PATRON-CLIENT TIES AND MAOIST RURAL CHINA

by

Sumeeta Shyamsunder Chandavarkar

B.A., University of Toronto, 1993

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

POLITICAL SCIENCE

© Sumeeta Shyamsunder Chandavarkar 1997

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

December 3rd., 1997

All rights reserved. This work may not be
reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without permission of the author.

National Library of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services

Acquisitions et services bibliographiques

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-24103-3

Canada

APPROVAL

Name: Sumeeta Shyamsunder Chandavarkar

Degree: Master of Arts

Title of Thesis: Patron-Client Ties and Maoist Rural China

Examining Committee:

Chair: Alex Moens

Peggy Falkenheim Meyer
Associate Professor
Senior Supervisor

Yoshi Kawasaki
Assistant Professor

Patricia Howard
Department of Communications

Date Approved: Dec 3 1997

ABSTRACT

Title: Patron-Client Ties and Maoist Rural China

The primary aim of this analysis is to examine the general concept of clientelism and to elucidate its functions in Maoist rural China. This analysis highlights the relationship between clientelism, social fragmentation and the formation of horizontal linkages along categorical group interests.

Patron-client ties fulfilled two major functions in Maoist rural China: [a] they facilitated the articulation and satisfaction of particular interests, and hence political participation, [b] they reinforced existing social cleavages, which impeded the development of horizontal linkages among peasants capable of restructuring the predominant power relations in society. Patron-client ties maintained the prevailing socio-economic position of clients.

Chapters One and Two (Part One) focus primarily on clientelism as a concept. Chapter One examines the theoretical literature on clientelism to provide a conceptual framework for subsequent analysis of clientelism in Maoist rural China. Chapter Two establishes clientelism as a valid form of political participation.

Chapter Three (Part Two) looks at rural conditions in Maoist China as a reason for the emergence of clientelism. Chapter Four examines the concentration of power in the team leader and patron-client relationships within the production team unit. It further compares Chinese socialist clientelism with traditional and communist clientelism. Chinese socialist clientelism was a peculiar blend of both traditional and communist clientelism: it evinced a high degree of voluntariness, affectivity, loyalty, solidarity and legitimacy. It had little potential for coercion, but was exploitative as it maintained the

client's subordinate position. It was a single-strand relationship and both patron and client were from the same class. In Maoist China, the inadequacies of the institutionalised relations were remedied by clientelism.

Chapter Five explores the relationship between existing social cleavages, patron-client ties and development of horizontal linkages. The conclusion provides four reasons for the emergence of clientelism in the production team: [a] scarcity and unequal access to major resources, [b] concentration of power in the team leader, [c] insecurity due to political campaigns, [d] social fragmentation. The paper concludes by emphasising the importance of social cleavages to the study of clientelism in rural China.

IN MEMORY OF TIMOTHY R. EDGAR, 1971-1996

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should first like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Peggy Meyer for her unparalleled encouragement, advice, patience and most of all friendship; Prof. Yoshi Kawasaki for his insightful questions addressing research methods, clientelism and other personal relationships; and Prof. Pat Howard for revealing alternative interpretations on clientelism and *guanxi* in China.

I also extend my gratitude to Dr. Chris Hassell and Dr. Zenona Hrabar for their help and support. No words can adequately convey my thanks to Dr. Joe Wernick for giving me the necessary "equipment" to walk.

Last but not least, I thank my family for their love, support, tolerance and above all sense of humour, without which nothing would have been possible. And, I shall always have fond memories of my Vancouver days with M & B, M & M, S & S, and especially Clare.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION **1**

Patron-client ties 1
Maoist China 2
Approaches 5
Précis 9

CHAPTER ONE: THE PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP **14**

Characteristics of a traditional patron-client relationship 15
Power inequality *15*
Volition *17*
Reciprocity *19*
Affectivity *21*
Interests *22*
Generalised Exchange 24
Legitimacy 26
Variants of patron-client linkages 27
Origins of clientelism 30
Communist clientelism 33
Groups and clientelism 36
Tolerance 45
Conclusion 46

CHAPTER TWO: CLIENTELISM AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION **49**

Peasant influence and policy making in Maoist rural China 50
Articulation of interests 53
Criticism 57

PART TWO **64**

CHAPTER THREE: STATE POLICIES AND RURAL ENVIRONMENT **65**

Towards the communes 66
The three-tiered rural management system 70
Commune 71
Brigades 72
Production teams 74
Tax and surplus grain sales 77
Grain rations: basic grain and work point grain 84
Conclusion 91

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP IN MAOIST RURAL CHINA ... **94**

Team leader in a production team 95
Burdens of office 96
The emergence of clientelist ties with the team leader 102
Team leader's power and influence 104
Clients and patron 111
How clients benefited 111
Benefits to the patron 112
Non-clients 115
Efforts to contain abuse of power ineffective 116
Clientelism as addendum in rural China 118
Characteristics of Chinese socialist clientelism 119
Conclusion 124

CHAPTER FIVE: CLIENTELISM, SOCIAL CLEAVAGES AND HORIZONTAL LINKAGES . **127**

Lineages 129

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CLASS 136
COMPETITION AND INTRIGUE 137
EFFECTS OF CLIENTELISM IN RURAL CHINA ON HORIZONTAL TIES AND CLEAVAGES 140
REGIME LEGITIMACY, AUTHORITY AND STABILITY 143
Legitimacy *143*
Stability and authority *144*
STATE PENETRATION AND POWER 145
CONCLUSION 147

CONCLUSION 148

PRODUCTION TEAMS 149
CLIENTELISM IN RURAL CHINA 149
CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE SOCIALIST CLIENTELISM 151
SUMMARY 154

BIBLIOGRAPHY 156

INTRODUCTION

Clientelism is a ubiquitous phenomenon, capable of adjusting to the changing needs and demands of the societies in which it emerges. In such varied states as traditional-feudal and modern universalist, patron-client ties have fulfilled a range of functions such as provision of security, structural integration, political participation, and facilitation of co-operation and interdependence between unrelated groups.[1] Clientelism has even been observed to fulfil a function as superficial as ego massage.[2]

Patron-client ties have been observed not only as linkages within elites, but also between elites and non-elites. This thesis is interested in clientelism as a linkage between elites and non-elites in Maoist rural China.

Patron-client ties

Patron-client ties are vertical dyadic ties. They are established between two persons of different status, wealth, influence, and hence power. They are not only instrumental but also affective. The relationship derives its distinctiveness in its incorporation of contradictory features. On the one hand, there is an emphasis on voluntariness. On the other hand, the power inequality in the relationship dictates the terms of the relationship. But, despite the

---

[1] Rene Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation-Building," in eds. Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, James C. Scott, Friends, Followers, and Factions:A Reader in Political Clientelism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p.101.

[2] Jacek Tarkowski, "Poland: Patrons and Clients in a Planned Economy," in eds. S.N. Eisenstadt and Rene Lemarchand, Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development, (London: Sage Publications, 1981), p.183.

power imbalance, both parties need each other and engage in a mutually beneficial exchange of goods and services. Its ability to advance diffuse interests gives the clientelist relationship flexibility and resilience.[3]

As a concept, clientelism is best viewed as an evolutionary process arising out of factors such as: [a] the weakening of strong kinship bonds that were previously able to provide physical, economic and emotional security, [b] the inequality of autonomous access to vital goods and resources, and [c] the heightened feelings of insecurity and vulnerability due to a lack or unreliability of institutional guarantees. These factors may lead to the emergence of the patron as a guarantor of individual security. In traditional societies, patrons may fulfil responsibilities that kin groups no longer were able or willing to fulfil.[4]

In the communist setting due to the scarcity of goods, the amount of power wielded by local leaders, and the high degree of insecurity that accompanies political campaigns, patron-client ties serve to provide much desired economic, physical or emotional security.[5]

Maoist China

The primary aim of this analysis is to observe the overall concept of clientelism and in particular to elucidate its major functions in

---

[3] S.N. Eisenstadt and Luis Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange," Comparative Studies in Society and History vol.22, no.1, (1980), pp.50-51.

[4] James C. Scott, "The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds and Social Change in Rural Southeast Asia," Journal of Asian Studies vol.32, (November 1972); James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," in Friends, Followers, and Factions; Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations"

[5] S.N. Eisenstadt and Luis Roniger, "Clientelism in Communist Systems: A Comparative Perspective," Studies in Comparative Communism vol.XIV, no.2&3, (Summer/Autumn 1981), pp.234-244.

Maoist rural China. The patron-client relationship in Maoist rural China exhibited elements of clientelism evident in traditional as well as communist settings. However, Chinese socialist clientelism in all its aspects conformed neither to traditional nor to communist clientelism. An analysis of the Chinese variant poses a challenge because of the task involved in differentiating among traditional, communist and Chinese socialist clientelism. Moreover, Jean Oi's analysis of clientelism in rural China has encouraged such a study.

The socialist reorganisation of rural China commencing with the Mutual Aid teams and culminating in collectivisation, which emphasised local self-reliance, resulted in the creation of a fairly autonomous agricultural collective: the production team. As the lowest unit of accounting in a majority of the rural areas, the production team was responsible for production, management, finance and distribution within the team. Chief responsibility was in the hands of the team leader who was endowed with power sufficient to influence the daily lives of ordinary peasants. Although collectivisation brought assurance of some food supply at the minimal level, life in rural China was characterised by shortages, unreliable distribution, and dependence on local elites. The situation in which the team leader, a local elite, was uniquely placed because of his power created an environment conducive to patron-client ties. As political campaigns intensified and disillusionment with the socialist structure set in, the importance of patron-client ties between the team leader and team members increased.[5]

---

[5] John P. Burns, "Peasant Interest Articulation and Work Teams in Rural China 1962-1974," in eds. Godwin C. Chu and Francis L.K. Hsu, China's New Social Fabric (London: Kegan Paul International, 1983); Marc Blecher, China: Politics, Economics and Society (London: Frances Pinter [Publishers] Limited, 1986); Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relations in China (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

As a fairly autonomous unit, the production team was the most important political, social and economic structure in the lives of ordinary peasants. Peasant lives were played out usually within the confines of the production team.[7] And relations outside the team decreased in significance due to the insularity of the production team.[8] Without the production team, a peasant could secure neither employment nor a minimum share of the harvest. A peasant was identified by his/her production team unit. Within this corporate group, peasants lived, worked, socialised[9] and participated politically.

As peasants strove to extract particular benefits from their interactions with the team leader, the state represented by the team leader and society represented by individual team members began interacting. The team leader, a state agent, and the team member established a state-society linkage through a clientelist tie, which facilitated the articulation and satisfaction of particular interests. To borrow Jean Oi's words: "Here state meets society; here politics takes place. Here one can observe how state regulations shape political strategies and action as well as how state directives are circumvented, twisted, or ignored."[10]

---

[7] Franz Schurmann, "Peasants," in eds. Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell, Communist China: Revolutionary Reconstruction and International Confrontation 1949 to the Present (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p.191.

[8] William L. Parish and Martin King Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.303.

[9] Vivienne Shue, "State Power and Social Organization in China," in eds. Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World (New York:Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.69.

[10] Jean Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China: The Political Economy of Village Government (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p.3.

Approaches

This essay to some degree draws on Jean Oi's seminal work on clientelism as a state-society relationship in rural China. But it parts from Oi's approach in adopting a fundamentally different line of inquiry aimed at determining the major functions of clientelism in Maoist rural China, and arrives at a conclusion that highlights the impact of patron-client ties on intra-production team relations.

First, the line of inquiry in this essay is not solely on how non-elites pursue their particular interests and affect policy implementation to their benefit, though this does merit sufficient attention in this paper. Instead, the focus is primarily on the two major functions of clientelism in rural China, of which the articulation of particular interests is but one.

Second, in contrast to Oi's work, this paper does not seek to illustrate the superiority of the clientelist model in comparison with other state-society models. For Oi, the *totalitarian model* portrays "an atomized society and politically neutralized non-elites."[11] The view of the state as a repository of absolute power disqualifies any societal influence. The *interest-group model*, on the other hand, has a more favourable view of non-elite influence. This influence, however, is exerted by citizens acting as groups and utilising formal channels of political expression.[12] In contrast, the *clientelist model*, in Oi's view, allows for a more flexible image. Individuals participate in dyads and use informal channels of interest articulation.[13]

---

[11] Ibid., pp.8-9.

[12] Ibid., pp.3,8.

[13] Ibid., p.9.

This essay does not begin with a search for how non-elites participate in rural China. Instead, it starts with the broader concept of clientelism and concludes with clientelism in Maoist rural China. It itself focuses primarily on the broader theoretical literature on clientelism to glean an insight into the functions of patron-client ties in rural China. Whilst this theoretical literature on clientelism has not been ignored by other writers, such as Oi, it has not been their principal focus. By establishing the theoretical literature as its foundation and focus in Chapter One, this thesis offers a different interpretation of clientelism in rural China; one that emphasises the deleterious effects of clientelism in further aggravating the existing social cleavages within the production team.

An in-depth examination of the characteristics of the patron-client relationship reveals a degree of inherent complexity that is not altogether evident without a thorough investigation into the subject. This investigation raises a question whether clientelism can be viewed as a viable form of political participation, given the inherent power asymmetry and debate over volition.

The literature on the emergence of clientelism and its deleterious effects raises several questions on the relationship between kinship and patron-client ties. One such question is this: Can kinship and clientelist ties coexist and if so, how do they interact? In what setting did clientelism emerge in rural China and how did it affect the interpersonal relationships in that setting? How did this vertical dyadic tie impact the formation of horizontal linkages and organisation of groups coalescing around shared categorical interests? Does the

image of the production team as a unified corporate entity[14] stand in light of the above questions?

Graziano's study which reveals that clientelism emerges in an already disorganic society[15] and Lemarchand's study which explores the relationship between clientelism and co-operation between discrete ethnic groups[16] are both germane to the Chinese case. Hence, this conceptual survey of clientelism enhances considerably one's understanding of the complexity of patron-client ties and its various functions.

In addition, a comparison of clientelism in traditional and communist settings poses a question regarding to which variant Chinese socialist clientelism was most similar? How affective was the relationship and how strong was the degree of loyalty between the patron and client in rural China? Did the relationship emphasise its instrumental benefits? Was the relationship similar to the traditional variant where it was exploitative? Was there any potential for coercion in Chinese socialist clientelism? How voluntary was the relationship? Did clientelism serve as a "mechanism for distribution"[17] within the production team in rural China? Did it regulate the flow of major resources in society or did it function as an addendum?

By adopting an approach that first explores the general literature on clientelism, what emerges is an image of the patron-client relationship that is multi-dimensional in function and less benign than the one depicted in Oi's study. In a sense the exploration of clientelism as a

---

[14] Parish and Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China.

[15] Luigi Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," in Friends, Followers, and Factions, p.361.

[16] Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity"

[17] Christopher Clapman, "Clientelism and the State," in ed. Christopher Clapman, Private Patronage and Public Power: Political Clientelism in the Modern State (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p.16.

concept serves as a barometer and a heuristic tool which facilitates a better understanding of the workings of clientelism, in traditional and other settings, and its major functions in Maoist rural China.

It must be noted that the task of assessing the corporate unity of the production team is difficult. Little research has been undertaken on the topic of patron-client ties coexisting and/or corresponding to kinship ties within the production team.[18] In fact, although the literature does oftentimes hint at the potential conflict within the production team, there is an underlying assumption therein that the production team was a unified corporate entity.[19] Furthermore, little attention has focused solely on relations within the production team, with much of the attention placed on relations within villages, brigades and between production teams.[20] Moreover, when scholars discuss the erosion of the collective spirit, there are few clear references to whether this applies to villages, brigades, or production teams.[21] Nevertheless, the findings of prior research such as specific case studies provided by scholars of China will be utilised to show their relevance to the analysis put forward here.

This essay will address the questions posed with an examination of the general concept of clientelism, conditions in Maoist rural China and specifically within the production team, the dynamics between the team

---

[18] See Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.149, fn.39.

[19] Ibid.; Parish and Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China. These are just two examples. Works on rural China used for this analysis have tended towards the viewpoint of the production team as a unified corporate entity.

[20] Although Oi examines in detail the relationships between team leaders and team members, her line of inquiry is different and hence does not delve into conflicts within the team.

[21] Elizabeth Croll, From Heaven to Earth: Images and Experiences of Development in China (London: Routledge, 1994); Richard Madsen, Morality and Power in a Chinese Village (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

leader and the team members, and pre-existing cleavages within the production team. It will illustrate that clientelism in the production team enabled the peasants to articulate and satisfy their individual interests. And more important, it reinforced the pre-existing cleavages within the production team. Hence, it can be said that the patron-client relationship had two major functions in Maoist rural China:[9] [a] it facilitated articulation and satisfaction of particular interests and hence political participation, and [b] it reinforced the existing cleavages in society, which impeded the development of horizontal linkages among peasants capable of restructuring the predominant power relations in society. Indeed, clientelism maintained the prevailing socio-economic status of the clients.

Précis

This essay is structured along two parts. Part One adopts a broad scope and examines the general theoretical literature on clientelism. As a synthesis of the major findings on clientelism, Part One does not enter into the Chinese case-study in any great detail. Aside from a brief look at clientelism as political participation in China, Part One retains its rather general scope. Part One has two chapters.

Chapter One begins with a look at the characteristics of patron-client linkages in a traditional setting. The delineation of these characteristics will serve as an ideal type, a basis for comparison with the features of Chinese socialist clientelism in subsequent chapters. A brief look at the issue of legitimacy in this relationship will illustrate that despite the power asymmetry and potential for coercion, a feeling of legitimacy can affect the client's evaluation of, and desire to, leave the relationship. Legitimacy also affects the degree of affection and loyalty between the patron and client.

The next section will set forth the various reasons for the emergence of clientelism and allow for a later analysis of which reasons can be rendered germane to the emergence of clientelism in Maoist rural China. Similarly, the section on communism and clientelism elucidates the differences between clientelism in traditional and communist societies.

The subsequent sections summarise the findings on the deleterious effects and benefits of clientelism. This segment is especially important as it provides an insight into the "disorganic society"[22] in which patron-client ties become significant, the interaction between kinship and patron-client ties, and the impact of clientelist ties on existing societal cleavages. In addition, the benefits of the patron-client relationship illustrate the reasons for its endurance and the willingness of a ruling regime to tolerate such ties. This chapter also elucidates the ability of patron-client ties to adapt to changing settings and needs of society.

The whole purpose of the first chapter is geared towards outlining the various characteristics and functions of clientelism. This promotes a better understanding of clientelism and provides a basic foundation; it sets the conceptual framework for subsequent analysis of clientelism in Maoist rural China.

Chapter Two still devotes considerable attention to clientelism, but this time in its function as political participation. It will evaluate clientelism's participatory role and illustrate that clientelism can be, and is, accepted as a viable form of participation. Furthermore, it will present general criticism of clientelism as political participation; chief among them is its contribution to the

---

[22] Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.361.

preservation of the prevailing power relations in society. Since the latter is the theme of the paper, this aspect of clientelism will be highlighted.

This chapter also initiates the transition of the paper into examining rural China. There is a brief look at the Chinese political context in which clientelism as a form of political participation proves efficacious.

Part Two is devoted to Maoist rural China and divided into three chapters. Each of these three chapters provides reasons for the emergence of clientelism in Maoist rural China.

The first chapter (Chapter Three) is a detailed look at the post-1949 socialist reorganisation of rural China. Its purpose is to illustrate how state policies "shape[d] local politics."[23] The disillusionment, confusion and uncertainty of the peasantry as the state oscillated between radical and relaxed policies will be conveyed, and how this kindled the willingness of the peasants to pursue individual interests through clientelist ties.

This chapter also examines the state's methods of grain extraction through grain tax and procurement contracts. The low rates of food consumption endured by the peasants illustrate the context in which clientelism gained widespread currency. The section on work points will convey how the different work point systems affected the interpersonal relationships among the production team members and the general mood of the peasantry. It will also reveal the link between work points and a household's grain consumption. The scarcity of grain and cash, and the resultant competition to increase its supply through clientelist relationships will become evident.

---

[23] Ibid., p.11.

The thrust of this chapter will be to illustrate that, although peasants received some variable minimum share of the harvest, the scarcity of food and cash income and general poverty were characteristic of peasant life. Furthermore, peasants became economically and politically dependent on the production team and the production team leader. This chapter will set the stage for subsequent analysis of how clientelism established a strong presence in Maoist rural China.

The second chapter of part two (Chapter Four) narrows the focus of the paper on the production team. It examines in detail the economic dependence of the team members on a single elite, the team leader, and how this situation presented both the team members and team leader with opportunities to cultivate patron-client ties. Attention is also paid to the team leaders' attitudes to the burdens of office. This portrays a more complex image of team leaders in rural China and avoids an across-the-board classification of all leaders as local despots.

Having established clientelism as a viable form of political participation in Chapter Two, Chapter Four details the use of clientelism as political participation. Using Chapter One as a framework, this section compares the features of traditional clientelism, communist clientelism and Chinese socialist clientelism. This starts the process of outlining the features of clientelism in Maoist rural China and establishes political participation as one of the two major functions of clientelism in Maoist rural China.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, continues with the application of the insights gleaned from Chapter One to the Chinese case-study. It specifically explores pre-existing cleavages within the production team as one of the reasons for the emergence of clientelism. It also illustrates how the use of patron-client ties reinforces these cleavages. It further explores the impact of this interaction between

patron-client ties and social cleavages on horizontal linkages. In the process, this chapter answers the questions on the relationship between patron-client ties and kinship ties.

Chapter Five will put forward the second major function of patron-client ties in Maoist rural China: they reinforced existing societal cleavages, which impeded the development of horizontal linkages among peasants capable of restructuring the predominant power relations in society. This final chapter will also briefly present some thoughts on regime legitimacy, authority and stability.

The Conclusion briefly summarises the major findings of each chapter that lead to the delineation of the two major functions of patron-client ties in Maoist rural China. A summary of the reasons for the emergence of clientelism in Maoist rural China and the features of Chinese socialist clientelism are also presented. The Conclusion ends with calls for future studies of patron-client ties in China that incorporate more fully an analysis of social cleavages.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

A "lopsided friendship"[1] is how Pitt-Rivers characterised the patron-client relationship. Inequality, power asymmetry, and an element of affectivity are features evinced in clientelist ties. It is an alliance that falls somewhere between a relationship among equals based purely on personal sentiments and one based on pure coercion.[2] Indeed, clientelism exhibits some very contradictory features such as the "potential and/or actual coercion [which] co-exists with an ideological emphasis on the voluntary nature of the attachment."[3] This power relationship, which exhibits some characteristics of kinship and friendship bonds, has spurred much exploration and development. This chapter synthesises some of the major works on clientelism to present its salient characteristics in both traditional and communist settings, the variety in which it manifests itself, reasons for its emergence, its benefits and some of its detrimental effects. In effect, this chapter will serve as a basis for a later comparison of traditional clientelism and communist clientelism (as observed in the Soviet Union) with Chinese socialist clientelism.

---

[1] Julian Pitt-Rivers, The People of Sierra (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), p.140.

[2] James C. Scott and Benedict J. Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy: A Theory with Special Reference to Southeast Asia," in Friends, Followers, and Factions, p.442.

[3] Luis Roniger, "The Contemporary Study of Clientelism and the Changing Nature of Civil Society in the Contemporary World," in eds. Luis Roniger and Ayse Gunes-Ayata, Democracy, Clientelism, and Civil Society (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pubishers, Inc., 1994), p.4.

Characteristics of a traditional patron-client relationship

The difficulty in delineating the basic traits of the patron-client relationship cannot be overstated, given some of the attributes it shares with other instrumental or affective ties. Moreover, there is a lack of unanimous acceptance of two of its major characteristics: power inequality and the decision to voluntarily enter into, and remain in, a clientelist relationship.

Power inequality

The most important, although not entirely undisputed characteristic of a patron-client tie, is its vertical nature. It is a relationship binding two parties of unequal status, wealth and influence[4] resulting in an inequality in power. This power asymmetry is one of its distinguishable features and is grounded in the patron having access to, or more precisely monopolising, goods needed by the client, which makes the client dependent on the services and resources of the patron.[5] The extent of client dependence is contingent on the degree to which the client needs the goods and services offered by the patron and the amount of power imbalance between the two parties; the more powerful the individual, the less dependent is s/he on others to gain access to vital resources.[6]

Before elaborating on this aspect, it must be mentioned that this power asymmetry is not accepted by all to be inherent to the patron-client relationship. Whilst most scholars view it as an integral aspect of clientelism, it is viewed by Andrew Nathan to be an optional feature.

---

[4] John Duncan Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics," in Friends, Followers, and Factions, p.147.

[5] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations," p.50.

[6] Scott, "Patron-Client Ties and Political Change," p.125.

Although Nathan states that the patron and client are dissimilar, he does not attribute to clientelism power inequality as a defining characteristic.[7] The difference in power, status, or wealth does exist in a patron-client relationship, but not necessarily in each and every relationship: "very often [patron and client] are unequal in status, wealth, or power."[8] In other words, power asymmetry is not considered by Nathan to be a characteristic that differentiates a clientelist tie from other relationships. Furthermore, for Nathan there is a fundamental difference, which will be addressed later, between a "power relationship of imperative co-ordination"[9] and the clientelist tie. Notwithstanding Nathan's views, this essay considers power inequality to be a distinctive feature of the patron-client tie, and one on which the conduct of both parties towards each other is predicated.

This power inequality, however, has to be balanced in that it can be neither barely noticeable nor reach the point of excessive power. If the two parties involved in a clientelist tie were to reach the point of power equalisation, then the relationship would be characterised as a horizontal dyadic tie conducted on equal grounds. Without the element of power inequality, a relationship between two parties is more a friendship than a patron-client tie.[10]

Similarly, an increase in the patron's power, thereby increasing the power inequality and thus affecting the rules of reciprocal exchange between the patron and the client, can also make a clientelist tie redundant since, as will be seen later, the element of reciprocity is

---

[7] Andrew Nathan, "A Factional Model for CCP Politics," in Friends, Followers, and Factions, p.383.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Rene Lemarchand and Keith Legg, "Political Clientelism and Development," Comparative Politics, vol.4, no.2, (January 1975), p.152.

central to a clientelist tie. When the patron's power is sufficient to secure him/her that which s/he desires without payment, the patron may no longer feel it imperative to reciprocate in the exchange of goods and services. The patron's overwhelming power frees him/her from the need to build up a clientele. Instead, s/he may use her/his excessive power to coerce her/his former client into carrying out her/his wishes, whereby the patron changes the tie from clientelist to repressive. Thus, this power inequality has to be balanced; the patron has to be powerful in comparison with the client, but not powerful enough to be completely independent. This power asymmetry must fall somewhere on the continuum between equality and coercion.[11]

Volition

The notion of voluntariness in the client's decision to enter into, and remain in, a clientelist relationship is contingent on the recognition of the existence of a power inequality in this dyadic tie. Unlike kinship ties, which are ascriptive, patron-client linkages are entered into voluntarily and can, in principle, be terminated voluntarily. But, although patron-client theories emphasise the voluntary nature of this relationship, this essay prefers to downplay this very aspect.

