to the deterioration of some local elites. Traditional conflicts over power recurred.

To conclude, Jiaying local elites' participation in post-Taiping reconstruction and the late Qing local self-government movement can assist us to understand the

interplay of state penetration and social mobilization. In the context of the late Qing and early Republic, the competition between state and local elites was not a zero-sum game. When the Qing government was implementing the New Policies, local elites quickly adjusted to this situation. By actively participating in the process, they increased resources, established networks, and maintained their status. Besides, the interaction between elite strategy and institutional changes also helps us to understand the historical processes of elite transformation in the early twentieth century China.

Appendix:

Election results of the seven districts of Jiaying prefecture in 1909

Districts	Number of voters	Date	District assemblymen
Jiaying	620	1909.06	Zhang Di, Wang Riji, Shen Wenhua, Shen Yanggao, Lu Neng, Wu Wenxi, Zhou Xierong, Wu Shoufu, Dong Deqian, Tan Xinjia, Yao Bingkui, Shen Benyi, Shen Hongji, Tang Nianzu Backup: Chen Zhiwan, Zhang Baoshen, Zheng Weisong, Zhou Zhimian
Xiushui	538 (0.29% of Xiushui's population)	1909.06	Shen Jinzhong, Tu Binghua, Tao Benque, Chu Fucheng, Ni Hengyong, Wang Gengyu, Mei Shaofu, Jiang Tingwei, Tao Baolin, Gao Ruiwei, Cai Jinxiang Backup: Shen Junru, Shen Shanjun, Zheng Weizhang, Zhu Xinyi, Qian Wenhui
Jiashan	Unclear	1909.06	Zhu Qizhen, Yu Chonghuang, Zhou Bin, Yuan Xilin, Qian Zuoyuan (the names of the other seven assemblymen were unclear)
Haiyan	444	1909.06	Zhang Gaoying, Zhang Yuanji, Zhu Bingtao, Zhu Baoqian, Wu Gengting, Chen Shu, Chen Yingsong, Wang Chengji, Xu Baoxin, Xu Shipai, Zhu Fushen, Li Zhen, Zhang Wenlong, Xu Shihen, Tan Tingwu, Feng Qinfang, Gu Weigao
Tongxiang	679	1909.06	Shen Shanbao, Zhu Aitong, Lu Fuji, Zhu Yongfang, Chen Qinghuai, Zhou Guozhen, Lao Jiongzhong, Guan Lunyuan; Backup: Shen Borong
Pinghu	Unclear	1909.06	Ge Sitong, Lu Bangxie, Zhu Fenggang, Xu Yingliang, Zhang Jingyong, Jaing Wengu, Gao Qinge, Wang Qizhen, Tang Tingrong, Zhang Peizhi, Gu Yanxing, Zhang Zongbi, Xu Shude, Zhang Wenchao, Ke Dezhong Backup: Ge Siluo, Lu Zengquan, Ji Zhaolin, Xu Guanguang
Shimen	470 (0.23% of Shimien's population)	1909.06	Yang Wentao, Zheng Junjie, Lu Jikuan, Wu Wenyu, Ma Zhao?, Li Shanji, Zhong Longwen, Sheng Zhongling, Zhang Daxun, Wei Changyu Backup: Yang Wenkui

Sources: *Shen bao*, 1909/06/09, 06/10, 06/13, 06/14, 06/16, 06/18, 07/20, 07/26. The population information of Xiushui in 1912 and Shimien in 1911 could be found in chapter two, table 4.

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