There is credence to the argument that the decision of the two parties to enter into a clientelist relationship is voluntary, but the difficulty arises in categorising the decision of the client to remain in the relationship as wholly voluntary. This paper adopts Anthony Hall's perspective that this relationship is somewhat coercive as it "trap[s] the weak and poor in a vicious circle of poverty that allows

---

[11] Scott and Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy," p.442.

them no alternative means of earning a living, and which perpetuates the values which legitimize the power structure."[12] The emphasis on the voluntary nature of this relationship plays down the potential coercion, that is indicative of power asymmetry between any two parties, which makes terminating the relationship by the client difficult. And since the relationship is not regarded as legal and is based on personal and informal understanding,[13] the client is unable to seek outside intervention in cases of dispute with the patron. The clientelist tie is, as categorised by Peter Flynn, more a "culture of powerlessness" in which "few men enjoy being a client."[14]

At the same time, this voluntary aspect cannot be dismissed altogether. Voluntarism does exist in the relationship, but perhaps not to as great a degree as some writers like Andrew Nathan state. To Andrew Nathan this voluntary aspect is the defining characteristic of clientelism. Nathan argues that if "the right of abrogation formally exists but in fact cannot be exercised," then the relationship is a "power relationship of imperative co-ordination" rather than a patron-client tie.[15] However, if one accepts the power inequality of the relationship as given, then the degree of voluntariness in the decision of the weaker party to terminate a clientelist tie is difficult to discern; one cannot disregard the potentially coercive nature of the relationship that is inhered in a superior-subordinate linkage.

---

[12] Anthony Hall, "Patron-Client Relations: Concepts and Terms," in Friends, Followers, and Factions, p.511.

[13] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations," p.50.

[14] Peter Flynn, "Class, Clientelism, and Coercion: Some Mechanisms of Internal Dependency and Control," Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, vol.12,no.2, (1974), p.151.

[15] Nathan, "A Factional Model," p.383.

To the extent that the status of a client is not ascriptive, the voluntary nature of clientelism is apparent. Yet, it is equally plausible that in certain environments, individuals have little choice but to seek clientelist ties, and were they presented with an alternative, they would surely eschew their subordinate clientelist role.[16]

There is an inverse relation, which must not be ignored, between client dependence on the patron and the degree of client voluntariness in the relationship. "But if there is unclaimed arable land, if the peasant can fall back on his kin group for protection and upon professional moneylenders for loans, the peasant's dependence on patrons is somewhat diminished,"[17] and this would increase the degree of client voluntariness in the relationship. Thus, in this situation a peasant-client's decision to leave the relationship would be quite voluntary.

The degree to which this relationship is voluntary varies according to different situations. It is difficult to determine this because the nature of the power inequality significantly affects the behaviour of the two parties. This specific feature of clientelism is more clear cut in principle than in reality. Nevertheless, an element of voluntarism does exist conceptually, due to the nature of reciprocity inherent in the clientelist relationship.

Reciprocity

Unlike the concept of voluntarism, the notion of reciprocity is not as difficult to delineate. The exchange of goods and services is central to the clientelist relationship, although the goods and services exchanged are not comparable. Whilst the patron provides such tangible

---

[16] Flynn, "Class, Clientelism, and Coercion," p.151.

[17] Scott, "The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds," p.12.

goods as economic aid, those offered by the clients are generally intangible, such as personal loyalty and political support.[18] The ability of each partner to offer something that the other does not possess "makes the system worthwhile."[19] Furthermore, the exchanges are not effected for specific purposes. Instead, the "exchange of these resources is usually effected by a 'package-deal,' i.e., neither resource can be exchanged separately but only in combination that includes both types [instrumental, economic, as well as political on the one hand and promises of solidarity and loyalty on the other]."[20] This particular kind of exchange referred to as generalised exchange injects unconditionality, continuity and long-term obligation into the relationship.[21] If the patron's power is so superior as to enable him/her to extract goods and services from the client without reciprocation, then the relationship is characterised as extortion. A key aspect of clientelism is that despite its power inequality, both parties have to reciprocate in the exchange of goods and services; they each need the other, but the degree of their mutual dependence is dissimilar.[22] This variance in dependence is reflected in the exchange of goods and services, which remains in favour of the patron.[23]

The reliance of the relationship on reciprocity is necessary to differentiate it from other asymmetrical relationships. Without the

---

[18] Eric R. Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies," in Friends, Followers, and Followers, p.174.

[19] George M. Foster, "The Dyadic Contract: A Model for the Social Structure of a Mexican Peasant Village," in eds. Jack M. Potter, May N. Diaz, and George M. Foster, Peasant Society: A Reader (Boston: Little, Brown and Company [Inc],1967), p.225.

[20] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations," p.50.

[21] Ibid., p.52.

[22] Alex Weingrod, "Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties," in Friends, Followers, and Factions, p.324.

[23] Scott and Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy," p.445.

quality of reciprocation, the patron-client relationship could be a "formal authority" relationship or one of "pure coercion."[24] An asymmetrical relationship that adheres to the rule of reciprocation is central to a patron-client linkage.[25]

Affectivity

But despite the inequality in power, which hints at the potential use of coercion, the patron-client linkage is not without personal sentiments. The interpersonal loyalty and obligation between the two parties makes the linkage affective as well as instrumental.[26] There is an element of attachment and solidarity, the strength of which is dependent on the parties involved. The longer both parties have been together, the stronger the personal tie between them. The patron is often viewed as not just the client's protector, but one who displays "an almost parental concern for the responsiveness to the needs of his client, and that the latter should display an almost filial loyalty to his patron."[27] This sense of personal loyalty and solidarity is a feature that separates the clientelist tie from other instrumental ties. This personal aspect is enhanced by the face-to-face contact that is essential to the development and maintenance of the linkage.[28]

Graziano adopts a different view of the role of affection in the patron-client relationship. He sees it as a response by the patron to preserve the inequality in the exchange of goods and services. He

---

[24] John Duncan Powell cited in Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change," p.125.

[25] See Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics," p.148.

[26] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations," p.50.

[27] Carl H. Lande, "Networks and Groups in Southeast Asia: Some Observations on the Group Theory of Politics," in Friends, Followers, and Factions, p.77.

[28] Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics," p.147.

states that "when the power differential is so great and the client is socially isolated," a strong feeling of affection can "soften the terms of an unequal exchange."[29]

But the show and development of affection as a calculated response does not preclude it developing into genuine affection. Over a period of time, the patron and the client both develop a deeper understanding of each other which enhances the feelings of genuine affection between the two.

Interests

Lastly, the patron-client tie advances particular and diffuse interests.[30] Both patron and client enter into this relationship not to further any common interests, but to pursue their complementary private interests.[31] Of course, there are cases in which both the patron and client do pursue a common goal, but this occurs when the attainment of the patron's goal is a prerequisite to the attainment of the client's goal.[32] The very diffuseness of interests pursued injects flexibility into this relationship. In fact, clientelism derives much of its enduring feature from its ability to adapt to changing situations and advance a variety of interests.

The traits of patron-client ties are contradictory in nature and defy precise characterisation. To illustrate: the relationship combines power asymmetry with solidarity, obligations, and interpersonal sentiments. The relationship is exploitative; it maintains the client's

---

[29] Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.363.

[30] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations," p.49.

[31] Carl H. Lande, "Group Politics and Dyadic Politics: Notes for a Theory," in Friends, Followers, and Factions, p.508.

[32] Carl H. Lande, "Introduction: The Dyadic Basis in Clientelism," in Friends, Followers, and Factions, p.xxi.

subordinate position because the client is more dependent on the patron and "can afford much less to terminate the exchange than the patron can."[33] The relationship is also potentially coercive. Yet there is an element of voluntarism and mutual obligation.[34]

The patron-client tie has characteristics similar to those noticed in friendship and kinship. But these similarities are outweighed by other characteristics inherent in this relationship. The face-to-face contact and long-standing commitment between two parties inject personal sentiments into this tie likening it to both kinship and friendship ties. The strong sense of obligation, loyalty, and solidarity resembles the emotional ties among kin.

However, unlike kinship, this tie is not ascriptive: one is not born a client. In a sense, Eric Wolf's classification of friendship can also be applied to the patron-client relationship namely that, "in contrast to the kin tie, the primary bond in the friendship dyad is not forced in an ascribed situation; friendship is achieved."[35] Similarly, a patron-client relationship is not ascriptive, but achieved. Identification with the patron or client is nurtured and can, theoretically, be terminated at any point in time.

The strong element of inequality in status, power, and influence which results in exploitation differentiates clientelism from friendship. It is not the instrumental aspect of the clientelist tie that separates it from a friendship, for friendships that emphasise instrumental benefits do exist and are quite common. It is the power

---

[33] Laura Guasti, "Peru: Clientelism and Internal Control," in <u>Friends, Followers, and Factions</u>, p.423.

[34] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations," pp.50-51.

[35] Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations," pp.171-172.

differential that is the crucial difference between a friendship and a patron-client relationship:

> When instrumental friendship reaches a maximum point of imbalance so that one partner is clearly superior to the other in his capacity to grant goods and services, we approach the critical point where friendships give way to the patron-client tie.[36]

Clientelism is a peculiar blend of instrumental and affective ties with an underlying inequality in power that governs the rules of exchanges between patron and client.

In sum, the distinguishing features of this traditional vertical dyadic tie are:

- Inequality in status, wealth and influence, hence power asymmetry and degree of exploitation. There is a potential for coercion. The relationship is exploitative as it maintains the client's subordinate position.
- Conceptual emphasis on voluntariness. Parties enter into, and can theoretically leave, the relationship voluntarily. But this degree of voluntariness is variable and related to the extent of power imbalance and hence client dependence. One's view regarding voluntariness in the relationship is directly related to the emphasis placed on the feature of power asymmetry.
- Reciprocity in exchange of non-comparable goods and services.
- Advances particular and diffuse interests.
- Relationship is developed and maintained through face-to-face contact.
- Relationship based on obligation. It establishes trust, loyalty and personal sentiments between the patron and client, the degree of which is variable.

Generalised Exchange

A brief mention of the concept of generalised exchange is relevant to an understanding of the reciprocity equation in the patron-client relationship. Generalised exchange creates a "connection between instrumental and power relations on the one hand and solidarity and expressive relations on the other."[37] The exchange differs from

---

[36] Ibid., p.174.

[37] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Patron-client Relations," pp.52-53.

specific market exchange in being non-utilitarian and unconditional. Generalised exchange establishes trust, solidarity, and obligation. There is restriction neither on the duration of the relationship nor on the specific purposes of the relationship. In other words, it is not a contract. In a patron-client tie, generalised exchange provides security; the patron comes to the aid of his client when the latter is in need. Whereas specific exchange is conditional and instrumental, generalised exchange is unconditional and is imbued with a sense of obligation.[38]

The best method of approaching a potential patron is to present him/her with a gift. The objective of first presenting a gift, and then, reciprocating the exchange of gifts is to help "initiate social interaction"[39]; a means of forging a relationship between two parties.

Through the act of exchanging goods and services, the two parties seek to establish trust and mutuality in the relationship. The on-going exchange of gifts creates a feeling of indebtedness and an obligation to reciprocate. Over the course of time, this reciprocity establishes obligations and unconditionality in the exchange of goods and services.[40] Both parties avoid striking a "balance"[41] in their debits and credits, since this would terminate the contract, unless of course one of the parties wishes to end the relationship. Generalised exchange creates and maintains trust and obligation between two parties, which facilitates the continuation of the relationship.[42]

---

[38] Ibid., pp.51-55.

[39] Alvin W. Gouldner, "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement," in Friends, Followers, and Factions, p.39.

[40] Ibid., pp.35-40.

[41] Foster, "The Dyadic Contract," p.217.

[42] Gouldner, "The Norm of Reciprocity," pp.35-40.

Specific exchange on the other hand demands a specific and immediate payment. There is no long-term obligation. The client receives a good or service, and reciprocates immediately.[43] The contract is entered into to fulfil a specific objective and with the return payment, the contract is terminated; the debits and credits are evenly balanced.

Legitimacy

Despite the power imbalance in the patron-client relationship, a feeling of legitimacy is integral to the strength of solidarity and loyalty between the two parties.

A subjective evaluation of the relationship can be derived from the "objective balance of goods and services exchanged individually."[44] If the client receives more benefits than the costs involved in remaining in the relationship, s/he is likely to view the relationship as legitimate.[45] On the other hand, the balance of goods and services exchanged may be in favour of the patron, yet the client may still view the bond as legitimate: s/he may believe that the patron by virtue of her/his superior position has the upper hand in the relationship and is entitled to more benefits.[46]

The client's evaluation of the legitimacy of this tie is likely to be negative if the exchange is overwhelmingly in favour of the patron, and the benefits do not meet subsistence levels.[47] At this point, the client's compliance to the patron's wishes is forced, there is no

---

[43] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations," p.52.

[44] Scott and Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy," p.444.

[45] Ibid., p.445.

[46] Ibid., p.444; and Lande, "Introduction," p.xxvii.

[47] Scott and Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy," p.445.

reciprocity, the relationship approaches extortion and is void of legitimacy; the client considers him/herself better off without the patron's protection. When the relationship is characterised by pure extortion rather than reciprocal exchange of goods and services, the patron-client tie devolves into a relationship of "forced dependence which inspires no legitimacy."[48]

To sustain the patron-client tie, then, the imbalance of goods and services exchanged and power asymmetry has to be only delicately biased in the patron's favour. The patron-client tie by its very nature favours the patron over the client.[49] Therefore, the imbalance in the reciprocity will be ever present. It is the degree of this imbalance and the patron's circumspect use of his/her superior power[50] that determines, in the eyes of the client, the legitimacy of the relationship and the "active loyalty" of the client.[51]

Variants of patron-client linkages

The emphasis on face-to-face contact in a clientelist tie restricts the scope of the parties involved. In other words, much of the clientelist transactions occurs between two individuals. This dyadic relationship is the most basic form of a patron-client tie. However, clientelism has produced variants of the original patron-client linkage: corporate clientelism, dyadic non-corporate groups and brokerage, all of which illustrate the fluid nature of clientelism.

---

[48] Ibid., p.449.

[49] "The question, however, is not whether the exchange is lopsided, but rather how lopsided it is" (Ibid., p.445). Also see Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change," p.125.

[50] "The more the patron needs the active loyalty of his clients, the more likely he will avoid using force" (Scott and Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy," p.449).

[51] Scott and Kerkvliet note the difference between dependence and active loyalty, which cannot be forcibly extracted (Ibid., pp.444-445,449).

Corporate clientelism is a corporate group of professionals, local communities, or other associations acting as a single client. The patron, a specific political candidate or a political party, promises rewards to his/her client, the corporate group, in return for the client's votes and political support. For example, a political party perceives a threat to its power due to the rise of a certain trade union leader. To negate that threat, absorbing the trade union leader is one option. By offering the union leader and his/her union particularistic benefits, the party is able to coopt the union leader and the union.[52]

Another variant of corporate clientelism is two corporate groups, such as lineages or clans, involved in a patron-client relationship. Although corporate clientelism exhibits a more issue-oriented outlook towards politics and is therefore more developed in its ability to organise group-based interests, it retains an important clientelist feature: the articulation and satisfaction of particularistic interests.[53]

On the one hand, members of a local community coalesce around shared interests and thus illustrate their ability to discard an extremely narrow personal outlook. Yet, this local community group seeks particularistic rewards: rewards that are of benefit only to that community. Corporate clientelism illustrates the evolution of the articulation of interests based purely on a personal outlook to one based on local group interests. But this form of interest articulation

---

[52] Although this example is extracted from Graziano's study in Southern Italy, it is not in reference to a clientelistic system. The example cited in this text is modified and quite general (Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.372).

[53] Lande, "Introduction," pp.xxxi.

has "not yet acquired a sense of supra-local class," or occupational interest.[54]

Unlike corporate clientelism, dyadic non-corporate groups are less cohesive and lack a common group identification. Examples of non-corporate groups are clusters of friends or political factions. Group boundaries are unclear and there is a constant turnover of members. Members are very rarely linked to each and every member of the group. Such groups mobilise temporarily to advance "individual interests and fulfil individual obligations."[55]

A third variant, brokerage clientelism is important in connecting two parties who might otherwise be unable to link up. The broker secures benefits for him/herself and provides benefits to both parties. A broker, in being a middle man, can play a crucial role in securing votes from a specific group for a political candidate who is unable to personally connect with this group. A broker differs from a patron in not having control over the resource being exchanged. S/he merely links up two people and enables the exchange of resources between these two parties.[56]

These variations of the vertical dyadic relationship are important features of democratic and authoritarian politics. They integrate whole local communities into a political party, and are important in intra-party politics. In non-democratic regimes, clientelism in the guise of factions is encountered in much of the political manoeuvring. It is evident that clientelism exhibits itself in various forms and adapts itself to the situations in which it is present.

---

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., pp.xix.

[56] Ibid., pp.xxxv.

Origins of clientelism

Despite a client's subordinate position within the dyadic relationship, benefits such as security, access to resources, and opportunities of personal advancement are strong incentives to enter into a patron-client linkage. Clientelism first appeared in rural areas where land and other necessary resources were concentrated in the hands of the local gentry.[57] The constant vulnerability that came to characterise peasant life was somewhat eased by the emergence of clientelism. Since subsequent chapters deal specifically with peasants, examples of peasant hardships and strategies will help in explicating the origins of patron-client ties.

The security in an environment that relies heavily on the good will of nature and local gentry is but precarious. Natural disasters and concomitant economic hardship undermine any semblance of peasant security. Such insecurity, material or psychic, can seldom be ameliorated by institutional guarantees, which may be non-existent or unreliable.[58] In fact, extractive state policies, which usually accompany the penetration of centralised state structures, place further burdens on peasants.[59] To make the best of a hostile environment, a peasant seeks a patron who can offer him/her security and insurance. For example, in Imperial China, the unreliability of the justice system encouraged people to enter into a clientelist relationship as "a form of insurance against depredations,[and] false accusations by enemies and officials."[60]

---

[57] Hall, "Patron-Client Relations:Concepts and Terms," p.510.

[58] Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change," p.133.

[59] Lemarchand and Legg, "Political Clientelism and Development," p.158.

While the peasant is unable to control nature or by him/herself oppose state policies, s/he is able to accept the protection of an individual of higher status who becomes his/her "personal defender."[61] Furthermore, the patron stands between the state and the peasant and can mitigate the impact, on the client, of extractive state demands. As Lemarchand and Legg state, clientelism serves as an "alternative to the 'social security' functions of the modern welfare state."[62]

Aside from the general environmental conditions that classify average peasant life, specific hardships encountered by individuals are also reasons to rely on patrons. In such cases, patrons not only help clients deal with their initial specific problems but also assist them in dealing with the harsh general environment.[63]

The choice of an outsider as a protector reveals the weakening impact of kinship bonds. Through this act, an individual is not eschewing his/her kinship bonds. Instead, it illustrates the inability of these bonds to provide protection. Scott in his study of Southeast Asia regards kin bonds are the most "cohesive" and "dependable" and as the "ideal model of solidarity for other units of protection."[64] He discusses how economic and political changes can render kinship units of "co-operation and security" ineffectual inducing individuals to seek alternative means of protection: "patron-client dyads will flourish when kinship bonds alone become inadequate for these purposes."[65] This

---

[60] S.N. Eisenstadt and Luis Roniger, <u>Patrons, Clients, and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.140.

[61] Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change," p.133.

[62] Lemarchand & Legg, "Political Clientelism and Development," p.158.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Scott, "The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds," p.14.

[65] Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change," p.134.

situation, however, does not preclude the initiation of a patron-client relationship between two kin members.

Furthermore, when the village as a corporate unit can no longer project a cohesive, united image and provide necessary assistance to an individual, clientelism emerges to fulfil the demands of that individual: "Where corporate kin groups and cohesive village structures prevailed...they reduced the significance of vertical ties."[66]

Another equally important reason for the rise of clientelism is the inequality of autonomous access to vital goods and resources.[67] When the flow of resources in society is structured along an ascriptive hierarchical or universalist monolithic basis such as communist systems, lower status actors encounter inequality in access to resources and markets. The patron's role in this situation is to provide the client preferential access to resources. A client's objective is not to effect changes in the societal structuring of the flow of resources but to elicit benefits such as the distribution of vital and scarce goods on the basis of favouritism.[68] Thus, clientelism becomes a "mechanism for distribution."[69]

Aside from defensive goals such as security, clients are also motivated by the prospect of advancing their own status through clientelism, especially in an environment that provides few independent opportunities.[70] Patrons by virtue of their status, influence, and

---

[66] Scott, "The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds," p.13.

[67] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations," p.50.

[68] Roniger, "The Comparative Study of Clientelism," p.10.

[69] Clapman, "Clientelism and the State," p.16.

[70] "Social mobilization in a society with little structural differentiation is likely to nurture clientelism; on the one hand, where the political, economic and social spheres are higly differentiated, individual demands are most likely to be satisfied through channels other than those offered by ties of political clientage. In one case, politics and society so replicate each

power, have abundant resources at their disposal and can provide the means to advance a client's status. Through acts such as paying for the client's education, or using influence to secure a good job for the client, a patron contributes to advancing the client's status.[71] Although the client is in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the patron, s/he employs efficient and less arduous means of attaining a higher socio-economic status; this is more so in a system with few independent opportunities for "moving up in the world."

In sum, patron-client ties mitigate the adverse effects of unreliable distribution and inequality in access to vital and scarce resources, create a more secure environment, reduce some of life's uncertainties, and provide individuals with means to improve their social status. This relationship, per se, however is not without its negative aspects which are discussed later.

Communist clientelism

Communist systems, in general, are characterised by a high degree of scarcity of vital goods and services. And much of the available goods are poor in quality. Despite the high demand, supply of resources very rarely correlates to demand due to certain inefficiencies in many sectors of command economies and to overly centralised distribution. In such situations, clientelism as addendum "remed[ies] inadequacies of the institutionalized relations"[72]; that is, it serves to narrow the gap

---

other as to offer relatively few opportunities for advancement other than those identified with 'favors,' 'pull' or patronage; in the other, the social and economic sectors constitute more or less autonomous spheres of activity, and thus offer an alternative range of opportunities to those that might otherwise be derived from political clientelism" (Lemarchand and Legg, "Political Clientelism and Development," p.162).

[71] Ibid., p.158.

[72] Lande, "Introduction," p.xxi.

between that which is provided by the system and that which is actually needed. As an addendum in communist systems, clientelism "supplement[s] the flow of resources and the processes of interpersonal and institutional exchange and interaction throughout the society or within one sector."[73]

Communism creates a paradoxical situation for while such systems extol the importance of impersonal ideological tenets and profess a commitment to equal access to resources, in reality the system is characterised by personalised authority and inequality in access to resources. The scarcity of goods, the amount of power wielded by local leaders, the importance of correct ideological positions, and the high level of insecurity are strong incentives to initiate patron-client relations. Bureaucrats, local or central, are in prime positions to serve as patrons since they control distribution of scarce and vital resources. And these patrons themselves are eager to increase the number of loyal supporters as a buffer against political campaigns.[74]

Despite certain similarities, clientelism in communist systems differs from clientelistic societies in which patron-client ties constitute the major mode of regulating the flow of resources. First, in communist clientelism, the patron does not own but has access to goods. Second, the patron and client can be, and frequently are, from the same class background. The patron derives his/her power by virtue of his/her office and is powerful only so long as s/he remains in office. Last, the political campaigns and constant intra-elite power struggles add uncertainty and insecurity to the patron's official

[73] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Clientelism in Communist Systems," p.234.

[74] Ibid., pp.235-236.

position: thus, decreasing the stability of clientelist ties in communist systems.[75]

The uncertainty also affects the nature of the patron-client relationship. The emphasis in this environment is more on the instrumental benefits of the relationship. The affective ties are weaker, and the sense of obligation and unconditionality not as strong.[76] However, one should keep in mind that in local areas where leaders are long-time residents and members of their constituent areas, the affective ties are strong. The personal element is stronger in smaller, local and familiar areas.

In spite of the prevalence of patron-client ties in communist systems, patron-client ties do not, and will not, constitute the major means of structuring the flow of resources. In communist systems, access to resources is regulated according to the universalist criterion that all citizens have access to public goods and major markets. Although citizens do rely on patron-client ties to get certain goods, they rarely rely completely on such ties. Instead, one encounters a combination of goods distributed by the state and those acquired through informal relationships.[77]

There are two reasons why clientelism in communist systems functions purely as an addendum. First, the party's legitimacy is predicated on its upholding universalist principles. But the use of clientelism cuts at the root of these principles and citizens learn that to gain favourable access to public goods and services, one needs a patron.[78]

---

[75] Ibid., p.244.

[76] Ibid., p.239.

[77] Ibid., p.238.

[78] Eisenstadt and Roniger, Patrons, Clients, and Friends, pp.189-190.

To maintain the universalist criterion of equal access to public goods and services, and hence to reaffirm the regime's legitimacy, the center has to reduce the power of the patrons. It does so by holding political campaigns and purges, which prevent these patrons from monopolising access to these public goods and services. But such campaigns are waged not only on the basis of maintaining the universalist values of the Communist Party.[79]

An important reason for the desire to "clean up" the system is that the central elite is fearful of losing its power and predominant position in society to patrons who may come to monopolise access to important resources. The center's power and influence are fettered by the rise of powerful patrons who use their bureaucratic position as controllers of public goods and services to enter into clientelist ties. The attack on these local patrons impedes the ability of clientelism to surface as the predominant mode of regulating the flow of resources in society.[80]

The inadequacies of the distributive mechanism in communist systems engenders clientelism. The emergence of clientelism, however, counters the principles of universalism. The campaigns launched by central elites serve as a countervailing force to the expansion of clientelism. Despite the ideological bias of universalism, its coexistence with clientelism has become a reality in communist systems.

Groups and clientelism

In spite of all the benefits of patron-client ties, such personal relationships are not without deleterious effects. Indeed, most benefits of clientelism have a concomitant long-term negative effect,

---

[79] Ibid.

[80] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Clientelism in Communist Systems," p.240.

which makes the task of evaluating the merits of patron-client ties rather difficult. Whilst the client's motive for seeking a vertical dyadic tie is understandable given the hostile environment, this very action works against the client in the long run.

Even the act of exchanging votes for tangible goods in democratic societies, albeit "useful for the politicization and incorporation of peasants into modern politics,"[81] only serves to reinforce the peasants' dependent position. And although the peasants are involved in the act of voting, this act does not, by itself, reflect their political consciousness. Instead, their incorporation into the political system is coupled with their subordination to the "clientele system."[82]

The most important negative consequence of patron-client ties is its effect on the ability of individuals to form coherent and cohesive groups advancing categorical group interests. This is not to imply that clientelism is capable of dissolving extant groups and replacing horizontal with vertical loyalties. Luigi Graziano in his study of clientelism in Southern Italy states that such vertical relationships emerge in a "disorganic society"[83] and maintain the existing social fragmentation. Clientelism's impact on group consciousness is inversely related to the degree of solidarity present within groups.

Where primordial loyalties are predominant and strong, there is little significance of clientelist ties. The ethnic or kin group takes care of its members, provides for their needs and ensures their security. Therefore, peasants are unlikely to involve themselves in

---

[81] Cristina Escobar, "Clientelism and Social Protest: Peasant Politics in Northern Colombia," in Democracy, Clientelism, and Civil Society, p.67.

[82] Ibid., p.67.

[83] Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.361.

relations of dependence, which only provide goods and services that are already available to, or not required by, the peasants.[84]

However, the weakening of the kinship group's ability to provide support for its kin creates situations in which patron-client ties flourish. Patrons take on roles previously fulfilled by the kin group. In these circumstances, peasants find little alternative but to turn to powerful local individuals or leaders.

The prevalence of patron-client ties is also evident in circumstances where kinship bonds are weak and have rarely constituted a reliable source of protection, for example in villages where more distant members of the lineage are seldom allowed to enjoy the wealth of the lineage and are treated poorly and unfairly. Consequently, members who are at the bottom of the lineage hierarchy become willing to enter into a dependent relationship that allows them to pursue their particular interests. Clientelism, then, emerges in an environment that lacks strong group identities; "a product of a disorganic society."[85] This "disorganic society" can be taken to mean fragmentation within a lineage or ethnic group, or in the peasantry regionally or nationwide between lineages or different ethnic groups.

In many cases, the patron-client relationship is also based on consanguinity, but this does not preclude the relationship from being exploitative. Scott, however, views the interaction between kinship and clientelist tie differently. He states that when "patrons and clients...share certain social identities," this shared kinship identity may serve to "guarantee minimum benefits to the client" and "to the

---

[84] Scott, "The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds," p.13-14.

[85] Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.361.

degree that other shared interests are salient, they reduce the social significance of the patron-client balance."[86]

Scott further states that when different kin, race or religious group boundaries coincide with patron-client boundaries, the former serves to "both exacerbate and compound the potential for hostility in patron-client relations"[87] and may even help dissolve the patron-client linkage.[88]

But a patron-client tie can not only strengthen social identities such as kinship and ethnic ties, it can also weaken them. Lemarchand remarks that mutual interest can lead to patron-client ties, which can be quite effective in facilitating exchange between different ethnic or socially discrete groups.[89] A reason for the initiation of a patron-client relationship is the exchange of goods or services which the other party needs but does not have.

However, the nature of prior interaction between two groups is important. If there is a history of conflict between two ethnic or kinship groups that disallows any co-operation, then it is unlikely that these two groups would be willing to establish a relationship. If however, there has been little interaction of any sort between the two groups, then it is highly likely that co-operation could emerge between the two groups. This relationship between other social identities and patron-client ties is complex and makes the task of arriving at a conclusive viewpoint on the nature of their interaction difficult. But,

---

[86] Scott and Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy," p.446.

[87] Ibid.

[88] M.G.Smith cited in Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity," p.112.

[89] Ibid., p.101.

one can restate here that clientelism "tend[s] to act as a barrier to... horizontal ties between peasants qua peasants."[90]

By delivering short-term benefits to their client, patrons, in effect, hinder the formation of strong group-based demands. Although patron-client ties are detrimental to the formation of horizontal linkages among both patrons and clients, this effect is more apparent on the latter.[91]

In fact, it is quite plausible that patrons take care in ensuring that their clients have very little in common. The more heterogeneous the clientele, the fewer shared characteristics. A homogeneous clientele has the potential of forming horizontal ties, which could undermine a patron's predominant position. The common experiences of dependence on the patron may entice the clients, who already share other interests, to form a group based on these interests and experiences.[92]

But a heterogeneous clientele will prefer to maintain allegiance to the patron, who is still considered the best guarantor of individual interests. Clients feel no need to advance group based interests as they have little in common and consider the costs higher than any potential benefits.[93]

When individuals become clients, they are advancing particular interests. These interests are short-term and result in short-term benefits. The convenience of a patron facilitating the client's pursuit of interest is greater than when the client is working hard at reaching a group consensus. Group formation based on profession or ethnicity requires patience, time and organisation, and it may not necessarily

---

[90] Scott and Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy," p.440.

[91] Eisenstadt and Roniger, Patrons, Clients, and Friends, p.48.

[92] Scott, "Patron-Client Ties and Political Change," p.132.

[93] Ibid.

reap any immediate benefits. Clientelism, on the other hand, secures immediate benefits and requires less groundwork. The client perceives the cost of pursuing categorical group interests as cumbersome and frustrating, hence opts for an easier route.

This route satisfies a client's demands. No matter how oppressive and extractive the surrounding environment, the client experiences few of its effects, or at least that is how s/he views it. S/he obtains, and continues to receive, benefits, and thus does not feel alienated from society. The lack of, or reduced sense of alienation, the concomitant satisfaction with the status quo results in apathy towards involvement in group activity. Moreover, those around the client, who are not in clientelist ties, will begrudge the client for his/her better opportunities and access to resources. Clientelism is extremely competitive, and it engenders competition not only between non-clients and clients, but also among clients.[94]

Frequently, individuals, for example peasants, find that they no longer have much in common with other peasants. They are unable to share in the experiences of the peasants around them. Clientelism has given those individuals more benefits and opportunities than those around them. Since resources are scare and clientelism is very competitive, it is evident that only a minority of peasants will be clients, and among those clients will be a hierarchy of clients depending on the value of goods received. Thus, even clients will be hard pressed to find shared interests.

And if the subjective evaluation of the patron-client relationship is satisfactory, then the affective quotient is higher, resulting in a stronger sense of obligation and loyalty to the patron. With a high

---

[94] Lande, "Introduction," p.xxiv.

degree of loyalty, it is less likely that the client will choose to abandon the patron, who has been his/her friend in need. The client's sense of honour will diminish if s/he reneges his/her obligations to the patron.

Insofar as the client's ability to manoeuvre within the relationship is concerned, the inferior position of the client somewhat restricts his/her activities. In establishing a relationship with a person of superior power, a client abdicates a degree of control and power over the relationship.[95] The tangible goods that the patron gives his/her client create a perpetual cycle of obligations. The client is not in a position to match the benefits obtained from the patron. Thus, this cycle creates an endless feeling of indebtedness to the patron, and effectively restricts the autonomous activities of the client.

Furthermore, since the client is more dependent on the patron than vice-versa, the client to a large degree is powerless to leave the relationship. S/he needs the patron, without whom s/he may not have means of subsistence. Thus, s/he is reluctant to leave the relationship, unless it is terminated by the patron. Client dependence on the patron maintains the client's lower socio-economic position.[96]

In explicating the effects of patron-client linkages on group formation, this essay is not suggesting that these individuals, be they peasants or urban factory workers, are <u>always</u> making a conscious decision to eschew group-based activities. The opportunity to form organised groups may be lacking, the idea may not have presented itself, the individuals may not be aware of their "dependent" position or existing fragmentation inhibits formation of horizontal linkages.

---

[95] Ibid., p.xxvii.

[96] Guasti, "Peru: Clientelism and Internal Control," p.423.

Options other than clientelism may in all likelihood be either non-existent or imperceptible in a client's environment. Therefore, the suggestion is that whilst clientelism has negative effects on organised group behaviour, clients may not entirely consciously decide in favour of clientelism. Of course, some clients may be conscious of their decision to forego group activity, but this too is a rational response to immediate dangers facing these clients. Graziano aptly summarises the effect of clientelism on horizontal linkages: "In brief, lack of effective organized action discourages the emergence of categorical groups; people who share an objective interest, and may even be conscious of it, feel forced to act through the age-old channels of dyadic communications."[97]

Clientelism, then, "produces vertically-integrated groups with shifting interests rather than horizontally-integrated groups with durable interests."[98] It illustrates an already weakened solidarity among groups of individuals, who by virtue of their occupation, station, or ascriptive bonds can be characterised as a single unit and have the potential to form a coherent organised group that can undertake collective action to advance common interests. Patron-client ties further add to the fragmentation of these groups, isolating many individuals from each other. And in spite of such ties being able to foster co-operation between different kin and ethnic groups[99] and between individuals who are not kin[100] and thus, reducing the "salience of primordial loyalties,"[101] they do so to the detriment of the formation

---

[97] Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.373.

[98] Scott, "Patron-Client Ties and Political Change," p.132.

[99] Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity," p.103.

[100] Scott, "Patron-Client Ties and Political Change," p.134.

[101] Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity," p.103.

of a collective identity. In order for individuals to coalesce around shared interests and advance categorical group interests, patron-client ties must "cease to be predominant."[102]

Even corporate clientelism, in which the client is a group of individuals advancing collective interests, illustrates the lack of complete autonomy and the inability of these groups to act on their own. As a corporate client, the group may satisfy its collective demands, but its autonomy is not enhanced, rendering it dependent on its patron. Although corporate clientelism illustrates progress towards less narrow interest articulation, its interests, however, are still "narrower than supra-local categorical groups."[103]

Lastly, clientelism further "reduces the predictability of the behavior of actors."[104] Tarkowski makes a good point regarding the hazards of the use of patron-client ties to remedy the inefficiencies of the command economy. He states that it "disrupts the criteria regulating distribution,"[105] and more important, it weakens the ability of the state to steer the system.[106] Furthermore, once the system has corrected the causes of its inadequacies, clientelism may linger and become habitual-- "economic culture"[107] --although the reasons why it first arose are no longer relevant. Thus, it creates disadvantages for the general populace, the clients, and the system as a whole.

---

102 Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.362.

103 Lande, "Introduction," p.xxxii.

104 Tarkowski, "Poland: Patrons and Clients in a Planned Economy," p.187.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid.

Tolerance

The above section, then, raises the question as to how patron-client ties are perceived by a governing regime. These particularistic relationships, obviously, reduce the degree of direct control over the entire system. The deleterious effects of clientelism are considerable. However, from the perspective of self-preservation, clientelism plays to the advantage of the regime.

Sections of society are incorporated into the system. When the satisfaction of interests, albeit on a particular basis, is facilitated by state agents there is a reduced sense of alienation. The system appears responsive to the client. Despite regime frustration over strategies used by local patrons to satisfy client interest and preserve their local power positions, which affect the ability of the regime to ensure rigid compliance to its policies, the regime overall gains considerably from patron-client ties.

The most important advantage to the regime of the patron-client relationship is the very feature that works against the clients: the preservation of the prevailing power relations. The clientelist tie serves to maintain the socio-economic status quo: the client's subordinate position. The negative impact on the formation of horizontal linkages based on categorical group interests, inhibits the emergence of interest articulation that aims to drastically change the prevailing power relations.

Therefore, although the patron-client tie does provide an individual with a false sense of "I am able to satisfy my demands, and hence have beaten the system," it maintains the dependence of the client on the patron. Instead of aiming to change the situation in which the client has to resort to patron-client ties, which is after all a power

relationship, the client seeks to find solutions within the confines of the prevailing power relations in society.

Exchanges between patrons and clients, then, contribute to regime stability. There is less likelihood that a threat to the regime, originating from groups in society, will emerge. The tendency of the patron-client relationship towards preservation of "social fragmentation and disorganisation"[108] inadvertently provides the regime with a governing tool, which does not require any active participation by the regime to maintain the balance of power.

It must be noted that the dissolution of patron-client ties is not the sole variable determining the probability of peasant rebellion or banditry against the regime. In situations where there are other guarantees of subsistence or the patron-client tie is not the guarantor of subsistence, its dissolution may not result in rebellion. But in conditions in which the patron-client relationship <u>is</u> the guarantor of subsistence and there are no alternative subsistence guarantees, the dissolution of the patron-client linkage, as Duara notes, "could ultimately lead-as it often did--to rebellion or banditry."[109]

Conclusion

Patron-client ties, then, are not without their deleterious effects. Their ability to mitigate the adverse effects of unreliable distribution and to create a somewhat stable and secure environment for the client is overshadowed by the reinforcement of the client's subordinate position, the effects of which were the initial reasons for

---

[108] Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.361.

[109] Prasenjit Duara, "Elites and the Structures of Authority in the Villages of North China," in eds. Joseph W. Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin, <u>Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance</u> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p.281.

seeking a clientelist tie. A common viewpoint in the writings on patron-client ties is the significance of the restrictive effects of such ties on the formation of associational groups and the maintenance of the patron's superior power and position.

Of course, one's viewpoint regarding the benefits and deleterious effects of patron-client ties is inhered in how one regards the power element and the degree of voluntariness in the relationship. If the importance of power inequality is emphasised which in turn decreases the degree of voluntarism involved in the client's decision to remain in the relationship, then it logically follows that one will highlight the negative tendencies of these particularistic ties on clients and view it as an exploitative relationship.

By focusing on the power inequality and questioning the extent of the client's voluntarism in remaining in the relationship, this essay is inclined to view the relationship as a predominantly exploitative one. The ability of clientelism to mitigate the inequality in access to vital and scarce resources and its other benefits are not disregarded. But this is all contingent on the client retaining his/her subordinate position.

The rewards derived from clientelist relationships are particular and a temporary adjustment mechanism to institutional inadequacies. Instead of making the system more receptive to its demands, clients are content to pursue these demands through their individual patrons. Their interest is in resources and in "situations that are to their advantage, on the basis of favoritism."[111] And their goals stand in contrast to those of class-/or group-based organisations who seek to "translate their interests into general policy."[111] Specific demands are satisfied

---

[111] Roniger, "The Comparative Study of Clientelism," p.10.

at the cost of remaining a client: a subordinate who requires the patron's assistance in the satisfaction of future interests.

The patron-client relationship, then, is based on the "submission of low-status actors to higher authority."[112] It is essentially a power relationship, which tends to reinforce the prevailing societal power relations. To view it as purely beneficial and innocuous to the client would be to ignore one of its fundamental characteristics: the power asymmetry.

The task now is to see which of, and to what extent, the points made in this chapter about patron-client ties, especially points relating to social cleavages, apply to Maoist rural China. The immediate task, however, is to examine the role of the patron-client relationship as a form of political participation.

---

[111] Flynn, "Class, Clientelism, and Coercion," pp.138-139.

[112] John Duncan Powell cited in Robert R.Kaufman, "The Patron-Client Concept and Macro-Politics," Comparative Studies in Society and History, vol.16, no.3, (June 1974), p.286.

CHAPTER TWO

CLIENTELISM AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The previous chapter has presented the salient features of traditional and communist patron-client ties, their benefits and deleterious effects. But can the patron-client tie, a power relationship, be viewed and accepted as a valid form of political participation, given that it is asymmetrical and has the potential for coercion?

The term political participation itself is nebulous, but at the same time risks being confined to conventional democratic modes of participation if it is too narrowly defined. Rather than ascribing the term political participation with a precise definitive action, it is advisable to conceptualise an area within which political participation can be said to occur: public affairs. Thus, political participation can be broadly defined as "activity [not attitude[1]] by private citizens designed to influence public affairs."[2] The insertion of "public affairs" ensures that not each and every activity is interpreted as participation, but restricts the activity to that which will have an impact on not just the individual, but more important, on the community, regionally, provincially or nationally.[3] Such a definition escapes the risk of being limited to activity having a successful outcome as the emphasis is on the attempt to influence. Also, the level at which

---

[1] Samuel P. Huntington and Joan M. Nelson, No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p.3.

[2] John P. Burns, Political Participation in Rural China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p.9.

[3] James R. Townsend, Political Participation in Communist China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p.4.

influence is attempted is not confined to policy formulation and it includes the implementation stage.

Clientelism has come to be viewed by many as a distinct mode of political participation. One proponent of this view is Jean Oi, who characterised Chinese rural politics as clientelist.[4] Her analysis examines the political behaviour of persons in dyads and focuses attention at the implementation stage. Her findings suggest that clientelism is a mode of participation, and one that has great impact on policy implementation.[5] In evaluating its participatory role, one must recognise that citizens participate politically in the context in which they find themselves, according to the political pressures and opportunities that present themselves.[6] The postulate whether the patron-client relationship can be viewed as a form of political participation is addressed in this paper in the context of the situation existing in Maoist rural China.

Peasant influence and policy making in Maoist rural China

The central issue of peasant politics was "how the harvest shall be divided."[7] Peasant interests in Maoist China were directed primarily at obtaining a larger share of the grain harvest. Their desire to be assigned better jobs, to get higher work points, were all aimed at increasing their meagre grain rations.[8]

---

[4] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.9.

[5] Ibid., p.8.

[6] Victor C. Falkenheim, "Citizen and Group Politics in China: An Introduction," in ed. Victor C. Falkenheim, Citizen and Groups in Contemporary China (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1987), p.4.

[7] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.1.

[8] Peasant interests revolved around their crops, which they wished to be able "to cultivate, reap, market, and consume" (Michel Oksenberg, "Occupational Groups in Chinese Society and the Cultural Revolution," in The Cultural

In Maoist China, citizens were seldom presented with conventional modes of participation, such as those found in Western democratic societies: opportunities to exercise influence over the selection of central elites or in certain cases to exert significant influence at the policy formulation stage. On the contrary, Chinese Communist Party doctrine emphasised the citizens' role in the execution of its policies as the prime function of political participation.[9] But this hardly resulted in peasant passivity. Notwithstanding the symbolic or mandatory modes of participation, such as attending study groups and political meetings, Chinese peasants did indeed find alternative avenues, one of which was clientelism, that enabled them to articulate and satisfy their political demands.

The experimental nature of Chinese policy making frequently meant that the policy formulation and implementation stages were merged, which resulted in local leaders having discretion in making decisions.[10] Many directives sent from the center were necessarily vague so as to be adaptable to local situations.[11] The "size and diversity"[12] of rural China constrained the state's ability to make detailed production plans.[13] Brigade cadres, who had the necessary information to make the required production plan decisions, were actually responsible for making

---

Revolution: 1967 in Review (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1968), p.4).

[9] Townsend, Political Participation in Communist China, p.80.

[10] Falkenheim, "Citizen and Group Politics in China," p.5.

[11] A. Doak Barnett and Ezra Vogel, Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p.74.

[12] Victor C. Falkenheim, "Autonomy and Control in Chinese Organization: Dilemmas of Rural Administrative Reform," in eds. Sidney L. Greenblatt, Richard W. Wilson, and Amy Auerbacher Wilson, Organizational Behavior in Chinese Society (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981), p.193.

[13] Ibid.

production plans.[14] In such cases where decisions were to be taken locally, peasant influence through clientelism was more successful.

But where peasant influence threatened party policy or the decisions were taken by central elites, peasants had little influence.[15] Peasants, for example, could not change the party policy of high grain extraction:

> But it was clearly understood that where state interests or state policy were infringed upon, the dialogue, on an open basis at least, was to cease. In rural areas, for example, production and requisition quotas were not to be subject to serious open discussion by "the masses."[16]

Actions such as passive resistance and withholding of grain did indeed have a positive effect, but it was local and temporary. The state's ability to modify rural consumption patterns and retain its extractive procurement policy was not affected.[17]

Furthermore, the prevailing political atmosphere was relevant to the strategies peasants used to articulate interests. During more relaxed periods or in times of heightened scarcity, peasants were likely to be more open and aggressive in their tactics.[18] For example, the rural response to the extremely extractive policies of the Great Leap Forward and the widespread famine in 1959-1962 following the Great Leap resulted in private plots once again being sanctioned, reduced delivery

---

[14] Barnett and Vogel, Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power, p.420.

[15] John P. Burns, "Political Participation of Peasants in China," in Citizens and Groups in Contemporary China, p.118.

[16] Victor C. Falkenheim, "Political Participation in China," Problems of Communism, vol.27, no.3, (May-June 1978), p.26.

[17] Thomas P. Bernstein, "Cadre and Peasant Behavior Under Conditions of Insecurity and Deprivation: The Grain Supply Crisis of the Spring of 1955," in ed. A. Doak Barnett, Chinese Communist Politics in Action (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), p.366.

[18] Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.163.

quotas and increased procurement prices.[19] But in times of radical mobilisation, periods such as the Cultural Revolution, peasants relied on less obvious and more safe means of conveying personal interests: "In the face of intense pressure from political campaigns, policy winds, and the radical environment, peasants wisely avoided open dissent....Influence was advanced through personal approaches to team leaders."[20]

Fortunately, although the negative impact of the Cultural Revolution was evident in the rural areas with the constant debates over brigade versus team accounting and work point systems,[21] its intensity did not and could not compare to that of the urban areas. The excesses, inefficient communication and overexaggerated reports of the Great Leap Forward had illustrated the importance of an environment somewhat conducive to agricultural production. The sheer number and economic importance of the peasantry dictated that the state retain a certain degree of sensitivity towards peasant reactions.[22]

Articulation of interests

Clientelism provided many individual peasants in Maoist China with an alternative, albeit not altogether legal, route to advancing personal interests.[23] Through entering into a patron-client relationship with a

---

[19] Nicholas R. Lardy, "State Intervention and Peasant Opportunites," in ed. William L. Parish, Chinese Rural Development: The Great Transformation (New York: M.E. Sharpe,Inc., 1985), pp.42-43.

[20] David Zweig, Agrarian Radicalism in China. 1968-1981, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p.88.

[21] See David Zweig for a detailed examination of the policy winds during the period of 1968-1978 (Ibid).

[22] Oksenberg, "Occupational Groups in Chinese Society," p.37.

[23] "At the lowest levels, however, cadres come in daily contact with their constituents and develop friendships with them. At this basic level, the informal nature of politics again looms large" (Michel Oksenberg, "Methods of

local official, usually a team leader or a Party Secretary, if the village had one, peasants in China conveyed their personal problems and aimed to seek items or services of benefit to them. For those peasants engaged in clientelist relations, the use of patron-client ties to articulate their interests was a more efficient and less arduous task than using official channels, the hazards and unreliability of which cannot be overstated. Patron-client ties established a link between the ordinary peasant and an agent of the state fostering communication between the two parties. This activity is considered political for the simple reason that individuals were extracting demands from the state through the local leader, and thus the activity moved from the private to the public realm.[24]

The fact that the patron-client relationship is asymmetrical with the client dependent on the patron does not affect the acceptance of this relationship as a valid form of political participation. The power inequality and client dependence does not change the fact that peasants use this linkage as a means to extract particular benefits. Their decision to use this avenue is largely autonomous--that is the individual initiates the contact and is not forced to do so. However, it is true that political constraints existing during Maoist China compelled the individual to seek less formal and more secure routes of political expression. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the autonomous nature of using clientelism to convey individual interests. Furthermore, "voluntarism is always a matter of degree," and it is

---

Communication within the Chinese Bureaucracy," China Quarterly, no.57, [January-March 1974], p.37).

[24] Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.10.

difficult to state with certainty that any "social action is totally free from compulsion."[25]

In initiating and maintaining clientelist ties with local officials, ordinary peasants were articulating interests, a "process by which individuals and groups make demands upon political decision-makers,"[26] and affecting policy implementation. Insofar as a peasant-client received preferential treatment from his/her team leader-patron, s/he was affecting the implementation of a policy: the policy formulated at the official level changed at the level of interaction with the citizen. Thus, when an individual peasant engaged in clientelism, that individual was having an effect on a policy outcome.

And such manipulations of policy implementation have an impact, however subtle, in the wider community. Altering the distribution of resources in favour of one's client has an effect on other peasants, on the quality or quantity of that particular resource, especially if it is a scarce resource. The result may not be immediately discernible. But it does affect the allocation of resources at a macro-level, especially with the prevalent reliance on such ties.

The use of clientelism to articulate interests further illustrated the lack of faith in, and general unwillingness to rely on, official channels of interest articulation. Although Chinese peasants were presented with other modes for articulating their interests, such as speaking out and writing complaints, such avenues were considered too risky and in all likelihood failed to yield success.

---

25 Townsend, Political Participation in Communist China, p.193.

26 Gabriel A. Almond and Bingham Powell Jr., Comparative Politics: Systems, Process, and Policy, 2nd.ed. (Boston: little, Brown,and Company [Inc.], 1978), p.73.

As Victor Falkenheim's research, indicated, particularised contacting was the preferred method of political participation in China.[27] Peasants used it to articulate a variety of interests, such as obtaining extra grain, or a better job assignment within the collective. Peasants preferred this mode of communication because it was more direct and informal.[28] Also, the person with whom they were communicating was from the same village, thus making him/her familiar and approachable. Moreover, the prevalence of such ties attributed to it some degree of regularity and legitimacy.

It could be said that since a peasant patron's identity is linked to other individuals in his personal network and helping those in the network is viewed as legitimate, then as far as the Chinese peasant is concerned, being helped by his/her team leader-patron is legitimate. This accords clientelism, as a form of interest articulation and thus political participation, a certain degree of legitimacy.[29]

Thus, this essay does not dispute Oi's assertion that clientelism is a valid and viable form of political participation, for here it is certainly viewed as such. Peasant demands are articulated, satisfied, and peasants are incorporated into the political system. The view here, however, is that the benefits of clientelism to the individual, at the micro-level, are outweighed by its adverse effects at the macro-level. The following sections will briefly summarise some of the general criticism of clientelism as political participation.

---

[27] Falkenheim, "Political Participation in China," p.25. Particularised contacting although not exactly a clientelist tie, resembles the clientelist tie. It is intermittent, unlike the patron-client tie which is more of a long-standing relationship. There is no reason to doubt, however, that the use of clientelism is as frequent as the particularised contacting mode.

[28] Ibid., p.26.

[29] Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.32.

Criticism

Clientelism is regarded as a parochial mode of participation. The participant is concerned with only advancing particular interests and extracting specific benefits rather than addressing any fundamental systemic problems. But whilst the benefits extracted are relevant only to that individual, the clientelist form of political participation has a negative impact on the whole system in that it entrenches the factors which gave rise to clientelism in the first place. Thus, this essay considers clientelism as a form of political participation to have two aspects: it enables individuals to articulate their interests, but it maintains the prevailing socio-political positions of both the patron and the client.

One can never ignore the importance of the power element in the relationship. Although the individual's decision to use clientelism, as indicated in previous paragraphs, is autonomous, the scope of the patron's power removes a certain degree of freedom from the client, especially in regard to the client's decision to remain in the contract. Since the client's dependence on the patron is more than the other way around, the client has less power. The client needs the patron and the relationship. Thus, the patron-client linkage serves to maintain the current superior-subordinate position. Whatever benefits may be elicited from the patron, they do not increase the client's power in relation to the patron. The client's subordinate position vis-à-vis the patron is maintained, and unlikely to change.

In addition, the patron-client contract presents the client with a new protector and one who demands his/her loyalty. S/he perceives a threat to his/her patron's position, from which s/he has derived benefits, as a threat to him/herself. Thus, the client too has a vested

interest in maintaining his/her patron's position. This could make the client hostile to activities that may threaten his/her patron's position, and in aspiring to protect the patron, the client is in actuality assisting the maintenance of the regime.

And a client's loyalty to the patron surpasses his/her loyalty to fellow peasants. The existing low degree of group solidarity is further weakened by patron-client contracts, which serve to transfer allegiance to the patrons. The client is looked after by his/her patron and is genuinely grateful to the patron. The client's identification with the patron is greater than with his fellow peasants. And although the client shares with his/her fellow peasants grievances regarding state policy, s/he is successful in circumventing difficulties caused by state policy and in deriving particular benefits. Despite his/her continuing criticism of rural policies, his/her hardships became mitigated by the patron.

In spite of the role clientelism plays in providing peasants with a means to articulate and satisfy their political demands, clientelism merely reinforces the very institutional defects the effects of which it aims to circumvent. Peasants become clients to gain better access to resources and satisfy particularistic demands. Articulation of interests through this channel limits the upward flow of these interests. Patrons rarely convey accurately their individual client's political demands to their superiors, unless the patron is acting as a broker. The reason for this is quite simply that it is in the patron's power to fulfil the client's demands; the patron uses the resources that are at his/her disposal.[30] There is little need for the patron to

---

[30] Wayne A. Cornelius, "Urbanization and Political Demand-making: Political Participation Among the Migrant Poor in Latin American Cities," in eds. Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, The Citizen and Politics: A Comparative Perspective (Stamford: Greylock Inc.,1978), p.54.

filter the demands upward for them to be granted. Therefore, instead of the transmission of interests to the bureaucratic structures,[31] and consequently, interest aggregation at the policy formulation level, these political demands are transmitted to individual local leaders and satisfied at the local level.

In China, however, some local interests were brokered into the system by higher level brigade or commune cadres. The village Party Secretary was especially important in the village as he was a party member and thus was seen as having great power. Team leaders were frequently engaged in clientelist relations with their brigade cadres. This complicates the picture in China as some team leaders act not only as patrons to their team members but also as clients to their brigade cadres.[32]

In general, without adequate communication, policy formulation is unlikely to change drastically, aside from as a result of factional battles at the center. Responsiveness of the system is restricted; the downward flow of communication being stronger than the upward flow.[33] Political elites are unable to respond or to gauge successfully the preferences of individuals or groups unless they have been communicated to these elites either directly or indirectly. And the aggregation of individual interests is a difficult task for local leaders.

---

[31] Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.373.

[32] See Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, chap. 6 for a detailed description of the collusion between team leaders and brigade leaders; a patron-client relationship between the team leader and brigade leader. The team leader "cultivated a relationship with the brigade leader to receive special consideration in matters such as allocating quotas, granting loans, procuring scarce goods, generally acquiring extra resources, and equally important, regulating policy" (Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.128).

[33] For an extended discussion on the relationship between control and information see Clapman, "Clientelism and the State"

Thus, although this form of articulation provides clients with immediate and efficient means to ameliorate institutional inadequacies, it does not solve the actual problem; it seldom affects the policy that is actually causing, or is one of the causes of, this problem. In other words, the effects of a macro-level problem are mitigated for the benefit of clients at the micro-level, without the existence of the problem being communicated to the decision-makers. Consequently, this prevents the probability of alternative policies being formulated,[34] instead reinforcing the effects of the very policy that is causing distribution and/or other problems.

Ironically, the objective of this mode of participation is not to create pressure to change the contents of policy, but quite simply to elicit particular benefits. Although obviously dissatisfied with the scarcity in the availability of necessary resources, and the general hardships wrought by Maoist policies, peasants as individuals were content with pursuing their individual interests rather than involving themselves in seeking fundamental systemic change. Their actions illustrate that they participated only to gain specific benefits relevant to them and their families.[35] Where goods are scarce and competition is stiff, it is easier to concentrate on one's own interests than to attempt to form cohesive groups to advance categorical group interests.[36]

---

[34] For a discussion on government priorities, resource allocation, and informal channels of articulation see Cornelius, "Urbanization and Political Demand-making," p.54.

[35] Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.59.

[36] For a discussion on rational choice and collective action please see Samuel Popkin, The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

Furthermore, any discontent expressed, even by a large number of peasants is declared by individual peasants to individual local leaders. Such individual actions do not create the necessary pressure to change policy content.[37] Instead, implementation of the policy is affected to the benefit of the individuals.

Satisfaction of particular demands is only a short-term solution to a fundamental policy problem. Strategies aimed at circumventing inadequacies in the distribution of goods and services serve to further disrupt distribution at the systemic level. The redirection of resources is unaccounted for and its allocation to other sectors must be adjusted according to the quantity of available resource. This will in all likelihood reduce the amount of resources to be distributed to another group or sector of the system.

This further increases the gap between the demands of the population and the goods delivered by the policies formulated by the central elites, increasing the reliance on patron-client ties. Political participation by peasants is restricted to the realm of policy implementation rather than rising to the level of policy formulation.

This parochial mode of political participation is predicated on manipulating policy implementation to extract particular benefits. It does not call for a change in the local elites nor any fundamental change in the system. And despite the obvious dissatisfaction with a particular policy or even the government, such political demands tend only "toward the preservation of the basic socio-political order."[38]

---

[37] Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, and Jae-On Kim, Participation and Political Equality: A Seven Nation Comparison, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.314.

[38] Cornelius, "Urbanization and Political Demand-making," p.54.

However, insofar as such action lends support to the ruling regime, its mobilisation aspect cannot be ignored. The individual is supportive of his/her patron because of the benefits s/he receives from the patron, and his/her support does not necessarily extend to the ruling regime. In all likelihood the peasant is not even conscious of the degree of support his/her actions give the regime. And such support is not overt. This makes the task of distinguishing autonomous from mobilised participation- rather difficult.[39] It would be best to claim that elements of both are present in this activity.

In briefly illustrating that clientelism is a mode of political participation, albeit a parochial one, and listing its chief problems, this essay is not suggesting that it is an improper or illegitimate form of participation. The objective of any mode of participation is to pursue one's interests. And clientelism provides the individual with a direct and efficient method of articulating and satisfying political demands.

The Chinese political system under Mao was not conducive to autonomous groups applying pressure to formulate certain policies.[40] It is therefore understandable that some ordinary peasants adopted clientelism as a strategy of participation, focusing on affecting the policy at its implementation stage[41] within the production team to their benefit. Clientelism, as illustrated by the Chinese model, can be viewed as a viable form of political participation.

---

[39] For a discussion on patron-client ties and mobilised political participation see Huntington and Nelson, No Easy Choice

[40] "The power of the peasants to enforce their demands, however, was limited by the fact that they had no organization which could be considered their own" (Oksenberg, "Occupational Groups in Chinese Society," p.6).

[41] "Grass-roots influence, while rarely initiating policy, can substantially affect policy implementation" (Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.1).

The next chapter begins the part of the thesis specifically on Maoist rural China. By presenting a detailed commentary on the rural policies, the context in which and reasons for the widespread use of clientelism will become evident. It sets the stage for the subsequent chapter on how patrons and clients used their special relationship and participated politically in the system.

PART TWO

In exploring the concept of clientelism, Part One has provided a framework for Part Two: the analysis of clientelism in Maoist rural China. It presented the salient features of traditional and communist clientelism. It not only explained the reasons for the emergence of clientelism, but further revealed the complex relationship between clientelism and social cleavages, and between clientelism and the development of horizontal linkages in society.

This first part also evaluated the participatory role of clientelism and established clientelism as a viable form of political participation. In discussing the negative aspects of clientelism as political participation, Part One illustrated one major point: that clientelism maintains the client's subordinate position.

Now, Part Two undertakes the task of elucidating the major functions of clientelism in Maoist rural China through the juxtaposition of the points made in Part One and conditions in Maoist rural China. The focus will be on the production team as it was the single most important unit in the lives of the peasants. Peasants received their grain rations and employment from the production team. They were identified by their team. Without membership in a production team, a peasant could not eat, work or have a permanent residence.

This section of the thesis, then, will illustrate the intricacies of patron-client relationships within the production team. Each of the following three chapters will provide a reason for the emergence of clientelism in Maoist rural China. Chapters Four and Five deal specifically with the two major functions of clientelism in Maoist rural China. In the course of the analysis, the salient features of Chinese socialist clientelism will emerge.

CHAPTER THREE

STATE POLICIES AND RURAL ENVIRONMENT

Despite the repeated proclamations by the Chinese Communist Party of the rewards of liberation and the progress towards communism, an important feature of the pre-liberation rural landscape remained unmitigated: the preponderance of poverty. Although the numerous political campaigns launched by the pontifical Mao did not cause as much rural as urban disruption, they were hardly innocuous, especially when combined with the constant vicissitudes in policy content. In fact, the frequent references to the benefits of socialism were more a chimera than a reality to many peasants, who were not oblivious to the stagnation in the quality and quantity of their diets[1]. The enthusiasm that was evident during Land Reform waned as policies failed to deliver the promised rewards of socialism, instead merely placing further burdens on the peasants. As Bernstein notes, the "subordination of the peasants to state goals and plans thus undoubtedly constituted a real deprivation for the peasants."[2]

The objective of this chapter is to portray the conditions endured by peasants in Maoist China. This will set the context of harsh state policies in which peasants became increasingly willing to use clientelism to mitigate the hardships of rural life. Peasant frustrations and disillusionment over state policies will be conveyed.[3] This chapter

---

[1] Louis Putterman, Continuity and Change in China's Rural Development: Collective and Reform Eras in Perspective (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.5.

[2] Bernstein, "Cadre and Peasant Behavior," p.367.

[3] See Mark Selden, The Political Economy of Chinese Development (Armonk: M.E.Sharpe, 1993), p.21.

will, in effect, help illustrate one of the reasons for the emergence of clientelism and how state policies determined the nature of local politics.

The majority of the accounts of rural life in China during this period, after the Land Reform and up until the late 1970s, depict a severe environment in which peasants were confronted with the vagaries of policy makers. Much of the literature emphasises the competition between the state and the peasantry to gain sufficient amounts of grain for their respective purposes. Despite some of the benefits, such as the "iron rice bowl" policy, rural life in Maoist China did not show a significant improvement in peasants' standard of living after 1955. Instead policy makers subjected peasants to a low rate of food consumption and generally poor living conditions.

Towards the communes

The Agrarian Reform Law of 1950 addressed the problem of land ownership and rural power. The state by targeting landlords and organising struggle sessions against the landlords immediately integrated the peasantry into the task of state-building. Tactically brilliant, the state was not only able to destroy the landlord-rural gentry as a force of opposition, but in doing so garnered the support of the peasantry: "Land reform had created a new poor and lower middle peasant economy and society, which gave most peasants a basic means of livelihood, and certainly secured peasant support for the new government."[4] Ownership of previously landlord-owned land was transferred to poorer peasants some of whom for the first time experienced the thrill of ownership. In addition, with the removal of the landlord-gentry as a

---

[4] Sulamith Heins Potter and Jack M. Potter, China's Peasants: The Anthropology of a Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.59.

buffer, the state was able to push forward its penetration of rural areas.

The ownership of land, however, was not only a new experience for some of the peasantry but a limited one as well. The formation of mutual aid teams in the early 1950s was the start of the socialist reorganisation of the countryside which later culminated in the formation of collectives. The mutual aid teams were voluntary associations and consisted of a small number of households who exchanged labour and other resources, excluding land, for mutual benefit. By the second half of the 1950s the state was rapidly progressing towards higher levels of cooperativisation: first the lower stage agricultural producers' co-operative, and then the higher stage agricultural producers co-operative (1956-1957). The organisation of the countryside into people's communes in 1958 was a signal that the state had abandoned a gradualist approach and was hastening towards realising communism.[5]

After the institution of the state's monopoly on the control and production of grain in November 1953, there were emerging signs of conflict between the peasantry and the state, especially over grain procurement. Despite these strains, much of the peasantry still believed that the new system would bring them benefits. Thus, many peasants were enthusiastic over the formation of communes and collectivisation.[6]

---

[5] Blecher, China: Politics, Economics and Society, pp.61-64; Selden, The Political Economy of Chinese Development, p.11.

[6] Blecher, China: Politics, Economics and Society, p.71; Potter and Potter, China's Peasants, p.73. For a perspective on the cooperativisation stage and peasant attitudes that differs from Blecher and Potter and Potter, see Dali Yang who states that: "Peasants wanted to join collectives not because they were convinced of the inherent superiority of collective production, but because the potential alternatives, such as individual farming were being closed to them" (Dali L. Yang, Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society and Institutional Change Since the Great Leap Famine [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996], p.31).

The communes were formed as a fundamental feature of Mao's impractical Great Leap Forward initiated in 1957. Fantastic goals of "overtaking England in fifteen years in industrial production,"[7] calls for mass mobilisation, and hastening towards communism were regularly broadcast. Peasants were encouraged to have their own back-yard steel furnaces and direct all their energies towards selfless devotion to the cause of communism.

The communes averaged around 5,000 households when first established, but were later reduced to about 1,600 households.[8] The national average population of communes was 13,000 and the average in Guangdong was around 23,000 persons.[9] Commune administrators had wide ranging responsibilities over political, economic, and social affairs. The commune was not a purely agricultural venture but included local factories, workshops and social services for its members. As the movement towards collectivisation became more radical in 1958, private plots and sometimes even private ownership of consumer goods were eliminated.[10] In some areas the principle of distribution became according to need rather than according to work. Furthermore, for a brief period in 1958, commune mess halls provided free, unlimited quantities of food, and services such as medical care and education were also free.

But the irrational policies of the Great Leap Forward, (such as the backyard steel furnaces and killing sparrows because they ate grain), caused havoc in the countryside. Crops rotted in the fields as

---

[7] Schurmann, "Peasants," p.181.

[8] Blecher, China: Politics, Economics and Society, p.70.

[9] Parish and Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China, p.307.

[10] Blecher, China: Politics, Economics and Society, p.71.

a direct result of manpower shortages.[11] The back-yard steel furnaces and mass mobilisation to build water control projects had deprived the communes of the required manpower during harvest. Inaccurate reports of grain production from local cadres reacting to pressure from above to increase grain production resulted in higher procurement targets.[12] In the face of higher grain extraction without concomitant higher grain production after 1958, peasant food consumption dropped rapidly.[13] From 1959 to 1961, due to poor agricultural planning, peasant demoralisation and natural disasters, about sixty percent of cultivated land suffered:[14]

> The nadir of living conditions, everyone agreed, was the winter of 1960-61. The Great Leap Forward had, by 1959, left the country in chaos, which was aggravated the following year by bad weather. By late 1960, there was no meat, no fish, scarcely any vegetable, and reduced portions of rice.[15]

The responsibility for the disaster of the Great Leap Forward can only be placed with the leadership. As Bernstein notes:

> A major explanation for lower-level concealment of famine must therefore lie in the readiness of the top leaders to believe in the results of the "winds of exaggeration." It seems extraordinary that leaders who had spent twenty years in the countryside making revolution could have accepted as true the miracles of 1958. But what is even more extraordinary is the absence of learning. In the spring of 1959, the 1958 output figures had been scaled downwards in recognition of false reporting. But this did not prevent leaders from believing the 1959 production figure of 270MMT [million metric tons] or making a serious effort at verification. It was in 1959-60 that procurements reached their highest levels, even as actual output had dropped to 170 MMT. The failure to learn from 1958 has to be attributed to leadership conflict, i.e., to Mao's reaction to Peng Dehuai's critique of his handling

---

[11] For labour shortages see Schurmann, "Peasants," p.184.

[12] For a detailed look at communication within the bureaucracy see Oksenberg, "Methods of Communication"

[13] Selden, Political Economy of Chinese Socialism, p.17.

[14] Blecher, China: Politics, Economics and Society, p.73.

[15] Stanley Karnow, "Why They Fled: Refugee Accounts," in Communist China: Revolutionary Reconstruction and International Confrontation, p.462.

> of the Leap. Mao pressured his colleagues to align with him and the subsequent anti-rightist campaign silenced all critical voices.... Absence of learning from 1958 plus diversion of attention to international issues account for the failure of the top leaders to meet their responsibility.[16]

The lack of promised progress and severe shortage of food exhausted the peasants, who became increasingly disillusioned with the latest economic policies.[17]

In the face of reports of intensifying shortage of food and rural discontent, the state modified its radical policy to rectify the mistakes of the Great Leap Forward. In the early 1960s, private plots and rural markets were once again sanctioned. In addition, in efforts to increase the grain reserves[18] through procurements, procurement prices were increased.[19] Communes were not completely dismantled, but there was a gradual devolution of their all encompassing powers. Power over labour organisation, production, and income distribution devolved first to the production brigades and then to production teams. The emerging three-tiered rural management system remained largely in place until the widespread acceptance in the 1980s of the household responsibility system.

The three-tiered rural management system

Although the commune's responsibilities were significantly reduced, they were retained as part of the rural structure and served as

---

[16] Thomas P. Bernstein, "Stalinism, Famine, and Chinese Peasants: Grain Procurements during the Great Leap Forward," Theory and Society, vol.13, no.3, (May 1984), p.369.

[17] Potter and Potter, China's Peasants, p.73.

[18] For an interesting account of government efforts to increase grain accumulation through encouraging local reserves see Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, chap.4.

[19] Ibid., p.49.

an "intermediary between the local community and the state."[20] The three-tiered system in place since the early 1960s included: communes, brigades, and production teams. Each commune included several natural villages, and had a number of production brigades. These production brigades were further divided into production teams. Production brigades sometimes followed natural village boundaries,[21] especially when villages were too large to be effectively organised into a single production team. Where villages were small, a number of villagers were organised into a single production team. If not, then production teams were usually shaped by neighbourhood boundaries within the village.[22] Production teams averaged around twenty to sixty families.[23]

Commune

The commune's predominant task in the rearranged system was to ensure that state procurement quotas were fulfilled. Its functions were to transmit central policies to lower levels, ensure their implementation and communicate local interests to higher authorities. Thus, the commune was transformed into a purely administrative unit. As far as agricultural production was concerned, communes simply allocated quotas to brigades, and held meetings twice a year to discuss the production plan and distribution of the harvest.[24]

---

[20] Benedict Stavis, People's Communes and Rural Development in China, rev.ed. (Ithaca: Rural Development Committee, Cornell University,1977), p.82.

[21] Oi states that production brigades usually followed natural village boudaries (Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.4). Other authors, however, note that production teams were mostly natural villages. (Godwin C. Chu and Francis L.K. Hsu, "Integration in China: The Post-Mao Years," in China's New Social Fabric, p.273).

[22] Stavis, People's Communes and Rural Development in China, p.60.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., p.124.

After the Great Leap Forward, the commune withdrew from daily participation in agricultural production and distribution, but retained its administrative duties. Commune officials were state employees and on salary. An important aspect of the commune was its party representation. The Communist Party Committee at the commune level was instrumental in communicating local attitudes and reactions to policies formulated by the centre.[25]

Brigades

In the agricultural restructuring in the early 1960s, the brigade was briefly identified as the lowest unit of accounting.[26] It took over previously commune held responsibilities, but this was a temporary arrangement.[27] After the further reduction in the size of the accounting unit, the brigade shared the commune's task in ensuring safe and timely delivery of procurement quotas. However, unlike the commune cadres, the brigade officials were not on state salary; they derived their income and grain rations from the production teams to whom they were attached and were not exempt from participating in collective labour.[28]

The brigade's responsibilities entailed co-ordinating the activities of the production teams: specifying what and how much production teams would grow through contracts signed by the two tiers.[29]

---

[25] Ibid., p.122.

[26] But some production brigades such as the Dazhai brigade and other targeted models remained the lowest unit of accounting. Aside from these exceptions, the lowest unit of accounting was the production team.

[27] Calls for brigade accounting were made by radicals and accounting sometimes shifted between team and brigade levels. But for the most part, local cadres tried to maintain team accounting and by 1978 fewer than 10 per cent of production brigades had established brigade accounting (Zweig, Agrarian Radicalism, p.119).

[28] Stavis, People's Commune and Rural Development in China, p.103.

In addition to communicating the production targets to the teams, brigades also provided social services and agricultural investment, and furnished production teams with certain means of production.[30] Like the commune, brigades owned several small factories such as brick factories.[31] Also, projects that were outside the scope of individual teams, such as water conservancy or projects of benefit to a number of production teams were undertaken by brigades.[32]

Like the commune, party representation at the brigade level was active with the expectation that these party leaders were to provide the necessary leadership in political work. Brigades were required to organise non-agricultural activities, namely overseeing the "political work among the peasants."[33] The brigade had a militia, and Women's Association and it was also entrusted with the task of maintaining close surveillance of the five bad elements (the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, criminals and rightists) and population movement.[34]

Brigade cadres like commune cadres were regarded with suspicion for they were entrusted with the task of collecting the grain quotas, which reduced the availability of grain for the peasants. Despite this suspicion reserved for brigade cadres, however, some of them colluded with production team leaders when the latter sought to keep a small extra amount of grain from the state. Since brigade cadres derived

---

[29] Barnett and Vogel, Cadres,Bureaucracy, and Political Power, p.420.

[30] Stavis, People's Commune and Rural Development in China, p.77.

[31] Parish and Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China, p.36.

[32] Blecher, China: Politics, Economics and Society, p.76.

[33] Martin King Whyte, Small Groups and Political Rituals in China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p.143.

[34] Stavis, People's Commune and Rural Development, p.102.

their grain ration and income from their respective production teams, underreporting by teams usually meant that brigade cadres benefited from this action.[35] Thus, brigade cadres at times applied discretion in the procurement of grain for the state.[36]

Production teams

The production team was the "most significant social structure ...from the end of the radical Great Leap Forward experiment in 1961, until the demise of Maoist society in the early 1980s."[37] The importance of the production teams lay in the wide-ranging responsibilities and powers they were given. In addition teams were fairly self-sufficient and autonomous. They relied on their collective labour not only to fulfil the state procurement targets but to feed themselves. Peasants were not provided with grain rations such as those provided to urban residents, and instead had to rely on the collective for food. As a collective unit, the production team owned farmland, tools, and draft animals. As an economic unit, the team incurred its own expenses. The team was responsible for its production expenses such as fertiliser, insecticides, electricity, tool repairs, tractors, etc.[38] Teams were also burdened with the duty of providing grain rations and cash supplements to brigade cadres. After deductions were made for team expenses, the collective income earned mainly from the team's agricultural production was distributed to its members.

---

[35] John P. Burns, "Rural Guangdong's Second Economy, 1962-1974," China Quarterly, no.88, (December 1981), pp.638-639.

[36] For details on patron-client relationships between brigade cadres and team leaders, see Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, chap.4,5,6.

[37] Potter and Potter, China's Peasants, p.94.

[38] Stavis, People's Communes and Rural Development in China, p.68.

Each team elected a team committee consisting of a team leader, accountant, treasurer, and granary watchman.[39] Team responsibilities entailed planning and managing production, organising labour, allocating work-points to team members for collective labour, allotting plots for private cultivation, distributing grain rations, and assessing and distributing income according to accumulated work-points. Such responsibilities made the team a fairly autonomous unit. Organised party representation at the team level was not evident. The office of the team leader was not a party post.[40]

When formulating policy, cadres relied on team leaders' assessments of basic production to determine output quotas. For the most part, the state resisted the idea of encroaching directly upon team jurisdiction unless it was evident that certain teams failed to follow general state policy.

Take, for example, the election of the production team committee, which was chosen by the production team members. Although the brigade made up the list of nominees and as such this election was more of a formal process of approval, it could not afford to ignore the peasants' wishes. A good leader who commanded the respect of the team members was a prerequisite for a successful harvest.[41] Despite the influence brigade cadres had over the selection of team leaders, they would find it personally disastrous if they imposed upon a team a leader opposed by the majority of the team members.

---

[39] Ibid., p.98.

[40] Zweig, Agrarian Radicalism, p.87; Oi's research indicates the number of team leaders who were party members were higher than 70 per cent (Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.133, fn.8).

[41] Philip C.C. Huang, The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta, 1350-1988 (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1990), p.187.

Production teams exhibited a certain degree of openness and informality that was often refreshing in a politically charged climate. The comparatively smaller size of a production team facilitated open discussion in which average peasants did have some influence. During relatively calm political periods, economic issues came to the fore. Discussions centered around agricultural production invited plentiful comments and input. Because of the team's collective nature, peasants were unlikely to hold back on such issues since they had a direct bearing on their grain rations and personal income. The resolution of such issues, however, could not and did not deviate from general central policy.[42]

Given the extent of team power and its insularity, it is not surprising that for most peasants, the production team was the locus of rural life: the provider of grain rations, work, and collective income. Social life for most peasants occurred within the confines of the team, and discussion centered around agricultural matters and local gossip: "For most people, social experience was almost entirely local experience."[43]

The team also provided the arena within which the team members and the team leader could participate politically at the implementation stage. Analysis of a team leader's power and efforts of team members to affect policy implementation is the focus of subsequent chapters but will be briefly mentioned here. Although team leaders were not state cadres (in that the state did not provide them with an income), they were state agents entrusted with the task of policy implementation. Their power derived from their position as state agents with control

---

[42] Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, pp.75-78.

[43] Vivienne Shue, "State Power and Social Organization in China," p.69.

over important resources, such as job allocation, grain rations and personal income. Efforts by team members to affect the implementation of policy constituted a form of political participation. Interests were articulated by private citizens, and at times were satisfied; thus, policy implementation was affected.

Of the three tiers, the production team was the lowest but most important level. It was a distinct political, economic and social unit fulfilling a variety of roles. The considerable degree of autonomy and insularity dictated that the production team have strong leadership.[44] But the substantial amount of power conferred upon the team leader produced a peasantry that was dependent not only on the collective in general but specifically on the benevolence of the team leader:[45]

> Three-Fingers Li said,"A team leader controls his team. He can assign the best jobs to his friends. He has the power to reward them and to make life miserable for those he dislikes."[46]

Tax and surplus grain sales

The elimination of insecurity and the assurance of life is considered by Stavis to be a great achievement of the Communist Party.[47] Of course, the Communist Party must be lauded for introducing a guarantee of basic food supply for its citizens, a major achievement in any system. But this was accomplished through establishing in November 1953, a state monopoly on the trade in grain, which in effect reduced

---

[44] See Burns for comment on the increase in cadre corruption and lowering the accounting unit to the production team (Burns, "Peasant Interest Articulation and Work Teams," p.147).

[45] "Peasant dependence on local leaders, during 1960s and 1970s, for redistribution of grain rations, work-points, private plots, and outside employment encouraged the development of rural clientelism" (Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.123).

[46] B. Michael Frolic, Mao's People: Sixteen Portraits of Life in Revolutionary China (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p.136.

[47] Stavis, People's Communes and Rural Development in China, p.28.

individual peasant autonomy over not just production of grain but, more important, over its consumption. To illustrate, if a production team failed to produce sufficient grain for its consumption, the state would decide the amount of grain that team was entitled to buy regardless of the team's actual requirements[48] or would coerce peasants into substituting sweet potatoes (a not entirely popular type of food) for rice to fulfil the rice quota.[49] The state was quite willing to subordinate the peasantry to its production goals.[50]

In order for the central government to fulfil its priority of maintaining a certain level of urban food consumption,[51] it had to ensure a steady transfer of grain from the rural to urban areas. It achieved this primarily through its procurement policy rather than through a high level of direct taxation. Grain extraction was ensured through four different methods: [a] agricultural grain tax, [b]basic quota sales, [c] overquota sales, and [d] sales at negotiated prices.

Although at first glance, it would appear that the rate of grain tax was relatively low, in reality its impact was not insignificant. The percentage of grain tax ranged from between three to eight per cent of gross grain production.[52] Land was graded as good, average, or poor. The tax was determined not as a percentage of the total grain output, but as an estimated output of grain per mu of cultivated land.

---

[48] Bernstein, "Cadre and Peasant Behavior," p.365.

[49] Ibid., p.366.

[50] Ibid., p.367.

[51] In mid-June 1959, Mao made a comment that "he could not understand why the working class did not have meat, chicken, duck, and eggs to eat. In response to Mao's remark, the sycophant Premier Zhou Enlai and his subordinates at the State Council immediately adopted special measures to improve the supply of these products in urban areas" (Yang, Calamity and Reform in China, p.51).

[52] The grain tax was based on the land and grain production evaluation. It was fixed and had to be paid at any cost. The tax amount remained low throughout the Maoist years (Parish and Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China, p.49).

And although the tax assessment was reviewed every three to five years, it remained relatively stable and low in proportion to the total output. As Oi points out, the ability of the state to effectively evaluate the taxes was interrupted by political campaigns and much of the assessment was based on "outdated land information and production statistics."[53]

But however low the agricultural tax, the necessity of paying it created problems for peasants in poorer teams, especially considering that the tax was to be paid in grain. If the team was unable to produce sufficient grain to cover its agricultural tax, the only solution was to reduce its basic food rations to make up the difference because "the state's claim on the harvest had priority."[54]

Furthermore, Kenneth Walker states that it would be illusory to view the low percent of direct taxation as insignificant. Between 1953-1957, the tax, which was paid in grain, amounted to just under forty per cent of the grain delivered to the state. The remaining sixty per cent of grain deliveries were grain sales at low procurement prices. The revenue from these sales was insufficient to offset the forty percent of grain delivered without compensation; thus, one "can hardly regard the tax as light."[55] The figures for 1977-1980 indicate that although tax as a percentage of the total grain output decreased from 10.5 per cent to 4.5 per cent, tax constituted around twenty-two per cent of the grain delivered to the state. In light of the low procurement prices[56]

---

[53] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.20.

[54] Oi illustrates the difficulties encountered in applying for relief from tax payment during times of poor harvests. The emphasis on grain self-sufficiency from the mid-1960s placed heavy pressure on economic performance. Many cadres were unwilling to apply for relief for fear of negative political evaluations (Ibid., p.22).

[55] Kenneth R. Walker, Food Grain Procurement and Consumption in China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.49.

[56] Please see Lardy for his discussion of procurement prices, grain tax and the poorer teams' need to buy grain from the state for consumption. (Nicholas R.

throughout this period, this twenty two per cent was still a considerable burden on the peasants.[57]

The three remaining methods of grain extraction were all grain sales to the state: [a]sales within contract (Basic Quota Sales), [b]above contract (Overquota) Sales,[58] [c] and sales at negotiated prices. Although theoretically both the basic quota grain sales and overquota sales were extracted from the production team's surplus grain, the state's definition of "surplus" was arbitrary. The control on sales of "surplus" grain were an indirect form of taxation hiding behind the word "surplus" to legitimise the state's extraction policy.[59] The use of the term "surplus grain" was a "misnomer" as this quantity had to be sold to the state at any cost.[60]

The surplus grain was determined by dividing the harvest into two parts: the Basic Share and the Surplus grain. The former was reserved for the agricultural tax, and the "three retained funds": seed grain for the next production season, fodder to support livestock, and team members' grain rations. Of the "three retained funds" the seed grain was the most important as it determined the quality and quantity of the next harvest and was therefore necessarily of high quality. Because of the desire to raise grain output, the state was relatively lax in the amount it allowed for the seed grain portion of the harvest.[61]

Lardy, Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development [Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1983], pp.187-189).

[57] See table 57 (Walker, Food Grain Procurement and Consumption in China, p.182).

[58] Parish and Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China, p.50.

[59] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.15.

[60] Potter and Potter, China's Peasants, p.146.

[61] See Kenneth Walker for implications of the considerable increase in grain allocated for processing, seed, and livestock, Walker, Food Grain Procurement and Consumption in China, pp.177-179).

This leniency, however, did not extend to the amount of grain peasants could reserve for their personal consumption. Although the government stipulated a minimal amount for grain consumption for each individual, the actual amount of grain reserved for consumption was frequently much lower. Unlike the urban population, the rural population did not benefit from the food rationing system as it did not apply to them. The urban population was provided with food coupons, while the peasantry derived its basic food ration from the collective grain income; instead of ration coupons for a fixed amount, they received a varying portion of the grain after the taxes and quotas were filled.

Nicholas Lardy points to a contradictory situation in China, in which rural consumption continued to decline from the late 1950s, while urban consumption increased.[62] From the 1950s onwards, the state ensured a steady food supply to the urban areas, often to the detriment of the rural consumption rate. Between 1957 and 1978, average national cereal consumption decreased by 3.2 per cent; in the rural areas it decreased by 5.9 per cent, but in the urban areas there was an increase in cereal consumption of 10.5 per cent.[63]

---

[62] The substantial increase in population must be taken into consideration when evaluating increased grain production and consumption rates. However, it is generally recognised that the rural population has borne unproportional hardships and lower consumption rates. The urban population in comparison enjoyed better provisions and living standards. See Walker, Food Grain Procurement and Consumption in China, pp.186-198; Lardy, Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development, pp.157-189.

[63] Lardy, Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development, p.157. Bernstein notes that in the mistaken belief that there was surplus grain, leaders allowed the growth of the urban population from 99 million to 130 million between the years 1957 and 1961. When the exigences of resettling these people became apparent, in 1961 alone 10 million people were resettled to the countryside (Bernstein, "Stalinism, Famine and Chinese Peasants," pp.351-352). See Walker's figures which indicate rural grain consumption increased slightly between 1953-1979 (Walker, Food Grain Procurement and Consumption in China, p.191).

Rural consumption suffered at the hands of the state's procurement policy.[64] Much of the literature on rural China is replete with illustrations of low food intake,[65] especially in light of the international subsistence level identified at approximately 270 kilograms (or 45 jin per person per month) per person per year.[66] In contrast, in China a minimum of 156 kilograms per person per year was supposedly guaranteed by the state (using Chinese units of measurement 312 jin [unhusked] per person per year - 26 jin per month).[67]

The three funds and the tax, then, were part of the team's expenses. The remaining grain was classified as surplus grain out of which three kinds of grain sales were made. The first, the Basic Quota grain was similar to the agricultural tax in that it was an obligatory sale. The amount of this sale was fixed during the planning process and remained unchanged for approximately five years. The state procurement price was much lower than what would have been paid on the free market and offered the peasants little consolation for being coerced into making the sale.[68]

In addition, since this quota was set every five years and rarely modified to reflect changes in grain output, its sale frequently reduced the amount of grain available for local consumption. Teams who were classified as grain surplus teams but were experiencing a poor harvest,

---

[64] For a comparison of rural consumption rates according to different scholars, see Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.33; for population growth and rural consumption, see Potter and Potter, China's Peasants, pp.162-165. Despite the debate over population growth and rural, urban consumption rates, one can take as given that there was, if not a drop, then at least a lack of any substantial increase in rural consumption rates.

[65] For details on low rates of consumption see Lardy, Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development, pp.171-175.

[66] 1 jin is equal to 0.5 kilograms.

[67] Oi, State and Peasants in Contemporary China, p.45,fn.7.

[68] Ibid., p.50.

had little choice but to surrender the specified amount of grain. There was adjustment not in the amount of grain sold, but in the amount of grain consumed by the peasants. If the team was seriously grain deficient after the sale, it could apply to purchase grain from the state who decided the amount.[69] But teams were reluctant to appeal to the state, as such appeals had negative political connotations and would bring into question the local cadre's ability to produce a good harvest. Only in tragic cases due to natural disasters could teams be exempt from making this sale.[70]

Overquota sales were introduced in 1957, and were sales of grain produced beyond the Basic Quota, which the production team could sell to the state but for the same low state prices. Thus, even the Overquota Sale was not of significant benefit to the team. It was not until the early 1970s that the state decided to add a premium to the price of this grain sale.[71]

The sale of grain at negotiated prices was introduced at the same time as the premium for the abovequota sales. Both the amount and price of this grain sale were determined through negotiation with teams.[72] Overquota sales at regular basic quota sale price were encouraged as a show of patriotism.[73]

A brief look at the Chinese criterion for grain surplus team status illustrates the low level of subsistence in rural China. Those teams who had a distribution of 30-35 jin (unhusked) per person per

---

[69] See Potter and Potter, China's Peasants, p.146.

[70] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, pp.21-22.

[71] Neville Maxwell and Peter Nolan, "The Procurement of Grain," China Quarterly, no.82, (June 1980), p.304.

[72] Ibid., p.305.

[73] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, pp.52-53.

month of grain were considered as grain surplus teams and had to make surplus sales to the state.[74] International standards, however, give the definition of surplus as 51.6 jin per person per month.[75] The 20 jin discrepancy is illustrative. Chinese subsistence standards were far lower than international standards, which calls into question the ability of the state to ensure the provision of grain sufficient for subsistence. Furthermore, the grain transfer payments used in the mid-1950s were reduced by the late 1950s as self-sufficiency became the prevailing objective and the "capacity of the state to redistribute cereals to meet basic consumption needs in rural areas declined."[76] The official "iron rice bowl" policy did not prevent the peasants from enduring consistently low consumption rates, and starvation during the "three lean years" following the Great Leap Forward.[77]

Grain rations: basic grain and work point grain

The fact that state policy guaranteed a per capita grain ration of 312 jin was an ineffective guarantee as the state rarely intervened to determine if this quantum was indeed distributed to the peasants.[78] The Basic Grain Ration merely ensured that peasants received a portion of the team's grain, the amount depending on the availability of grain within the team, unrelated to their contribution to collective labour.

---

[74] Please see Oi's table (Ibid., p.47).

[75] Ibid., p.48.

[76] Lardy, Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development, p.167.

[77] In 1960 and 1961 China suffered a net loss of 20-25 million people (Blecher, China: Politics, Economics and Society, p.72). Also see Lardy whose estimation is that the net rural loss in 1960-1961 was 16 million (Lardy, Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development, pp.151-152).

[78] Lardy makes an interesting point about the grain rations in rural China. He states that: "There is no formal rationing system in rural China for cereals except insofar as grain taxes and quotas for the sale of grain by producing units to the state are set to allow minimum food requirements to be met" (Ibid., p.167).

Although implementation of the minimum amount of grain ration was not enforced, compliance with the ceilings set on maximum amount of grain ration was expected.[79] The state's primary concern was fulfilling its procurement targets.

This per capita grain ration provided by each production team was not the only means of obtaining grain. Grain was also distributed according to the amount of work points accumulated by individual team members: Work Point Grain. Work done on the collective was rewarded by works points which provided peasants with a cash income and extra grain.

Work points were introduced as a means to assess each team member's portion of the collective (production team) income. At the time of income distribution, the collective net distributive income was divided by the total amount of work points of all the team members. This determined the worth of each work point. Then each member's work points were multiplied by the value of each work point to assess his/her share of the collective income.[80]

Since the time peasants were organised into communes, there were two kinds of work point systems in place: the task rate system and the time rate system. The use of these systems depended on the prevailing political climate and on individual teams and on the nature of the work performed. Both systems could be in place at the same time.

During radical political climates, such as the Cultural Revolution and the Learn from Dazhai movement, the time rate system was preferred by the state. Workers were assessed according to their ability, given a fixed number of points based on their labour grade, and then received a

---

[79] Oi provides an example of a 1974 Anhui directive which set the maximum amount of per capita basic grain ration at 450 jin (Oi, State and Peasants in Contemporary China, p. 41).

[80] Stavis, People's Communes and Rural Development in China, p.68.

fixed number of work points for each day they worked.[81] Thus, workers accumulated points according to the number of days they worked for the collective.[82]

The task rate system, on the other hand, allotted certain points to certain jobs. Workers were paid according to the number of tasks and quotas they fulfilled.[83] Since work points accumulated increased with the greater number of tasks completed, workers were enthusiastic about this system, which facilitated a faster task completion speed. However, the task-rate system was criticised by radicals for favouring the strong over the weak and fostering inequality. In addition, since this system emphasised quantity and not quality, many team leaders discovered that although work was completed at a faster rate, its quality was poor.

The Dazhai system, which was named after Chen Yong-gui, a model production brigade in Shanxi province, was the least favoured and generally abandoned after 1971. A distinguishing feature of the Dazhai system was that it called for self-assessment. "In meetings everyday or so, members would report what level of work points they felt they should receive for the previous day's work."[84] After this introspective session, the other team members would either approve or criticise this evaluation. The daily meetings were abandoned and replaced by semi-annual assessments. The only remaining difference between the Dazhai

---

[81] In Chen village in Guangdong province, this 8.5 points became the minimal rating for all adult male. But women could expect only a maximum of 7.5. Furthermore, no man's rating could slip below the women's maximum rating (Anita Chan, Richard Madsen, and Jonathan Unger, Chen Village: The Recent History of a Peasant Community in Mao's China [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984], p.92).

[82] Parish and Whyte, Village and Family Contemporary China, p.62.

[83] Ibid., p.63.

[84] Ibid.

and the time-rate system was that the former was retroactive. Aside from this, both systems were based on labour grades.[85]

But in its labour assessment, the Dazhai system emphasised political and worker attitude. Those who were weak but exerted maximum effort were awarded, and so were those who held correct political attitudes and class labels. For example, in the task-rate system a strong worker could earn as much as twice the number of work points as a weak worker. In the Dazhai system, however, whereas the strong worker could still earn the full 10 points, the weak worker could earn at least 8.5 points by virtue of his effort and class background. Moreover, the emphasis on political attitudes "struck some peasants as unfair, since lazy peasants who were good talkers might earn more than hard workers."[86]

Of the three work point systems, teams used a combination of the first two. The time-rate system was appropriate during slack seasons when there was not enough work whereas the task-rate was successful in motivating peasants to complete the high volume of work during harvest and planting seasons. A high labour to job ratio also resulted in the preferred use of the time-rate system.[87]

Work points, then, were important as they entitled working individuals to a portion of the team's income: both cash and grain. For the majority of peasants, the Basic Grain Ration was insufficient, but could be supplemented through Work Point Grain. First, the amount and distribution of Work Point Grain depended on the ratio of Basic Grain to Work Point Grain preferred by the team: a high ratio of Work Point Grain

---

85 Ibid.

86 Whyte, Small Groups and Political Rituals, p.161.

87 Parish and Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China, p.63.

to Basic Grain Ration resulted in prosperity among families with a higher labour power to mouth-to-feed ratio.[88] In contrast, a high Basic Grain to Work Point Grain ratio frequently meant that hard-working villagers felt they were not being rewarded for their labour; families with several children received the same amount of grain, if not more, from the collective.[89]

Work points were used not merely to augment one's grain supply, but also to pay for one's Basic Grain ration; the Basic Grain Ration did not mean a free grain ration.[90] The Basic Grain Rations that were meted out to peasants were actually sold to them at the state procurement price. Each household account had the cost of this Basic Grain Ration deducted from its account. At the time of income distribution, the team committee would balance household accounts: those with a positive balance would receive their portion of Work Point Grain and income according to work points accumulated, and those with a negative balance would be considered overdrawn. Overdrawn households were not denied their Basic Grain Rations; the floor placed on consumption levels was to "allow them to borrow indefinitely from the team,"[91] providing it had any remaining grain.

The system of grain distribution must be further clarified to illustrate that the Work Point Grain was not a portion of the Surplus Grain. The harvest was divided into two parts: Basic Share and Surplus Grain. Once the quantity of the Surplus Grain had been determined,

---

[88] Ibid., p.62.

[89] An interviewee's joke related to Jean Oi aptly illustrates peasant feeling towards a high basic to work point grain ratio: "some labor all day in the fields to get their grain, while others labor at night" (Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.40).

[90] Free grain distribution only lasted for a few months in 1958 during the heydays of the Great Leap Forward (Ibid., p.36).

[91] Lardy, Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development, p.174.

production team units had no claim to it. Instead, the production teams had to allocate grain for personal and collective use from within the Basic Share.[92]

The grain included in the team's Basic Share was distributed according to two criteria: Basic Grain Ration and Work Point Grain. A ceiling was usually placed on the amount of grain that could be distributed as work point grain; limitations manifested themselves through the ratios of basic to work point grain. In addition, provinces and counties set limits on the amount of Basic Grain Ration, and some even limited the total grain distribution;[93] the state could ill afford to have its share of the harvest jeopardised by generous grain distributions.

Although the work point system was introduced to give peasants the opportunity to earn cash and increase their grain consumption, its distribution was contingent on the team receiving adequate cash income to cover its production and any other team expenses. If there was sufficient cash and grain left after expenses had been paid, then they could be meted out based on work points.

Unfortunately for the peasants, there was little opportunity to use their cash income to offset their meagre grain rations. Cash was rare in Maoist China as teams frequently had little cash to distribute. Teams either made insufficient cash income or their income was withheld by the credit co-operative for outstanding debts.[94] Lardy points out that the majority of peasant income was distributed in grain or other agricultural commodities.[95] Between 1974 and 1978, cash comprised less

---

[92] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, pp.15,26-38.

[93] Ibid., p.41.

[94] Ibid., p.38.

[95] Lardy, Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development, p.161.

than twenty percent of distributed income.[96] As far as cash was concerned, peasants relied on private plots and overseas remittances. And even then, cash was still rare because of political campaigns that discouraged the use of private plots and sideline activities to earn cash.[97]

With a lack of incoming cash for distribution, and limitations on the amount of work point grain,[98] work points then were frequently virtually worthless. In such cases, work points paid for the peasant's Basic Grain Rations, which were supposed to be distributed regardless of one's contribution to collective labour. Work points merely created the semblance of reward according to labour contribution. The vicissitudes in the method of allotting work points due to the conflict at the center over equity and equality added to the disillusionment among peasants.[99] In the end, work points elicited labour from peasants with few rewards.

For a considerable number of peasants, living conditions in Maoist China were below subsistence and for some life was even characterised by semi-starvation.[100] Grain rations were frequently insufficient.[101] Actually, it would be illusory to categorise the Basic Grain as a ration. Peasants did not receive coupons for their Basic Grain share. Nor were they otherwise assured of a specified amount of grain per

---

[96] The average per capita cash income between 1974-1978 was 13 Yuan (Ibid.).

[97] Ibid., p.162.

[98] For much of the period after mid-1960s, 7:3 basic grain ration to work point grain was the most common ratio (Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.39). .

[99] For a detailed account of work point grain and basic grain ratios, see Parish and Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China, pp.60-66; Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, pp.38-40.

[100] See Lardy's summary of accounts of rural consumption and income (Lardy, Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development, pp.166-189).

[101] Also see Kelliher regarding the state's admission that 100 million peasants did not have enough grain to eat (Daniel Kelliher, Peasant Power in China: The Era of Rural Reform, 1978-88 [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992], p.89).

month. In reality, the Basic Grain entitled all peasants to an equal amount, with slight variation for age and sex, of the available portion of the harvest. This amount fluctuated according to production, procurement levels, and team expenses. There was assurance that each peasant would receive a portion, albeit small, of grain. "Rely on the collective for food, on the individual for money to spend, and on speculation to get rich"[102] was the advice of an astute peasant.

Conclusion

The socialist reorganisation of the countryside did not eliminate the prevalence of poverty. The enthusiasm and faith in the communist dream that was so evident in the early years of communist rule, rapidly disintegrated with the "three lean years" following the Great Leap Forward.[103] When the mass mobilisation campaign failed to deliver higher living conditions and instead triggered famine and starvation, peasants tried hard to retain faith in the communist dream. The period of economic liberalisation, considered necessary for recovery in the aftermath of the Great Leap, provided a brief respite from radical policies.

The subsequent vicissitudes in agrarian policy as cliques at the center engaged in a power struggle with the ebb and flow of radical power further disillusioned and confused the peasantry.[104] Living

---

[102] R. J. Birrell, "The Centralized Control of the Communes in the Post-'Great Leap' Period," in Chinese Communist Politics in Action, p.417.

[103] Selden, The Political Economy of Chinese Socialism, pp.21,100.

[104] For interesting accounts of peasant life throughout the Maoist era, see the short story Li Shunda Builds a House by Gao Xiaosheng and A Small Town Called Hibiscus by Gu Hua. The following quotation aptly sums up peasant attitudes towards political campaigns: "But when the Cultural Revolution started, even he couldn't keep up anymore. How could you keep up with a situation in which you were surrounded by people everywhere loudly proclaiming 'Only I know the correct doctrine'? Who really knew who was right or wrong, good or bad, honest or insincere, red or black? Li Shunda got totally confused and finally had to just squat down on his heels and give up trying to follow anyone"

standards remained low, rural grain consumption did not meet international subsistence standards, oil, vegetables and meat were scarce, and cash extremely rare.[105] Such negative features of the rural landscape remained constant, while economic prosperity proved elusive.

The socialist organisation of rural China facilitated the "projection of state power into the countryside."[106] The creation of relatively autonomous collectives of twenty to sixty families enabled the state the fulfil its procurement targets to the detriment of rural consumption. The production team managed its own finances and production, fulfilled state quotas, incurred its costs and fed its team members. In the creation of the production team (the collective), the complete economic and social dependence of the ordinary peasant on this collective was ensured. Food and employment for peasants were available only through the production team. And team leaders were the repository of power within the production team. They determined job allocation, grain rations and personal income. In sum, they determined the quality of peasant life within the production team.

The only advantage to the peasants of the collective system was its guarantee of security: food. There was assurance of an amount of grain, which no matter how small, was still a constant "cushion of security."[107] Nevertheless, no matter how commendable this provision

---

(Xiaosheng Gao, "Li Shunda Builds a House," in The Broken Betrothal [Beijing: Chinese Literature Press, 1987], p.38).

[105] For details on non-grain food consumption and income, see Lardy, Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development, chap.4.

[106] Putterman, Continuity and Change, p.26.

[107] Parish and Whyte, Family and Village in Contemporary China, p.66.

was, it has to be judged in light of low rural versus urban consumption.[108]

It was in this context that peasants in Maoist China were not just willing but eager to use clientelism to increase their Work Point Grain ration and cash income. In sum, peasants resorted to clientelism to mitigate the harshness of rural life: to make the best of the scarcity and unequal access to such essential resources as grain. Having now provided the context in which clientelism took root and one of the reasons for the emergence of clientelism, the next chapter will detail the opportunities presented to initiate patron-client ties and the ways in which clientelism was used and thus facilitated political participation.

---

[108] For a combined discussion of increased grain production, procurement rates, rural consumption, population growth, and local grain reserves, see Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, chap.2-4.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP IN MAOIST RURAL CHINA

"To get what you wanted, you had to yanjiu, yanjiu."[1] In other words, the satisfaction of one's personal demands necessitated presenting local officials with wine and cigarettes.[2] How prevalent was this practice in rural China? Several writers on China, (in particular Jean Oi[3] who has provided the most detailed account of the extensive use of clientelism by peasants), have noted the widespread use of clientelism to procure goods and obtain access to services.[4] In rural China during the Maoist period, peasants had very little autonomous access to major resources or control over their own income. This, compounded by the scarcity of resources, often resulted in the use of informal ties such as clientelism to obtain desired items.

The previous chapter has detailed the scope of the state's power in extracting grain from the countryside and the dependence of the peasantry on the state for basic livelihood. The generally severe rural environment, and here I mean not just the natural environment but that which appeared as a result of the state's agricultural policies, raises the question of how peasants coped. Whereas the previous chapter elaborated on the content of state policies which created the context in which clientelism emerged, this chapter will present the nature of authority in rural areas that provided the opportunities and incentives

---

[1] Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.159.

[2] Yanjiu has a double meaning. It means not only cigarettes and wine but also to research.

[3] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China

[4] Scholars such as John P. Burns, Vivienne Shue and Richard Madsen have noted the presence of clientelism.

to use clientelism. It will point to the concentration of power in the team leader and the team leader's insecurity because of political campaigns as two reasons for the emergence of clientelism.

The objective of this section, then, is to illustrate how the generally severe environment and nature of local authority stimulated the use of clientelism in rural China. It will detail peasant strategies to extract particular benefits from the state through local leaders, in particular team leaders. Chapter Two established the acceptance of clientelism as a form of political participation. This chapter will illustrate the benefits to the patron and client of clientelism as a mode of political participation. It will further present the differences in Chinese socialist clientelism to traditional and communist clientelism.

A synthesis of several works on rural China conveys an image of rural China in the Maoist era that is diverse and filled with contradictions, which nevertheless illustrates how pervasive and varied were the ways in which clientelism was employed. The focus is primarily on the production team due to the peasants' economic, social and political dependence on it. For much of the Maoist period, peasant life in China was generally experienced within the confines of the production team, with few households having "continuous ties outside of [this] unit."[5]

Team leader in a production team

The production team was the locus of peasant life. Unlike urban residents, peasants were denied the use of ration coupons. Instead, as a direct result of the household registration system which bound the peasantry to the production team, peasants were dependent on their teams

---

[5] Croll, From Heaven to Earth, p.120.

for most of their food and income. Within the production team, power was concentrated in the hands of the team leader. Given the significant degree of autonomy of the team in matters of production, management and, most important, job allocation and income distribution, the team leaders "had great control over the lives and fortunes of their fellow villagers."[6]

Burdens of office

Before delving into the dynamics between the team leader and team members, one must mention that the office of the team leader had its own disadvantages, which perhaps paradoxically encouraged the incumbent to make the most of this office. It brought negligible material rewards in terms of payment for services. Instead, burdens of office were enough to deter most peasants from seeking this post:

> Being a team leader was a burden. I did all that extra work and received almost nothing in return. For a whole year of countless meetings and other demands on my time, I only got about 100 extra work points. I could make twice that much if I bought a handcart and did odd carrying work for the team or brigade, and I would have more time to fix up my house and just take life a little easier.[7]

Some of the burdens included job allocation. Take an example cited by Huang in which some team leaders had to allocate jobs on a daily basis, and this meant waking up early to post the jobs before work commenced. During regular seasons, the task of designating jobs would total one hour from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m., and during harvest and planting season, this time would double.[8]

The administrative work required to manage the team was rewarded by a negligible supplement. Furthermore, since the administrative

---

[6] Potter and Potter, China's Peasants, p.96.

[7] Frolic, Mao's People, p.32.

[8] Huang, The Peasant Family and Rural Development, p.186.

duties did not exempt team leaders from participating in collective labour like their fellow team members, much of the administrative work had to be done in their spare time. This frequently meant that team leaders had less time to spend on personal matters, such as tending their private plot or other activities aimed at raising their private income. Therefore, the small supplement given was "in part to offset the cadres' lower level of private income, since their official duties [did not] permit them to devote as much time as ordinary members to their private plots."[9] Rather than a wage, the small supplement was a form of compensation.

In addition, not only did team leaders have to satisfy their superiors' procurement targets, but they were often required to listen to their fellow villagers' complaints about state policy.[10] For example, Huang Shu-min relates a comment made by Party Secretary Ye in Lin village, who although speaking about office at the brigade level, provides an appropriate illustration of the burdens of office:

> We, the village cadres, are ultimately responsible for carrying out government policies. But, in the meantime, the government has also been suspicious about rural cadres having been co-opted by their kinsmen and community, and hence think we are corrupt. Similarly, villagers look at us ambivalently.... No matter what we do, we are criticized.[11]

Another example, related to William Hinton, will further illustrate the frustration felt by many cadres:

> People treated you just like the father-in-law who carries his daughter-in-law across the creek. He puts forth a great effort but gets nothing but curses in return. Why? Because he is sus-

---

[9] Marc Blecher, "The Mass Line and Leader-Mass Relations and Communications in Basic-Level Rural Communities," in China's New Social Fabric, p.69.

[10] Liu Hsia-chung, a former team leader, complained how "during the agricultural crisis he had to try to enforce team regulations and he served as a lightning rod for peasant complaints" (Whyte, Small Groups and Political Rituals, p.158).

[11] Shu-min Huang, The Spiral Road: Change in a Chinese Village Through the Eyes of a Communist Party Leader (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), p.186.

> pected of wanting to take the daughter-in-law in his arms, of wanting to embrace her. The daughter-in-law considers the old man to be fresh, and the son thinks his pop is taking liberties with his bride.[12]

Some writers, however, found that bridage leaders were "hopelessly trapped in the middle" and the team leaders felt less pressure. They were more willing to stand up to the higher levels, because they were part of, and derived their incomes and grain rations from, the collective team they each represented.[13] Nevertheless, most writers do acknowledge that the team leaders were also placed in the middle, between the higher ups and the peasants.

Therefore, team leaders too often found themselves between the state and fellow villagers, unable to satisfy both at the same time but obliged to listen to demands from both. Also, team leaders were often targets during political campaigns. Inability to increase production and fulfil procurement targets brought into question the leader's political credentials and overall ability.[14]

Given this inadequate formal compensation for their official role, it is understandable that team leaders would often use their power as team leaders for personal benefit. Team members were aware of the "importance of cultivating personal ties or connections"[15] with their team leaders, so that they "might be assigned lighter and easier work or receive better work evaluations."[16]

---

[12] William Hinton, Shenfan, (New York: Random House, 1983), p.157.

[13] Chan, Madsen and Unger, Chen Village, p.243.

[14] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.144.

[15] Victor Nee, "Between Center and Locality: State, Militia, and Village," in eds. David Mozingo and Victor Nee, State and Society in Contemporary China (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.243.

[16] Yang, Gifts, Favors, and Banquets, p.76.

However, there was a balancing element to this. Although there was a possibility that the local cadres could abuse their power and become quite despotic, in general, the fact that these cadres lived and would continue to live among their fellow villagers, kept a check on their abuse of power; "If you are to stay in the village for the rest of your life, you should be more careful in dealing with your villagers while you have power," was the advice of Party Secretary Ye in Lin village.[17]

Furthermore, team leaders would have to be circumspect in their use of power as they could ill-afford to lose the respect and co-operation of their team members. Without team members' co-operation, team leaders would be unable to fulfil their official duty of increasing production output. Resentment from other peasants would result in a lack of motivation and poor work performance, which would, in the eyes of the superiors, throw into question the team leader's abilities. Also, since team leaders were members of the team and thus depended on the team for income, they would not want to jeopardise their own income share. To facilitate a productive harvest, team leaders would have to be circumspect in their use of power.[18]

A look at the criteria for the selection of team leaders further reveals that this office could not be occupied by just any peasant. First, although team leaders were generally from the politically sound class background, they rarely became leaders solely by virtue of their class standing. The responsibility over important matters such as

---

[17] Huang, The Spiral Road, p.191.

[18] Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.105; Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, pp.144-145.

agricultural production made, "managerial abilities"[19] important in selection.

Second, Madsen in his study of Chen Village in Guangdong province found that team leaders were usually one of the hardest and strongest workers. To earn the respect of the team members necessary for success in production, team leaders would have to set an example by working hard. In Chen village, for example, physical strength was integral to gaining acceptance as the team leader by other team members:

> The combination of physical strength and practical skill required of a first-rate farm laborer was almost indispensable for the attainment of social prestige in Chen Village. And without such prestige, one could not be accepted as a leader.... Individuals who were weak and clumsy were simply not accepted as leaders.[20]

Moreover, villagers were reluctant to accept as leaders those who were unable to effectively exercise authority at home.

> For instance, the counsellors in production team no.7 decided that the wife of the team head was proving to be a major obstacle to her husband's effective exercise of authority. Although her husband had a reputation as a hard, relatively selfless worker and a skillful manager, his authority was being undermined by his wife's reputation as a lazy, contentious person given to petty theft and spiteful damaging of collective property....the team members said that their leader was not worthy of their respect since he could not even control his own wife.[21]

Such examples illustrate that class background, though very important, was not the sole criterion in determining a peasant's eligibility for leadership. As farmers, team members' priority was agricultural production and to this effect persons with good managerial skills were necessary and welcomed. And although the team leader

---

[19] Chan, Madsen and Unger, Chen Village, p.26.

[20] Madsen, Morality and Power, p.34.

[21] Ibid., p.139.

position was not a party post,[22] Jean Oi's research indicates that a majority of the team leaders were party members.[23]

Of course, examples of peasant reluctance to being selected as a team leader did not prevent the emergence of persons who were in fact determined to become leaders and actively sought this office.[24] Take, for example, a specific case provided by Frolic where the head of No.4 team in East Liu Wei production brigade in Liu Wei village valued his position as team leader and "didn't want to lose his chances of being promoted in the future."[25] Thus, for many peasants the office of the team leader was a stepping stone to higher and better positions at the brigade level.

Furthermore, abuses of power by team leaders did occur and did not go unnoticed. Sometimes those who had supporters in higher positions were wont to do as they pleased, which in some instances meant outright abuse of power for personal benefit. The resentment of fellow villagers could be countered by the threat of use of power to negatively affect the peasant's livelihood. Moreover, in some cases the insularity of the team allowed "despotism" to "be perpetrated with impunity."[26] However, despite the potential, for the most part, despotism was kept to a

---

[22] Zweig, Agrarian Radicalism, p.87.

[23] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.133, fn.8.

[24] See Madsen, Morality and Power, for an account of two peasants who sought public office. Although their positions were at the brigade level, there is a feeling that there were ambitious peasants who were interested in becoming the team leader. Burns also notes that "although many villagers [were] unwilling to serve in cadre posts, there are benefits sufficient to attract a relatively high proportion of the team or village population at one time or another to assume these responsibilities" (John P. Burns, "Chinese Peasant Interest Articulation," in ed. David S. G. Goodman, Groups and Politics in the People's Republic of China [Cardiff: University of College Cardiff Press, 1984], p.132).

[25] Frolic, Mao's People, p.37.

[26] Vivienne Shue, The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p.146.

minimum. Team leaders did use their official status to their benefit, but in most cases such "misuse" of power rarely approached the boundaries of despotism.[27]

The emergence of clientelist ties with the team leader

Control over job allocations, income and grain distribution placed considerable power in the hands of the team leaders. Not only could the possession of these resources be subtly used to extract policy compliance,[28] they also provided team leaders with an opportunity to augment "their income with personal 'gifts' received from villagers in return for favors."[29] In spite of the hardships associated with the position of a team leader, one of its attractions was the opportunity to exercise personalised authority which could benefit the leader's own family.[30]

The physical proximity of the team leader and members' residence quarters and work place provided ample scope for villagers and their team leader to enter into a clientelist relationship.[31] The daily interaction, during or after work, facilitated face-to-face contact between the team leader and the interested team member, which was necessary for the initiation and maintenance of a patron-client relationship.[32] Team members usually initiated the relationship, but

---

[27] Oi, State and Society in Contemporary China, p.144.

[28] Zweig, Agrarian Radicalism, p.87.

[29] Madsen, Morality and Power, p.39.

[30] Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.105.

[31] See Whyte, Small Groups and Political Rituals, p.227.

[32] The fact that villages were more "encysted and closed to outside contact" than before did impact the close interaction within individual production teams. "Co-operation simply within one's production team" became natural and accepted (Parish and Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China, pp.303-304).

without a leader's "active co-operation"[33] the relationship could not mature into a clientelist tie. Peasants presented their leader with gifts and made apparent their interest in establishing a more fruitful relationship with him. Of course, close friends and kin members were usually the first ones to benefit from the team leader. Their prior close association with the leader helped in initiating a clientelist tie. Ordinary villagers, however, were also able to, and did, establish close relationships with team leaders through clientelist ties.

In addition, the fact that production team and brigade boundaries were coterminous with traditional villages, hamlets or neighbourhoods within villages increased the approachability of the team leaders. Villagers had lived together for generations and knew each other very well:

> The team head has grown up and lived with the people of the team all his life.... People in the village have lived together for generations. They understand not only your situation, but even as far back as your grandfather....[34]

This familiarity increased the likelihood that team members would feel comfortable in approaching their leader for special consideration, which could later lead to a long-standing clientelist relationship.[35]

For the villagers, a patron-client relationship provided them with an opportunity to articulate their interests and advance influence through "personal approaches to team leaders."[36] The frequency and ruthlessness of political campaigns did not foster an environment conducive to the expression of "open dissent."[37] In the light of such

---

[33] Burns, "Chinese Peasant Interest Articulation," p.144.

[34] Belcher, "The Mass Line and Leader-Mass Relations," p.65.

[35] See Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, pp.44, 103-105.

[36] Zweig, Agrarian Radicalism, p.88.

[37] Ibid.

circumstances, the prudent thing to do was to use the clientelist tie to voice one's complaints and requests to the team leader-patron. Clientelism was frequently used as a palliative to the hardships of rural life.

Team leader's power and influence

There were several factors inherent in the system of production teams that helped to increase the leader's influence.[35] The different work point systems may have limited the influence of personal authority in determining work points, but it did not completely eliminate this influence. The team leaders could not arbitrarily assign a number of work points. They had to be allotted on the basis of the work point system.

Team leaders could, however, affect work point accumulation through job allocation. The time-rate system graded each worker and allotted a fixed number of work points to that grade; workers would accumulate work points for each day worked. In the task-rate system, the team leader could assign jobs of different levels of difficulty to two workers with similar grades. Therefore, although these two labourers received the same number of work points per day, their job input was different. A tractor driver had to expend less energy, while a manure carrier had the more tiring and unpleasant job.[36]

Of course in the task-rate system, the team leader had more discretion. Team members received work points depending on the amount of work points allotted for each completed job. Thus, the more jobs

---

[35] "Peasant dependence on local leaders during the 1960s and 1970s for redistribution of grain rations, work points, private plots and outside employment...encouraged the development of rural clientelism" (Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.123).

[36] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, pp.135-136.

done, the more work points accumulated. The most sought after job was one that required the least amount of time and effort, but awarded the greatest number of work points. Exercise of personalised authority by the patron could go a long way to obtaining the desired jobs and work points for the client.[40]

In labour-rich teams, where the labour-to-work ratio was high, jobs frequently had to be rotated. While team leaders could not monopolise all the available jobs and assign them only to their relatives, friends and clients, they could determine the frequency of one's job assignment. A close relationship with the leader could lead to assurance of some sort of regular job assignment or a better than average number of job assignments.[41]

Of all the powers conferred on the team cadre, this was the most important. Job allocations determined the number of work points which in turn determined the amount of income received from the collective. They further affected the status of a household. If the accumulated work points were insufficient to pay for the grain, vegetable and oil rations, then the household would be classified as overdrawn. This would not result in the withholding of the household's basic grain ration, but it would affect the amount of work point grain, and thus that household's grain consumption.

Aside from work for the collective, which since the formation of the communes constituted the main source of income, villagers were also granted private plots and opportunities to work as temporary urban workers. The importance of private income was significant considering the meagre collective income, and was crucial to the household's ability

---

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., p.137.

to pay for its expenses. Collective income was distributed once or twice a year. "For the purchase of daily necessities in the months in between harvests, [peasants had to] shepard [their] cash carefully and rely on [their] family and its private production activities."[42] Peasants also depended on their private plots for vegetables. Parish and Whyte in their study of villages in southern China found that little had changed with regards to private income since 1956. Private income came to approximately twenty percent of the total peasant income with percentages lower for villages in northern China and higher for those in southern China.[43] By and large, the amount of time spent on one's private plot determined the level of private income. And this too was under the control of the team leader.[44]

In most cases, plots were "allocated by lot."[45] But in others, the team leader determined who received which plots. In such instances, it was within the team leaders' power to allocate the best and most desirable plots to their clients. The quality and distance of the plot from the peasant's home were the two most important features. Plots closer to one's home would decrease the time spent walking, as well as allow peasants to tend to their plots during their lunch hour. Any time spent on one's private plot had to be above and beyond the time spent on the collective; a peasant could not shirk his/her responsibilities to the collective. Thus, accessibility was a determining factor in the time spent tending to private agricultural production. Moreover, the

---

[42] Parish and Whyte, <u>Village and Family in Contemporary China</u>, p.60.

[43] Ibid., pp.61, 119.

[44] Oi, <u>State and Peasant in Contemporary China</u>, p.138.

[45] Ibid.

use of oxen to plough the fields and access to other larger farm implements and machines had to be approved by the team leader.[46]

In addition, teams would rotate the plots on a regular basis: annually or every two to three years. This practice only succeeded in transferring more power to the team leader and adding to the lack of stability in rural life. There was little assurance that the quality of the next plot would be as good. After investing time and effort in tending to one plot, a household would often see others reap the benefits of their hard labour. An option was to exert influence either to be assigned a better or same quality plot or to retain the original plot.[47]

Similarly, team leaders would often be asked to select a small number of team members for work in the brigade or commune factories. These jobs were not only less onerous, but provided a salary which was something of a novelty for the average peasant. The better living and working conditions in these factories greatly increased their appeal. The selection of persons for such jobs was the responsibility of the team leader. And once again, influence with the decision-makers could greatly assist the chances of being one of those selected.[48]

Villagers were sometimes provided with opportunities to work temporarily in urban factories. But again the team leader would decide which member could be excused from the collective to pursue this opportunity. Collective work was always a priority and especially during busy seasons, hands were required on the collective. A team leader had the power to excuse the villager from his/her collective

---

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., pp.139-140.

work. Those who left the collective to work without approval were denied their grain rations. The threat of being denied grain rations was sufficient to deter one from being reckless; villagers were still dependent on their collective even if they were to work temporarily in an urban factory.[49]

Since few impersonal methods were used to determine which peasant could temporarily leave the team, team leaders were in a position to apply discretion. Moreover, they could determine the amount of the peasant's income allocated to the team; since working away from the collective deprived the collective of labour, one had to compensate this loss.[50]

Other private income activities, such as carpentry, although they did not deprive the team of a team member, did reduce the amount of time that a peasant could spend working for the collective. Hence, permission to be excused from collective labour had to be solicited. These skills provided peasants with a lucrative side-line business, but without the team leader's approval they could never be applied.[51]

The provision of welfare for households in need further illustrates the lack of impersonal rules to assist in such decision-making. The concentration of power in the team leader, even over welfare allocation, reduced the probability of a needy peasant receiving fair treatment. Although the team leader required official approval before granting any loans, this procedure merely rubber-stamped the team leader's assessment. Welfare funds came out of the team's grain reserves and were highly valued. The team leader had to be very

---

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., p.140.

[51] Ibid., p.139.

discriminating in his/her distribution of reserve grain for fear of depleting the reserves. The lack of practice in using impersonal rules of determining the distribution of welfare, compounded by the fact that this distribution was rare, made a needy peasant dependent on the good will of the team leader.[52]

An extremely important source of power for the team leaders was the access to information. Information was available only to the privileged and was usually restricted to party members and representatives of the state. For the ordinary team member, information regarding the outside world was scarce. And, although team leaders were not entitled to specific details or classified information because they were not state cadres, they, as agents of the state, did receive important information regarding state policies, from which they gauged the prevailing political climate. In certain cases where the team leader was involved in a clientelist relationship with a bridgade level party cadre, the quantity and quality of information available to the team leader increased.

Team leaders became one of the privileged as information became increasingly scarce during radical political climates. And access to this information was an important source of power since the information

> either took the form of details of imminent policy changes and new ritual skills or advance knowledge of the types of social behaviour and social practices to be selected as objects of criticism in the frequent campaigns of rectification and purification which had become an institutionalised part of the political process in the 1960s and 1970s.[53]

---

[52] Ibid., pp.141-142. Parish and Whyte in their research found that welfare was the responsibility of the family (Parish and Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China, p.95).

[53] Croll, From Heaven to Earth, p.123.

Prior knowledge of political campaigns became a protective armour which reduced the risk of being caught in a compromising situation and later punished. This selective access to information, then, introduced another dimension to the power and authority of the team leader and to the pursuit of clientelism, a dimension that could be subtly wielded to the disadvantage of énemies and to the advantage of client-friends.[54]

Perhaps the only area in which the team leader could not exercise personalised authority was in the distribution of the basic grain ration. Team members were guaranteed their basic grain ration and could not be deprived of it. But the team leader could choose to be more selective in the quality and quantity of grain distributed. For example, instead of giving rounded scoops of high quality grain, the leader could give level scoops of inferior quality grain. The peasant could not protest as s/he was deemed to have received his/her grain ration.[55]

The concentration of power over grain rations, work points, private plots, welfare and outside employment in the hands of team leaders frequently meant that they exercised personalised authority over the team members who were dependent on them.[56] This is not to suggest that all team leaders were despotic and behaved as local emperors. The threat of passive resistance and non-compliance to the team leader's orders was a check on the abuse of power as "team leaders who failed to win the co-operation of their teams risked dismissal."[57] Villagers were not overly concerned about expressing their complaints with regards to economic issues. But they were generally careful. An area between the

---

[54] Ibid., pp.122-124.

[55] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.142.

[56] Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.123.

[57] Ibid., p.105.

despotic and impersonal was where the team leader's use of power lay. Most villagers seemed to accept the reality of personalised authority.[58]

Clients and patron

The foregoing highlights that the peasants were economically dependent on a single political elite: the team leader. Concentration of power in the hands of the team leader, a team leader's ability to influence the quality of life of individual households, the general scarcity of goods and services and the hardships encountered by team members created an environment conducive to the emergence of patron-client ties. In this environment, a patron-client relationship provided a peasant with an opportunity to articulate his/her interests. But the privileged status of a client could not be extended to all the team members. The scarcity of grain, which often resulted in below-international-subsistence-level grain consumption, and the lack of abundant job opportunities created stiff competition among peasants for the position of a client. Those who were unable to establish a clientelist relationship with the team leader would approach the leader only in times of need; they would present the cadre with a gift in return for a specific favour. Some, persistent in their efforts to become clients, would constantly ingratiate themselves and try to impress upon the leader their respect for him/her.[59]

How clients benefited

And what were the clients assured of by their team leader? Clients were guaranteed preferential treatment at all times. There was no need for them to approach their team leader-patron daily for

---

[58] Ibid.

[59] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, pp.148-149.

satisfaction of demands. The tacit understanding between the patron and client ensured that the patron advanced the client's interests on a daily basis. For example, the patron ensured that the client received the best job assignments on the collective, ones that would enable the client to accumulate a large number of work points for correspondingly lesser effort.[60]

When brigade or urban factories requested teams to send some of their members as labourers, clients would be given the first opportunity to either accept or refuse the work. Furthermore, if a client accepted a position outside the collective, the team leader would ensure that the client's family was taken care of and try to extract as little compensation as possible for the lost labour. Similarly, in times of labour surplus with limited job availability, clients were assured of preferential treatment.[61]

In general team leaders tried to ensure that their clients' household had sufficient grain for consumption, at least in comparison with others. The leader may not have been able to provide the absolute best, but relatively, within the team, the client received the best: the most fertile and accessible plot, job opportunities, permission to partake in side-line activities, and information relating to brewing campaigns.

Benefits to the patron

For the team leader, the patron-client relationship facilitated the build-up of a group of personal supporters. Clients were compliant with their leader's orders, thereby making the leader appear strong and

---

[60] Ibid., pp.146-147.

[61] Ibid., pp.140,146.

effective in the eyes of the superiors (brigade cadres). A client provided the team leader with extra eyes and ears. S/he would alert the patron to any trouble brewing in the team, and help the patron safeguard his/her position as a team leader.[62] In addition, a client who worked at the local co-operative store would provide "[his/her patron] with preferential access to rationed or scarce goods that [s/he] happened to control."[63] Or clients who received a large piece of meat would not hesitate to offer to share it with the patron.

But rather than such material items, patrons preferred to be reciprocated in support. The support that a client provided, either politically or in general, was invaluable to the patron. "In a highly politicized system such as Maoist China, loyalty and political support, along with enthusiasm and assistance in carrying out policies, were invaluable for weathering the many political campaigns."[64]

Although the impact of the Cultural Revolution was generally less in the rural than in the urban areas,[65] the political atmosphere was highly contagious and was seen by some as a continuation of the Four Cleanups Campaign. Huang Shu-min points out that the Four Cleanups Campaign begun in 1964, which was part of the Socialist Education Movement, had more deleterious effects on the Chinese countryside than the Cultural Revolution. It specifically targeted the rural cadres in lower level government units and investigation work teams were sent to the countryside to root out the incompetent cadres.[66]

---

[62] Ibid., p.147.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Jean C. Oi, "Partial Market Reform and Corruption in Rural China," in ed. Richard Baum, Reform and Reaction in Post-Mao China: The Road to Tiananmen (New York: Routledge, 1991), p.147.

[65] Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.38.

[66] Huang, The Spiral Road, pp.73,93.

The countryside was not completely immune from political campaigns. People would use class labels as an excuse to settle past scores or simply to act against people they disliked. The manipulation of political campaigns to one's personal benefit was common. Team leaders as people of authority were highly vulnerable during these political campaigns.[67]

Team leaders frequently needed a buffer of loyal supporters against not only political campaigns that targeted those in power, but also members of another grouping within the production team. Conflict between two or more persons jockeying for power within the team usually led to the build-up of supporters who could be mobilised during times of need.[68] Political conflict was not solely between the central state and local units, but emerged in local communities under conditions of competition for power. To maintain one's official position, then, support and loyalty within the team was essential. "The most important kind of help [clients] could give [team leaders] was political."[69] In addition, supporters ensured that when external officials, such as work teams, came to inspect, there would be abundant praise of the team leader. Supporters would be discreetly mobilised by team leaders, who did their utmost to avoid any punitive action from the work team.[70]

Team leaders assured of their own supporters could afford to be less scrupulous about their use of power. Supporters of the team leader would be quick to criticise anyone who complained about the team leader. An unjust team leader surrounded by strong support could have consider-

---

[67] Ibid.

[68] Burns illustrates the detrimental effect of campaigns on communal conflict and the mobilisation of supporters by local leaders (Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.38).

[69] Madsen, Morality and Power, p.50.

[70] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.147.

able leeway within the team. The team leader's show of power might be enough to intimidate critics within the team.

Non-clients

But what of non-clients? Did their exclusion from the client club make them resent those in the client club? In many instances, those excluded tried to get in. The lack of opportunities outside the clientelist club impressed upon peasants the advantages of a close relationship with the team leader: "survival for those outside the state's orbit"[71] frequently meant ingratiating oneself to the team leader. Those who had hopes of becoming a client would ensure that the team leader noticed their constant efforts. They would follow the team leader's orders with enthusiasm, speak highly of the team leader's ability, or present the team leader with little gifts.

An incident in Chen Village in 1969 illustrates how matchmaking was used to extract particular benefits. Lilou, a troublesome woman, recommended her sister-in-law's daughter as a prospective wife for one of the two team leaders' brother-in-law. In offering her services as a matchmaker, Lilou would find the team leader in her debt. This would perhaps enable her "to get lighter work."[72] The desired relationship in the end did not materialise, and instead the whole affair created unnecessary nuisance and conflict.

Some knew the futility of trying to become a client. Therefore, they would approach the team leader when they had a specific request in mind and present him/her with a gift. In such cases, the favour was

---

[71] Edward Friedman, Paul G. Pickowicz and Mark Selden, Chinese Village, Socialist State (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p.269.

[72] Chan, Madsen and Unger, Chen Village, p.202.

specific, the granting of which terminated the contract. There was no long-term understanding or obligation.[73]

Those who had little to offer the team leader did their utmost to avoid antagonising him/her. If one could not be a client, then one could at least avoid attracting negative attention which would only worsen one's situation. Maintaining a low profile by following orders and refusing to publicly criticise the team leader was a good defensive strategy. Such acts were a common method of escaping the team leader's discrimination.

Efforts to contain abuse of power ineffective

Work teams sent to the countryside to investigate noted that although at times they uncovered abuses of power by team leaders, they encountered difficulty in eliciting public statements against the team leader:

> Most of the masses were afraid. The cadres were like emperors: brigade emperors and team emperors. If you complained about them, they might want to take revenge, something very frightful. Because a peasant has no way of leaving a village. A cadre's revenge could take the form of assigning them heavy work for years to come.[74]

Substantiating abuses by team leaders was a cumbersome task. Unlike work teams who left the village once their investigative reporting was completed, villagers remained in the production team. And the threat of retribution by team leaders who were still in power or those who were removed was ever present. Peasants unassured of action against team leaders were reluctant to collude with the work teams for fear of jeopardising their future in the production team.[75]

---

[73] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.148.

[74] Chan, Madsen and Unger, Chen Village, pp.47-48.

[75] Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, pp.149-151.

Those who did speak out during investigations by work-teams were usually activists who "had good class background and nothing to hide."[76] But for most peasants the dangers of using official channels were apparent. When compelled to speak out,[77] peasants just provided perfunctory statements.[78]

The most vulnerable of the non-clients were those peasants who had been targeted as enemies of the state for their class background or for exhibiting politically incorrect behaviour.[79] Former landlords were already penalised by the state and required to work a certain number of free days per month for the collective. They also received a lower number of work points by virtue of their class background. To point a finger at the team leader would only further jeopardise their already precarious position within the production team. Their best strategy during both campaign and relaxed periods was to avoid antagonising the team leader and to maintain a low profile.

So were there any peasants who could be relatively independent of the team leader's power? For example, Chang, the son of a former rich peasant cited above, noted that "it was usually only poor and middle peasants who dared to go off into trade or other unorthodox activities."[80] Furthermore, during the Learn from Dazhai period,

> those who stayed away [from Dazhai evaluation meetings] were mostly poor and lower middle peasants. They had no fear that they would lose points for missing these meetings, since their primary standard for judging political thought came to be the peasant's

---

[76] Ibid., p.151.

[77] Work teams were known to be persistent in their efforts to root out abuses by local cadres (Ibid.).

[78] Ibid., p.150.

[79] Chang, a son of a former rich peasant noted that during 1960-1963, "supervision of the four bad elements remained fairly strict" (Whyte, Small Groups and Political Rituals, p.148).

[80] Ibid.

class status rather than his political participation or enthusiasm during the previous month.[81]

But good class background become more an armour against penalisation. It did not entitle the peasant to particular benefits distributed by the team leader as a patron. But it did increase the probability of being accepted as a client. Landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries and other bad elements were rarely, if ever, admitted as clients. Any association with these elements was reason to doubt the redness of the patron.

Clientelism as addendum in rural China

Despite the frequent use of patron-client ties in rural China, they appeared only as an addendum to the institutional guarantees already in place. Clientelism was not the major mode whereby the flow of resources was structured in China: i.e. "access...to markets, positions of power within them, and to the centers of society" were not "effected through the mediation of some patron and this mediation" was not "contingent on the client's entering into a relation of exchange with the patron."[82] Basic grain rations, opportunity to earn income through collective labour and the possession of private plots were not restricted to clients. Such basic necessities were available and distributed to all members of the production team regardless of their status as a client or non-client. Except during the "three lean years" following the Great Leap Forward, clients were not dependent on their patron for their basic livelihood. Yes, they were dependent on the production team as a collective unit. But this dependence did not

---

[81] Ibid., p.152.

[82] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Clientelism in Communist Systems," p.240.

dictate the granting of grain rations and work for the collective through a patron-client relationship.

Instead, clients received preferential treatment, which provided a supplement to the goods provided by the state. For example, since each person was entitled to work for work points from the collective, the objective of entering into a patron-client tie was not to secure a job but to be given a job that was better, both physically and financially. An important aspect of patron-client ties as addenda to institutional arrangements is that life without clientelism was possible. Without clientelism life may not have been as palatable as one desired, but one's existence did not depend on the establishment of a patron-client tie. In other words, the totality of exchanges in society was not effected through patron-client ties. So long as the right to the two most important resources, food and income for work for the collective, remained independent of the patron-client relationship, clientelism served as an addendum.[63]

Characteristics of Chinese socialist clientelism

Notwithstanding the differences between patron-client ties in rural China and those found in clientelistic societies, both variants are characterised by reciprocity. The team leader and his/her client exchanged goods and services that the other did not have but desired: political support and loyalty in return for economic benefits. Obligations were long-standing and unconditional. The team leader and client were unlikely to have negotiated a contract.

But the patron-client tie in rural China did not illustrate a substantial inequality in the wealth of the patron and that of the

---

[63] For a similar discussion see Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.153.

client. Aside from a few despotic team leaders, those team leaders who became patrons to their team members lived as simply as their clients. The reason for this was that rural China was characterised by poverty; there was a lack of considerable sums of cash or excessive amounts of grain. Thus, the wealth differential between the patron and client was not as obvious as in the traditional setting.

But this modern version did resemble the traditional patron-client tie in one important way: total dependence on a single elite.[84] Clients were dependent on the team leader for the quality of food, work and various opportunities. Power within the production team was concentrated in the team leader. The team leader's range of responsibilities and scope of control gave him/her a substantial amount of power with the ability to affect various aspects of clients' and non-clients' lives. Since most major resources came under the team leader's control, there was no need for the client to establish multi-strand patron-client ties. A one strand relationship with the team leader was sufficient to cover the client's basic needs and then some.

But in spite of the power differential, both patron and client worked side by side. This is something unique to the Chinese countryside. Whilst the state granted the team leader significant control and power, it simultaneously required the team leader to earn his/her income through participating in collective labour just like his/her fellow villagers.

Insofar as the affective quotient is concerned, it is likely to have been high. Both patron and client were born in the same area and lived their entire lives knowing each other. This physical proximity probably forged a close personal relationship between patron and client.

---

[84] For a similar discussion see Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.153.

And although the material on clientelism in communist societies notes the emphasis on the instrumental aspects of this relationship in the communist setting, the impression one gets from the writings on rural China is that there was a discernible degree of affection in the relationship. This quite simply is because production teams were coterminous with natural village, hamlet or neighbourhood boundaries. Villagers, therefore, knew each other very well and had lived generations together in the same village. Consequently, the degree of affection and loyalty was higher than that found in communist clientelism and comparable to that present in a traditional patron-client relationship.

Finally the legitimacy of the patron-client tie in the eyes of the client was likely to have been high. Since the client was assured of a basic grain ration and income for work for the collective, the objective of entering into a clientelist relationship was not to secure one's basic subsistence.[35] Therefore, the patron could not deprive the client of his/her basic needs and thus, the team leader's power and ability to forcibly extract favours, such as a show of political support, from the client was reduced. The team leader's own dependence on the state and his/her brigade superior for his/her position made him/her apprehensive about outright abuses of power.

The objective balance of goods exchanges must have been viewed favourably by the client. A patron-client relationship improved the quality of the client's life. It was not needed to secure a grain ration. The client received beyond what was provided to ordinary

---

[35] Subsistence here and after does not refer to the minimum amount of grain considered adequate for subsistence by international standards. It refers to an amount of the available grain within the production team.

peasants. Thus, the legitimacy of the relationship in the eyes of the client would naturally have been high.

Another point to make is that the "durability and legitimacy of the patron-client tie was best served when all of a client's dependencies were focused on a single patron."[35] Chinese socialist clientelism was a single strand patron-client relationship, hence this should have enhanced the legitimacy of the relationship in the eyes of the client.

There is another major difference between the traditional and communist clientelist tie. In the former, depending on the extent of the patron's power, the patron has the power to deprive the client of basic subsistence. This, however, was not possible in the Chinese clientelist variant because the basic grain ration was provided by the state.

Another illustration is the right to work for the collective and receive income for this work. In a traditional setting where the patron owns the land and thus controls the client's opportunity to work, the patron could deprive the client of job opportunities without fearing punitive action from any superior. In contrast, the team leader could not deprive a team member of the right to work. His/her ability to extract favours from his/her client without reciprocation was negligible. The client's perception of the legitimacy of the patron-client tie was likely to be favourable. In return for support of the team leader, the client received concrete rewards such as better job assignments.

Consequently, it would be accurate to say that the degree of client voluntariness to enter and leave the relationship was quite high. Chapter One established that in the traditional setting, the degree of client voluntariness to leave the relationship was difficult to discern.

---

[35] Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change," p.138.

Where the patron has the means to withhold subsistence guarantees, he can use this as an unspoken threat in influencing client decision to leave the relationship.

In the Chinese setting, however, although the patron had considerable power to influence the daily lives of the peasants, he could not withhold from his/her client the basic grain ration or the right to receive payment for work for the collective. Therefore, the degree of client voluntariness in entering and terminating the relationship must have been high as the client dependence on the patron was tempered. Furthermore, given that the patron-client relationship provided preferential treatment to the clients, it is highly unlikely that clients even wanted to leave the relationship.

Similarly, although the patron-client relationship here was exploitative, it exhibited little potential for coercion. It was exploitative in that it maintained the client's subordinate position vis-à-vis the state. But the patron's power was constrained by the fact that the state guaranteed a basic grain ration. Thus, the patron could not withhold the grain ration to forcibly extract compliance from his client. In Chinese socialist clientelism, there was little potential for physical or other means of coercion.

In sum, the distinguishing features of Chinese socialist clientelism[3] were as follows:

- Single strand patron-client relationship. The patron had the power to influence every facet of a peasant's life. There was no need for the client to establish a multi-strand clientelist tie with different patrons who each provided different goods and services. Here the relationship resembles a traditional patron-client relationship.
- In general, the patron had to be circumspect in his/her use of power. The patron was as dependent on the collective as the ordinary peasant. Without a successful harvest, the patron, clients

[3] For a discussion on Oi's Socialist Clientelism, see Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, pp.152-154.

and ordinary peasants would suffer. Co-operation of all peasants was necessary for successful fulfilment of production targets. This, however, did not preclude abuses of power by some team leaders.

- The patron's access to important and scarce resources was not based on an ascriptive hierarchical standing. The patron and client were from the same socio-economic standing and their power differential was a chance inequality. The patron was dependent on his superiors for his position. The patron was also dependent on the co-operation of the team members for grain production. The patron's position here was less stable than in the traditional setting and resembles the communist clientelist variant.

- The affection and loyalty between the patron and the client were strong. Unlike in the communist setting, the Chinese socialist patron-client relationship exhibited a high degree of affection. This was because the production teams were coterminous with natural villages, hamlets or neighbourhoods and thus, the inhabitants knew each other very well.

- The degree of voluntariness in the client's decision to leave the relationship was high. Unlike the traditional patron, the Chinese patron could not threaten to deprive the client of basic means of subsistence and thus, influence the client's decision to remain in the relationship. The very fact that the client had a right to the grain ration decreased to some degree the patron's power. Thus, there was little potential for coercion. The relationship was exploitative because it maintained the peasant's subordinate position.

- Clientelism served as an addendum to the institutional guarantees of basic grain and opportunity to participate in collective labour. Life without clientelism was possible, but clientelism made rural life more palatable.

Some of the features of Chinese socialist clientelism detailed here are those also found in Oi's socialist clientelism. However, Oi's socialist clientelism excludes a discussion of client voluntarism, legitimacy and affection. Furthermore, her analysis does not compare every feature of socialist clientelism with communist clientelism or with traditional clientelism.

Conclusion

Patron-client ties between the team leader and team members were a means to a better life in rural China. The team leader could not deprive a team member of his/her right to work on the collective or of

his/her basic grain ration. The team leader could, however, make life more comfortable and profitable. The state in creating a fairly autonomous production unit made the office of the team leader a repository of power within the production team. This paved the way for the exercise of personalised authority and hence clientelism in rural China. Clientelism emerged not just because of the scarcity of and unequal access to major resources but also because of the concentration of power in the team leader and the high level of insecurity due to political campaigns launched by the center.

Team leaders, although initially reluctant to the idea of being chosen, once in office would find it difficult to resist exercising personalised authority and enjoying some of the perks of office. The lack of any substantial income attached to the office was also a strong incentive for the team leader to "get something in return for the hard work." For the leader-patron, presentation of gifts, support, loyalty and assistance were sufficient rewards of clientelism. Of these, loyalty and support were the most important to the team leader. For the team member, better job opportunities and hence higher grain and cash income, privileged information, a better private plot, and outside employment were also impressive rewards of clientelism. Hence, both the team leader-patron and the team member-client were sufficiently motivated to initiate and maintain a clientelist tie.

This chapter, then, has illustrated peasant strategies to extract particular benefits from an agent of the state: the team leader. Team leaders, working in their capacity as state agents, facilitated the satisfaction of particular interests. This enabled ordinary peasants as clients to extract benefits from the state through local leaders and hence promoted political participation. Although the primary objective of the relationship was subserving individual client interests, it

nevertheless resulted in influencing implementation of state policies at the local level. Insofar as a peasant-client received preferential treatment from his/her team leader-patron, s/he was affecting the implementation of a policy: the policy formulated at the official level changed at the level of interaction with the citizen. The clients were able to manipulate the universalist tenet of state policy to their benefit through clientelism.[38] This constituted political participation.

This, then, was one of the two major functions of patron-client ties in Maoist rural China: the articulation and satisfaction of particular interests and hence political participation. The next chapter will explore the second major function of patron-client ties in Maoist rural China.

---

[38] To quote Oi: "But peasants do pursue clientelist politics as a means of getting ahead and receiving special consideration in the distribution of the rewards available in a system that theoretically prohibits unequal access to goods and resources" (Ibid., p.153).

CHAPTER FIVE

CLIENTELISM, SOCIAL CLEAVAGES AND HORIZONTAL LINKAGES

Clientelism in Maoist China provided the team leader with much needed personal loyalty and support. For the team member it promised a better quality of life with an opportunity to augment one's cash income and grain ration. In providing the client with a safe avenue of interest articulation, clientelism facilitated political participation. In an environment of reciprocation of desired goods and services, patron-client ties matured in rural China. The maturation of patron-client ties did not, however, mean that the majority of the members within a production team could be clients. The position of a client was much sought-after and not easily attainable.

To the extent that the use of clientelism facilitated the informal articulation of interests, albeit particular interests, and integrated a percentage of the peasantry into the political system, it was advantageous both to the regime and the concerned peasants. But patron-client ties also had deleterious effects on the formation of horizontal linkages into coherent, cohesive groups along class lines. In addition, it contributed to the state's failure to make peasant allegiance to class supersede kinship or network loyalty.[1] Given the fairly insular characteristic of the production team and the prevalence of patron-client ties, how was the corporateness or solidarity of the production team affected by the use of clientelism?

---

[1] For an account of kinship and lineage loyalties and their relation to rural violence, see Elizabeth J. Perry, "Rural Violence in Socialist China," China Quarterly, no.103, (September 1985); also see Burns for how boundaries of production units came to be coterminous with old lineage boundaries and affected the state's ability to make class allegiance supersede kinship allegiance, Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, p.36.

The determination of the extent of team solidarity is a difficult task, since much of the literature is inconclusive. Whilst some extol the solidarity of the collective,[2] others remark on the conflict and disunity within villages and collectives.[3] Furthermore, the lack of a precise delineation of the team, brigade, village or commune as the unit of analysis when discussing collective solidarity makes the task of discerning team solidarity versus village solidarity or commune solidarity difficult.

But one can apply the points made in Chapter One on patron-client relations and horizontal linkages to the Chinese production team to show how team solidarity and patron-client ties are related. When writers routinely discuss the erosion of collective spirit and interest, one can postulate that this reference applies not just to the communes or brigades but also to production teams. The image of the production team as a unified, corporate entity has often been examined in the context of conflict with other teams and not in isolation.[4]

Determining how patron-client relationships affected the solidarity of the collective production team unit is also important. It is not simply a matter of class versus clientelist loyalties, but also

---

[2] "Today in the production teams, which are mostly natural villages, there is a sense of solidarity shared between the peasants and the team cadres who are themselves peasants elected by their peers. This communal solidarity rooted in traditional local identity and shared economic interest provides the basis for collective task-oriented co-operation in the production team" (Chu and Hsu, "Integration in China," p.273).

[3] "On the other hand, kinship rivalries and clan conflict may disrupt this unity, and in some areas campaign experiences may have aggravated internal cleavages" (Whyte, Small Groups and Political Rituals, p.227). See also Croll, From Heaven to Earth, p.12.

[4] Elizabeth Perry's article on rural collective violence does look at conflict between different kin groups, but this is "based upon team, brigade and commune membership" (Perry, "Rural Violence in Socialist China," p.428); also see Oi for a look at competition among teams, Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, p.62; and Zweig, Agrarian Radicalism, p.115.

kinship identification. An important point made by Graziano is that clientelism emerges in an internally fragmented society.[5]

Therefore, the strains within the collective production team could not, and would not, have been evident in each and every production team unit. In those with pre-existing cleavages, the patron-client tie would have exacerbated these cleavages. In units with a high degree of collective spirit, the relevance of patron-client ties would probably not have been as significant.[6]

One objective of this section, then, is to illustrate that social fragmentation is one of the reasons for the emergence of clientelism. Another aim is to illustrate how patron-client relationships reinforced existing cleavages in society. To this end, specific examples of cleavages created by lineages, competition, intrigue and class labels drawn from case-studies on China will be cited. In the process, a few thoughts regarding clientelism and stability and legitimacy will also emerge.

Lineages

In rural China, the existence of lineages was and is a significant factor.[7] But although lineages were a strong force in traditional

---

[5] Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.361.

[6] Rich teams were probably the ones most likely to have a high degree of solidarity. Rich teams were also the ones resistant to de-collectivisation as they had more at risk than poorer teams (Zweig, Agrarian Radicalism, p.159).

[7] The definition of lineage here is where a group of people with the same surname exist in a specific geographical area. Clans, however, as defined by Freedman are "lineages of like surname [who] may be tied together geneologically but are not members of an enduring group with common interests and activities. The ties of clanship may be almost devoid of significance." Therefore, from hereon the term lineage will be applied to those groups of like surname grouped in geographically distinct areas and who have common lineage estates and activities. (Maurice Freedman, Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwantung [London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1966], p.21).

China, their power as a force of opposition was weakened considerably after 1949.[8]

Lineages were traditionally hierarchically structured, and economic benefits were not equally divided amongst lineage members. Large lineages were usually divided into branches. These branches, though part of the same lineage, were not equally endowed with wealth or power. Richer segments of the lineage usually dominated power at the village level. The close branch identification within the individual richer branches further increased their power and insularity. Moreover, the common estates held by the lineage as a whole were usually smaller than those belonging to the individual branches. As Freedman points out:

> The chances were that the estate of the local lineage as a whole was smaller than those of some of its constituent units; it had come into existence first, was less likely to have been added to and might indeed have been depleted, whereas the estates of segments had been built up precisely to assert the separate identity.[9]

Identification with the particular segments of the lineage was more important than identification with the lineage as a whole, except of course, in the event of an external threat to the entire lineage. And in some cases, identification even within the branches was not strong. In Chen Village, for example, the Chen lineage was divided into five branches. The Lotus branch was the wealthiest and had dominated pre-liberation village politics. The other branches named Fidelity, Loyalty, Pine, and Bamboo exhibited little corporate identity and their members were in fact scattered throughout the village. Members of these branches, unlike the Lotus branch, did not live in a specific neighbour-

---

[8] C.K. Yang, Chinese Communist Society: The Family and the Village (Cambridge: M.I.T.Press, 1959), p.196.

[9] Freedman, Chinese Lineage and Society, p.74.

hood of the village, and "few networks of kinship relations bound families from this part of the village together."[10]

Domination of weaker segments by the more powerful branches of the lineage was treated as normal. Lineage ties did not prevent stronger branches from exerting their power as landlords or rich peasants and restricting access to resources. The poorer segments of the lineage did not enjoy the same degree of benefits as the wealthier branches. Lineages were highly stratified. The weaker segments were subordinate to and oppressed by the ruling clique.[11] Patron-client ties between stronger and weaker lineage members were common, illustrating the lineage's unwillingness to help its weaker members without reciprocity.[12] Lineages, although organisationally strong, were frequently internally fragmented. Identification with the lineage as a whole was not always strong. Take, for example, the Chang lineage cited in Martin Whyte's study on small groups:

> The Chang clan did not, however, form one cohesive social unit. For as long as people could remember there had been rivalry and disputes among branches of the Chang clan almost as intense as those between the Changs and outsiders.[13]

A possibility to consider is the closer identification of poorer sections of the lineage with members outside of the lineage. Their lower level of integration into the lineage organisation increased the

---

[10] Madsen, Morality and Power, p.45.

[11] Maurice Freedman, Lineage Organization in Southeastern China (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1958), p.69.

[12] The intra-lineage relationships described by Richard Madsen are patron-client ties (Madsen, Morality and Power, pp.59-60).

[13] Whyte, Small Groups and Political Rituals, p.142.

probability of their identification with non-lineage members, who shared their class status.[14]

Villages with two or more lineages typically experienced conflict between the lineages. In these cases, identification with the lineage was stronger. Lineages were more cohesive and protected their individual lineage interests. This tended to increase the probability of conflict among the various lineages. Whyte's research on Liu village provides an example of inter-lineage conflict. In Liu's village, the Liu lineage, though numerically inferior was much wealthier and had historically dominated the pre-1949 positions of power in the village. The concentration of land holdings in the Liu lineage had antagonised the numerically superior Su clan resulting in intra-village fragmentation according to lineage loyalties.[15] It is highly likely that in pre-liberation Liu village, patron-client relationships had coincided with these social cleavages, thereby "intensify[ing] the dissatisfaction with any given balance of patron-client exchange by infusing it with additional areas of conflict...."[16] Especially when the monopoly over significant resources is with a "particular ethnic or communal group [or lineage], the clientelistic solidarities arising from the exploitation of these sources may possibly reinforce ethnic or communal [lineage] solidarities."[17] Consequently, the patron-client relationship probably worsened relations between the Sus and the Lius and strengthened individual lineage solidarities.

Land reform, then, served as a vehicle for revenge. In Liu village, the Su lineage activists were not only able to completely

---

[14] See Nee, Social Exchange and Political Process, p.103.

[15] Whyte, Small Groups and Political Rituals, p.157.

[16] Scott and Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy," p.446.

[17] Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity," p.112.

destroy the economic basis for the former Liu dominance, but were also able to have the Liu lineage excluded from new positions of power.[18]

And in single lineage villages, although lineage ties at first inhibited the "oppressed" from struggling against landlords, the "repetition and reminder of old acts of cruelty and the tales of deprivation...served to enflame peasant hatred."[19]

The state, then, through Land Reform and agricultural collectivisation, "organisationally and functionally crippled" lineages so that they "no longer retain[ed] [their] traditional dominance as core of the rural community life."[20] While many of the kinship ties remained intact,[21] ties with the traditional village elite were no longer favoured because of the risk involved, and former landlords and rich peasants were usually avoided. To illustrate, in Chen Village, the former landlord and two rich peasant families were included in the No. 6 production team composed mainly of Lotus branch members. And although the landlord and rich peasants were from this same Lotus branch, "they were treated as social outcasts."[23]

But patron-client ties that coincided with kinship ties were possible. In production teams such as team No. 6, a kinship tie would have improved a peasant's chances of establishing a clientelist tie. The sharing of a kinship relation between the patron and the client did not preclude the affirmation or coexistence of this kinship association with a patron-client association.

---

[19] Whyte, Small Groups and Political Rituals, p.157.

[20] Vivienne Shue, Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development Towards Socialism, 1949-1956 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p.74.

[21] Yang, Chinese Communist Society, p.196.

[22] See Perry, "Rural Violence in Socialist China"

[23] Chan, Madsen, and Unger, Chen Village, p.32.

In villages, such as the Liu village, with two different lineages, patron-client relationships within the production team, given the past hostility, would more likely than not have been only along kinship lines. The probability that patron-client ties would cut across kinship ties in a village rife with lineage conflict is low, and if they did, the clientelist relationship would have compounded the hostility between the patron and the client, who were already from opposite groupings. "Each dimension of the conflict [would serve] to magnify the other."[23] But the very chances of such a clientelist relationship arising between members of opposing lineages would be substantially reduced in light of the setting, in which subsistence for the client did not depend on the patron-client relationship. Thus a peasant need not enter into a subordinate relationship with a team leader from an opposing lineage. Likewise, the team leader would be predisposed to reject a move to initiate a patron-client relationship from a member of the opposing lineage.

Similarly, the establishment of a clientelist relationship in an environment of inter-branch conflict would reinforce loyalty to a specific branch. Where prior conflict between the lineages had been minor or non-existent, the chances of patron-client relationships cutting across discrete kin boundaries could be higher.

In contrast, kinship relationships beyond the boundaries of the production team frequently lost their significance. The production team encapsulated peasant experience and was the foundation of peasant livelihood. Loyalty to members of the same lineage branch beyond the

---

[23] Scott and Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy," p.446.

production team did not provide any economic rewards, and hence lost their relevance.[24]

However, in sparsely populated regions such as the northwest and border areas the brigade was the key decision-making unit and was a more important focus of rural life. In such situations, interaction beyond the production team would be more significant. Dazhai is an example of the brigade as the unit of accounting and key decision-making unit.

Patron-client ties that coincided with kinship ties reinforced the division within teams along kinship lines. The patron was not only a patron but also a kin member- no matter how distant the relationship. However, it is difficult to comment on whether the kinship relationship between the patron and client "reduce[d] the social significance of the patron-client balance."[25] The kin tie strengthened as a result of the patron-client relationship, but it is unlikely here that it could override the significance of the clientelist tie. In all likelihood, the patron-client relationship reigned supreme or was equal in significance to the kinship tie. Since the reason to enter into a clientelist tie was that the kinship tie alone was insufficient to obtain preferential treatment, it is likely that the former was predominant. But at the same time this clientelist relationship reinforced the kinship tie in relation to opposing lineages within the production team: thus, since patron-client ties were operating within existing lineage boundaries they reinforced cleavages along lineage lines.

Although the socialist configuration of rural China displaced the traditional rural elites and destroyed the power of lineages as an

---

[24] Chan, Madsen and Unger, Chen Village, p.33; Parish and Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China, pp.302-303.

[25] Scott and Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy," p.446.

organisational force of opposition, kinship ties among members of the production team remained in place. The emergence of clientelism in this environment, especially in teams composed of two or more lineages, served to reinforce those very identities and cleavages that the regime hoped would become less important.

Class

For the peasantry, class designation was a new and weaker source of identity. Since class labels had been imported into the villages, class designations in some instances became not so much a basis for solid co-operation as a licence to do as one wished. A peasant in Chen village related to Madsen the importance of class labels.

> Having a good class label was like having an extra supply of money in the old society.... Class was a resource to be used in developing one's identity within the context of one's local community, but it was not the ultimate definer of identity.[26]

The peasantry was divided into landlords, rich peasants, upper middle, lower middle, and poor peasants, which added to the fragmentation.[27] For most of the peasantry, personal networks, friends, family, and kin were more a source of identity than class.[28] This, however, did not prevent some poorer peasants from using class labels to their advantage, and to the detriment of peasants from a different class background.[29] In

---

[26] Madsen, Morality and Power, pp.75-76.

[27] The state during the "politics of high tide collectivisation reversed earlier strategies of uniting poor and middle peasants and, consonant with more emphasis on class struggle, tended to create a wedge between them." For this and a more full discussion of the state's role in overturning its early 1950s policy of not alienating the middle and rich peasants, see Selden (The Political Economy of Chinese Socialism, p.99).

[28] Madsen, Morality and Power, p.75.

[29] A comment in the novel A Small town Called Hibiscus illustrates the negative impact of class labels: "Before squabbling with a neighbour you had to figure out whether his class status was higher or lower than yours" (Gu Hua, A Small

this context, clientelist ties that reinforced existing cleavages along lineage lines impeded the development and maturation of enduring ties based on class identification and interests.

Competition and intrigue

The retention of the traditional village boundaries for production teams, coupled with the increased degree of insularity, created a parochial environment. Generations of co-habitation as fellow villagers had created an established pattern of friendship or enmity.[30] Many old animosities did not die with the advent of the Peoples' Republic of China or the communes. Instead, competition within the village heightened with the increased scarcity of basic goods and resources.

Policies such as the distribution of grain and cash income according to the number of accumulated work points further fragmented the village community. Those under the protection of the local leader were usually graded higher or received better assignments which facilitated accumulation of higher points. Chang Jung found that in her team there were "constant arguments"[31] and consequently much bitterness over work points. Madsen in his study of Chen village found that such arguments were "in response to expectations that unless each person was very vigilant about his or her rights, the system would favour some at the expense of others."[32]

Town Called Hibiscus, trans. Gladys Yang, [Beijing: Chinese Literature Press, 1983],p.131).

[30] See Perry, "Rural Violence in Socialist China" for a discussion of traditional ties and conflict between teams, brigades and communes.

[31] Chang, Jung, Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China (London: HarperCollins, 1991), p.415.

[32] Madsen, Morality and Power, pp.93-94.

In highly charged political climates, such as the Cultural Revolution, when political attitude became a decisive element in the grading of workers, tensions amongst the villagers increased.[33] In Chang Jung's team, constant surveillance over other villagers created a tense and suspicious environment; "every day, the peasants would screw up their eyes to watch how the others were working in case they themselves were being taken advantage of."[34] Martin Whyte's research indicated that meetings convened for the exhibition of mutual criticism frequently degenerated into conflict over "traditional enmities and rivalries."[35]

Moreover, during political campaigns the unscrupulous targeting of class enemies within some production teams created an environment of suspicion in which mutual trust amongst fellow team members suffered. Those who had secure and close ties with team leaders were distanced as they were considered untrustworthy. There was fear that these spies would report back to the team leader.

Long-term jealousies and personal animosity manifested themselves in targets cloaked as political enemies.[36] Those who were unfortunate enough to be given bad class labels were the ones who had to be most careful. Their every action was observed and often mistakenly used to prove that they were indeed enemies of the working class:

> And he knew that revolution needs a target. Unless each village and town kept a few "dead tigers", how could mass movements and struggles be mobilized?...In teams where the Five Categories had died out, their children took their place. Otherwise, how to con-

---

[33] Jonathan Unger, "Remuneration, Ideology, and Personal Interests in a Chinese Village, 1960-1980," in Chinese Rural Development, p.117.

[34] Chang, Wild Swans, p.415.

[35] Whyte, Small Groups and Political Rituals, p.165.

[36] See Gu Hua, A Small Town Called Hibiscus for an excellent portrayal of village politics and animosity amongst villagers.

vince people that in the historical period of socialism there would always be classes, class contradictions and struggles?[37]

By the end of the 1960s, the constant political campaigns, especially the Cultural Revolution, understandably brought about a negative change in the attitudes of peasants towards the state and fellow team members. People became more interested in personal gains leading to intense competition amongst fellow team members.[38] The cynicism brought on by the upheavals of campaigns pitted many peasants against each other. Vogel in 1965 wrote that "friendships were under the most serious strain during campaigns, and the prevailing mood is that it is unwise to trust anyone."[39]

The inter-personal relations, then, between villagers were characterised by tension, uncertainty and distrust. A patron-client relationship provided not just tangible rewards but personal security in a hostile environment. For the team leader patron, the relationship brought security through loyalty of select team members. Both the team leader patron and the team member client were thus able to provide each other with a certain degree of security that was provided neither by the state nor by fellow villagers.

An important point to stress is that in situations where established horizontal inter-personal relations are positive, co-operative and dependable in providing economic, physical, spiritual and emotional security, the patron-client tie is not very significant. However, in situations (examples of which this chapter provides) where

---

[37] Gu Hua, A Small Town Called Hibiscus, p.172.

[38] Madsen, Morality and Power, pp.236-241.

[39] Ezra F. Vogel, "From Friendship to Comradeship: The Change in Personal Relations in Communist China," China Quarterly, no.21, (January-March 1965), p.48.

mistrust exists and group solidarity is not pronounced in the wake of relative shortages and lack of autonomous access to goods and resources, the patron-client tie emerges. As Graziano notes, "clientelism is the product of a disorganic society and tends to preserve social fragmentation and disorganization."[40] In Maoist rural China, patron-client ties, as illustrated above, provided security that villagers were unable to find amongst themselves as a cohesive group. Clientelism did not mitigate but reinforced the pre-existing intrigues and competition.

Effects of clientelism in rural China on horizontal ties and cleavages

The clientelist relationship brings a subtle change in the client's attitude. The patron-client tie results in the client's closer identification with the patron. The patron is viewed as the possessor of the better goods and opportunities in life. Hence, identification with the patron is regarded as a means to an end: acquisition of better goods and opportunities. This new identification either reaffirms any existing kinship identification or adds another focus to the client's loyalty.

An advancement for the patron is construed as an inherent advancement for the client. Similarly, a downfall for the patron also affects the client's position within the production team. Consequently, the client and the patron develop a vested interest in maintaining the patron's superior position within the production team.

In Maoist China, as a result of his/her closer identification with the patron, the client was less likely to identify with his/her team members and less able to forge strong horizontal linkages with them. The already fragmented intra-group relationships were put to further

---

[40] Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.361.

strain. To the client the common experience of grain shortages, lack of cash income and general hardship was somewhat mitigated by privileged access to resources and opportunities. Such privileged access in turn negatively affected the interpersonal relations between clients and other peasants, since the latter had to endure harsher conditions than the former. As Madsen notes,

> Under such circumstances, even a little favouritism, carried out in the name of "good human feeling" can have very painful consequences for those left out. As long as China's socialist economy and political system persists, the conduct of the Communist gentry will be widely felt to be irritating, even for people who may believe that it is morally natural and good.[41]

Subtle changes in distribution of grain and income did have a direct impact on non-clients' share of the harvest and cash income; hence non-clients were especially sensitive to the favourable treatment received by the client.

Elisabeth Croll states how transmission of crucial information, especially regarding political campaigns and targets, through patron-client ties "undermin[ed] the very solidarity of the collective structures."[42] The scarcity of knowledge, its negotiation and the disadvantages of ignorance within the collective "had the effect of fragmenting the local population."[43] The privilege of possessing knowledge of brewing campaigns understandably affected inter-personal relations. Such privilege enabled clients to adopt cautious behaviour and avoid being targeted. The high stakes involved resulted in intrigue, jealousy and competition for that privileged information which

---

[41] Madsen, Morality and Power, p.249.

[42] Croll, From Heaven to Earth, p.124.

[43] Ibid.

"could also be managed and manipulated first to establish hierarchies in the village and then to redefine those hierarchies at will."[44]

By the time the decade of the 1970s approached, exhaustion with political campaigns, and the lack of substantial improvement in rural living conditions affected the collective spirit. It was in this environment that clientelist ties took on a more significant role[45] and the competition between self interest and collective interest intensified.[46] That co-operation within the production team continued is not disputed as the economic livelihood of each and every peasant was dependent on such co-operation. But the collective spirit[47] and collective identification gradually eroded:

> The consequent generation of gossip, rumour, suspicion, tension, competition and conflict created divisions in interpersonal and intergroup relations that fragmented the local village population, in anticipation of which, or in the presence of such disruption, villagers frequently turned their backs, closed their doors and withdrew into the negatively sanctioned domestic or private spaces of the village thereby reducing the collective will on which local collectives structured their productivity and participatory politics largely rested.[48]

Since clients could only be few, competition was intense. In fact, clientelism "encourages all clients and would-be clients to compete with each other for the favour of their patron."[49] Non-clients within the group felt excluded causing strains in horizontal relation-

---

[44] Ibid., p.122.

[45] See Yang, Gifts, Favors, and Banquets, pp.146-147; Burns, Political Participation in Rural China, pp.38-54; Huang, The Spiral Road, p.111.

[46] See the following for an extended discussion on this topic: Madsen, Morality and Power; Croll, From Heaven to Earth; Unger, "Remuneration, Ideology, and Personal Interests"; Huang, The Spiral Road.

[47] "the heightened competitive desires among neighbors to defend their status resulted, at one and the same time, in an erosion of team morale..." (Unger, "Remuneration, Ideology, and Personal Interests," p.138).

[48] Croll, From Heaven to Earth, p.12.

[49] Lande, "Introduction," p.xxiv.

ships and group solidarity. As the literature on clientelism has repeatedly stated, clientelism emerges in a society lacking strong horizontal linkages.[50] It further states that the patron-client tie directly affects the ability of horizontal ties to displace vertical loyalties. For horizontal linkages to predominate in society, allegiance to vertical ties must decline in significance. As James C. Scott notes, the "collapse of vertical ties of loyalty" provides the potential for "peasant protest and class based organization."[51] Clientelism thus inhibited organisation of genuine class based activities.

Regime legitimacy, authority and stability

The closer client identification with the patron and the impact of the patron-client ties on ties among the team members raises the question of whether or not clientelism facilitated regime legitimacy and stability.

Legitimacy

To many peasants the struggle for subsistence was a daily pattern before 1949. The post-1949 conditions to some degree remained the same, but to a large degree did change for the better. Certain basic guarantees dramatically changed the rural landscape. Reward for one's labour on the collective was a significant change.[52] The most important guarantee was grain distribution. Although the state did not ensure that the peasants received the minimal grain ration guaranteed by the state, the collective did distribute a certain variable amount of grain

---

[50] Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," p.361.

[51] Scott, "The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds," p.35.

[52] Potter and Potter, China's Peasants, p.127.

to each and every peasant. Peasants were ensured a percentage of the available grain within the collective.

The provision of the "iron rice bowl" was a major contributing factor to regime legitimacy. The "concern for guarantees of subsistence caused peasants to be more tolerant of a system..... The system did effectively ration available food."[53] Thus, it was the regime's basic grain ration guarantee and not clientelism that contributed to regime legitimacy. Clientelism did, however, play a substantial role in maintaining the prevailing balance of power, authority patterns, and rural stability.

Stability and authority

Clientelism's main contribution was maintaining the prevailing balance of power and hence, authority pattern. Patron-client ties reinforced existing cleavages and further fragmented the peasantry. Existing tension, conflict and competition within the production team impeded the development of durable horizontal linkages formed along categorical interests. The predominance of the vertical tie illustrated the willingness of the clients to maintain the existing socio-economic order, consciously or unconsciously. There was a decreased probability of a potential threat arising in the form of peasant associations armed with categorical demands aimed at restructuring the prevailing power relations. This happened as the likelihood of peasants interested in the "generality of equality and legal rules" and seeking "to promote a rule for citizens as such"[54] similarly decreased. In effect, the ability of the party to retain its authority and hence its overall

---

[53] Steven B. Butler, "Price Scissors and Commune Administration," in Chinese Rural Development, p.96.

[54] Roniger, "The Comparative Study of Clientelism," p.10.

predominant position was ensured. In that context, clientelism in rural China can be said to have helped the maintenance of authority and contributed to overall stability.

The overwhelming power which remained in the hands of the team leader provided an avenue for the team leader to influence the daily lives of the team members; authority was exercised by the power over allocation of basic commodities. According to Oi, team leaders, through the use of either rewards or sanctions, were able to elicit a certain degree of compliance from the team members.[55]

The organisation of rural China forced peasants to comply with state directives. The basic grain ration was not independent of the production team's output; it was directly related to the team's harvest. This maintained a peasant's close relationship to the harvest, and at the same time ensured that the state could rely upon a certain degree of co-operation from the peasantry.

Thus, the non-emergence of an organised peasant association capable of restructuring power relations ensured the continuance of the prevailing authority pattern and hence contributed to rural stability.

State penetration and power

The state tried to penetrate down to the local level through the office of the team leader. In the process, however, the state created a contradictory situation. On the one hand, the state conferred considerable economic power on the local elite to ensure complete dependence of the peasantry on this local elite, and hence the state. On the other hand, by linking the economic fortunes of the team leader to that of the production team, the state gave the leader a reason to

---

[55] See Oi's socialist clientelism model (Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China, pp.132-158).

resist state penetration. In addition, by bestowing considerable power on the local elite, the state gave local elites the means to resist state penetration. This resistance manifested itself in the manipulation of state policies.

Team leaders were not adequately compensated for their team leader duties. Their grain rations and cash income were all drawn from the production team. The team leader's income, like his/her fellow villagers, was intimately tied to the performance of the production team. Consequently, the manipulation of state policies such as underreporting harvests or putting aside more land for private plots,[56] was encouraged by the local leaders.

This manipulation of state policy, however, did not drastically challenge overall state policies. Local leaders had little power but to adhere to the general policy content. Compliance or otherwise to general state policies was not manifested through a totally positive or negative response but through degree of co-operation. Subtle manipulations did not drastically affect state power, but as Shue points out, "compromised and fettered" state power.[57]

The state, although concerned about the amount of grain extraction from the countryside, allowed local manipulation of its policy. The state's primary objective of maintaining a steady grain supply to the urban areas, and generally harnessing the peasantry to its developmental goals, was fulfilled, but less effectively.[58]

By bestowing power on the team leader to influence distribution of goods and resources to team members, the state catapulted the team

---

[56] Zweig, Agrarian Radicalism, p.139.

[57] Shue, The Reach of the State, p.147.

[58] Ibid.

leader into the position of a patron. The resultant patron-client relationship with a select few and the consequent strain on horizontal intra-team relationships prevented the wholesale long-term collusion between all team members and the team leader against state policy. The state in effect created a permanent state of on-going tension and competition.

Theoretically, the action of the state in intimately linking the team leader's livelihood with that of the team and hence its members should have provided both the team leader and all its members a reason to form an internally cohesive production team acting, in the long-term, as a unified collective. However, the pre-existing lack of internal solidarity, the externally charged political climate and the resurgence of clientelism selectively within the team created conditions which diminished the collective spirit.

Conclusion

The patron-client relationship emerged in a production team rife with cleavages. Existing tensions arising from kinship rivalries, competition and age-old animosities increased not only the significance of patron-client ties within the production team but also interacted with the patron-client relationship to increase the social distance between the different groupings within the production team. In doing so, the clientelist tie performed its second major function in Maoist rural China: the reinforcement of existing social cleavages, which impeded the development of horizontal linkages among peasants capable of restructuring the predominant power relations in society.

CONCLUSION

The aims of this analysis have been two-fold: to examine the general concept of clientelism and to elucidate its major functions in Maoist rural China. In its latter scope, the examination of the dynamics of the patron-client relationship within the production team questioned the solidarity of the collective production team unit, within the confines of which peasants lived their daily lives. The examination also revealed the importance of exploring existing cleavages in Chinese society and tracing their relationship to clientelism.

The conclusions in this paper were arrived at through an examination of the general concept of clientelism and by exploring existing societal cleavages in Maoist China. Relying on the theories of clientelism and the existence of cleavages, this paper postulated a relationship between clientelism, cleavages, horizontal linkages and group organisation.

This analysis illustrates that the patron-client relationship fulfilled two major functions in rural China: [a] it facilitated the articulation and satisfaction of particular interests and hence political participation, and [b] it reinforced the existing cleavages in society, which impeded the development of horizontal linkages among peasants capable of restructuring the predominant power relations in society. Indeed, it maintained the lower socio-economic position of the clients. The Maoist regime inadvertently benefited from this latter function of clientelism. Clientelism decreased a potential threat from a peasant organisation aimed at upsetting the balance of power. At the same time, the state was able to continue its policy of grain extraction.

Production teams

The production teams analysed in this study exhibited a considerable degree of social fragmentation. Social fragmentation was one of the reasons for the emergence of clientelism within the production team. The interaction of the patron-client relationship with existing social cleavages resulted in aggravation of these cleavages. The examples used in this study provided an image of the production team riddled with internal social fragmentation, leading to a reasonable hypothesis that such internal social fragmentation was widespread. This affected the collective spirit of the production team and inhibited the organisation of peasant interests into a strong categorical group.

Clientelism in rural China

Clientelism in Maoist rural China arose for a variety of reasons: [a] situation of scarcity and unequal access to major resources and generally harsh rural environment [b] designation of the team leader as a repository of power within the production team with few checks and a wide breadth of authority, [c] a high degree of insecurity due to constant political campaigns, and [d] lack of strong and durable horizontal linkages and existence of social fragmentation within the production team.

First, important resources such as grain and cash were a scarcity in Maoist rural China. State grain extraction left behind a very small amount of grain for peasant consumption. Unfortunately, due to state control over the purchasing and supply of grain, avenues to obtain extra grain, other than from within the production team, were lacking. Thus, the scarcity of such commodities as grain was compounded by the fact that they could be obtained only through state agents.

The rural environment in general was harsh. Working days were long but payment was not substantial. And a productive harvest meant higher levels of grain extraction. Peasants were bound to the land and could not roam about the countryside in hope of finding better conditions. As the Potters state:

> By fixing peasants on the land, and having the team control their labour, the Maoist state created a set of serf-like conditions more classically "feudal" than the pre-liberation society, in which peasants controlled their own labour, and could leave their villages.[1]

Thus, peasants turned to clientelism to improve the quality of rural life through better jobs, higher work points and hence, a larger share of the grain harvest.

Second, within the production team, the team leader was supreme. S/he had power over job allocation which determined work points and thus grain consumption. His/her power extended to permission to leave the collective for temporary factory work, allocation of private plots, provision of welfare and dissemination of privileged information. The concentration of power in the office of the team leader presented team members with opportunities to use clientelism and paved the way for the exercise of personalised authority. Clientelism personalised the process of distribution of goods and services.

Third, constant political campaigns created a tense and suspicious atmosphere. As local leaders, production team leaders were targeted during the Four Cleanups Campaign. They were also at risk during the Cultural Revolution as calls to rebel and question authority filtered down from the center. Similarly, ordinary peasants were also at risk as some peasants used campaigns to level past grudges. Trust among

---

[1] Potter and Potter, China's Peasants, p.97.

villagers decreased in an environment of political campaigns. The unscrupulous targeting of individuals propelled them to seek some means of security from accusation. Thus, a patron-client relationship ensured a degree of security to both the patron and the client.

Fourth, collective solidarity of the production team was negatively affected by existing social fragmentation. Pre-existing societal cleavages created by lineage, competition, intrigue and general dislike provided a ripe environment for clientelism. Patron-client relationships provided material and psychic security that the collective structures were unable to adequately provide.

Maoist China was characterised by rural poverty. The constant vicissitudes in policy making, the shifts between different work point systems, the unfilfilled promise of a better life under Chairman Mao all served to deepen the desire to make rural life a bit better for oneself.[3] State policies created not only an environment in which peasants sought to extract individual benefits but also provided peasants with the means to extract these benefits- through the team leader: clientelism arose against the backdrop of the environment existing in rural China and in the context of internal team fragmentation.

Characteristics of Chinese socialist clientelism

Chinese socialist clientelism, as manifested in the Mao era, exhibited a mixture of characteristics associated with traditional and communist clientelism. Aside from reciprocity, power inequality and

---

[3] Despite the lack of significant improvement in diet, housing and income for the majority of rural residents after 1956, there were gains in provisions of education and health care. This continued through the 1960s and 1970s.

proximity,[3] the degree of client voluntariness and affection between patron and client varied.

First, clientelism in rural China resembled traditional feudal authority patterns. Peasants were dependent on a single elite, the team leader, for the distribution of scarce goods and resources. However, in Chinese socialist clientelism this dependence on the team leader was tempered by the team leader's dependence on the collective. Both the team leader and team members derived their income and grain ration from labour in the collective unit. Thus, the individual peasant was dependent on the team leader, who in turn was dependent on the collective.

Second, unlike in traditional clientelism but similar to communist clientelism in other countries, patron and client were from the same social class: in this case, mostly poor peasants. The patron's power was derived from her/his office which endowed her/him with control over the allocation of important resources, which s/he did not own. The patron and client positions did not correspond to an ascriptive-hierarchical standing in society. Unlike patrons in the traditional setting, communist and Chinese socialist patrons wielded power only so long as they remained in office.

Also, there was no wealth differential between the patron and the client. They both worked side by side in the collective fields. This is something unique to this specific variety of Chinese socialist clientelism.

Third, peasants in rural China did not depend on the team leader for their basic grain ration or income for participation in work on the collective. Instead, they were dependent on the collective. The team

---

[3] Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics," p.148.

leader, therefore, could not deprive the peasants of their basic grain ration or collective income. Clientelism, then, was used not to ensure the provision of basic needs, but to mitigate the hardships the peasants had to undergo and to provide them with a sense of security. Therefore, the degree of client voluntariness in this relationship was higher than in the traditional patron-client relationship, as was the feeling of legitimacy in the eyes of the client.

Similarly, the team leader's dependence on the production team meant that s/he had to be circumspect in her/his use of power. The team leader needed the co-operation of the team members to produce a successful harvest and fulfil targets. A team leader unable to maintain or raise grain output level would be dismissed from his/her post by brigade cadres. Therefore, unlike the traditional patron and probably also the communist patron, the Chinese patron in general could not afford to behave as a despot.

Fourth, the organisation of production teams around natural villages resulted in a high degree of affectivity and solidarity between the patron and the client. In single-lineage production teams, the patron and client were frequently from the same lineage branch. And in multi-lineage production teams, they were from the same lineage. This Chinese variant within production teams differed from clientelism in other communist settings in which the degree of solidarity and affectivity is typically much lower, and there is more emphasis on the instrumental aspect of the relationship. In this aspect, Chinese socialist clientelism resembled traditional clientelism.

The relationship was exploitative because it maintained the client's dependence on the patron and his/her subordinate position vis-a-vis the party. The potential for coercion was unlikely to have made a presence in Chinese socialist clientelism. The state's provision of a

basic grain ration reduced the patron's power. Unlike the traditional patron, the Chinese patron could not deprive the client of these provisions, therefore the power asymmetry was not as high as in the traditional relationship and the Chinese patron's ability to elicit rigid compliance to his/her demands was lower.

The degree of client voluntariness is inversely related to the degree of client dependence. And client dependence is linked to power asymmetry. In Maoist rural China, the team member-client was completely dependent on the team leader for the distribution of major goods and resources. However, his dependence was tempered by the fact that the team leader-patron could not deny the client his basic ration and the right to participate in collective labour. Therefore, client dependence was not as pronounced as in the traditional patron-client relationship. And the power imbalance was not as disparate. Consequently, the degree of client voluntariness in the relationship was higher.

Summary

The examination of the general concept of clientelism revealed the intricacies and contradictions of the patron-client relationship. Questions posed in the Introduction were answered in Chapter Two through to Chapter Five. These are summarised as follows:

1. Clientelism can be viewed as a viable form of political participation.
2. Patron-client ties and kinship ties can coexist.
3. In interacting with kinship ties, patron-client ties reinforced kinship ties.
4. Clientelism emerged in an environment of scarcity and unequal access to major resources, social fragmentation, concentration of power in the office of the team leader, and a high level of insecurity resulting from political campaigns.
5. Clientelism aggravated existing social cleavages.

6. Patron-client ties impeded the development of durable horizontal linkages and organisation of groups coalescing around shared categorical interests.
7. The image of the production team as a unified corporate entity cannot be sustained.
8. Chinese socialist clientelism was a mixture of traditional and communist clientelism.
9. Chinese socialist clientelism exhibited a high degree of affectivity and loyalty.
10. The relationship did not emphasise instrumental benefits to the detriment of affection between the two parties.
11. Chinese socialist clientelism did not exhibit a potential for coercion. It was exploitative in that it maintained the client's dependent position. This relationship was more voluntary than the traditional one.
12. Chinese socialist clientelism served as a mechanism for distribution within the production team.
13. Chinese socialist clientelism did not regulate the flow of major resources in society.

In conclusion, the findings of this analysis emphasise the importance of exploring the relevance of kin, friends, competition, and intrigue to the study of clientelism in China, especially in the rural areas. It is also evident that no further study of clientelism in rural China will be complete without adequate attention paid to the relevance of existing societal cleavages. Furthermore, a comparison of rich and poor production teams in different regions of China may determine the relative strength of each of the four reasons provided in this study to the emergence of clientelism in Maoist era. An integrated study of lineages, class and patron-client linkages is especially called for in the wake of the demise of the production team and general rural restructuring.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Almond, Gabriel A., and Bingham Powell Jr. Comparative Politics: System, Process, and Policy. 2nd. Ed. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company (Inc.), 1978.

Barnett, A. Doak, ed. Chinese Communist Politics in Action. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969.

Barnett, A. Doak, and Ezra Vogel. Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.

Baum, Richard, ed. Reform and Reaction in Post-Mao China: The Road to Tiananmen. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Bernstein, Thomas P. "Cadre and Peasant Behavior Under Conditions of Insecurity and Deprivation: The Grain Supply Crisis of the Spring of 1955." In A. Doak Barnett, ed. Chinese Communist Politics in Action. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969.

________. "Stalinism, Famine, and Chinese Peasants: Grain Procurements during the Great Leap Forward." Theory and Society, vol. 13, no. 3, May 1984, pp.339-377

Birrell, R. J. "The Centralized Control of the Communes in the Post-'Great Leap' Period." In A. Doak Barnett, ed. Chinese Communist Politics in Action. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969.

Blecher, Marc. "The Mass Line and Leader-Mass Relations and Communications in Basic-Level Rural Communities." In Godwin C. Chu and Francis L. K. Hsu, eds. China's New Social Fabric, pp.63-86. London: Kegan Paul International, 1983.

________. China: Politics, Economics and Society. London: Frances Pinter (Publishers) Limited, 1986.

Burns, John P. "Rural Guangdong's Second Economy, 1962-1974." China Quarterly, no.88, December 1981, pp.629-644.

________. "Peasant Interest Articulation and Work Teams in Rural China 1962-1974." In Godwin C. Chu and Francis L. K. Hsu, eds. China's New Social Fabric, pp.143-172. London: Kegan Paul International, 1983.

________. "Chinese Peasant Interest Articulation." In David S. G. Goodman, ed. Groups and Politics in the People's Republic of China, pp.126-151. Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1984.

________. "Political Participation of Peasants in China." In Victor C. Falkenheim, ed. Citizens and Groups in Contemporary China. Michigan Monographs in Chinese Studies. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1987.

________. Political Participation in Rural China. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Butler, Steven B. "Price Scissors and Commune Administration." In William L. Parish, ed. Chinese Rural Development: The Great Transformation, pp.95-114. New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1985.

Chan, Anita and Jonathan Unger. "Grey and Black: The Hidden Economy of Rural China." Pacific Affairs, no.55, Fall 1982, pp.452-471.

Chan, Anita, Richard Madsen, and Jonathan Unger. Chen Village: The Recent History of a Peasant Community in Mao's China. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Chang, Jung. Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China. London: Harper Collins, 1991.

Ch'en, Lin. "The 1975 Agricultural Picture of Communist China." Issues and Studies. November 1975.

Chu, Godwin C. "Societal Integration and Communication in China." In Godwin C. Chu and Francis L. K. Hsu, eds. China's New Social Fabric, pp.3-21. London: Kegan Paul International, 1983.

Chu, Godwin C., and Francis L.K. Hsu. "Integration in China: The Post-Mao Years." In Godwin C. Chu and Francis L. K. Hsu, eds. China's New Social Fabric, pp.251-286. London: Kegan paul International, 1983.

Clapman, Christopher. "Clientelism and the State." In Christopher Clapman, ed. Private Patronage and Public Power: Political Clientelism in the Modern State, pp.1-35. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.

Cornelius, Wayne A. "Urbanization and Political Demand-making: Political Participation Among the Migrant Poor in Latin American Cities." In Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds. The Citizen and Politics: A Comparative Perspective, pp.29-64. Stamford: Greylock Inc., 1978.

Croll, Elisabeth. From Heaven to Earth: Images and Experiences of Development in China. London: Routledge, 1994.

Dittmer, Lowell. "Public and Private Interests and the Participatory Ethic in China." In Victor C.Falkenheim, ed. Citizens and Groups in Contemporary China. Michigan Monographs in Chinese Studies. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1987.

Duara, Prasenjit. "Elites and the Structures of Authority in the Villages of North China, 1900-1949." In Joseph W.Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin, eds. Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance, pp.261-281. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Eisenstadt, S.N., and Luis Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange." Comparative Studies in Society and History, vol.22, no.1, 1980, pp.42-77.

________. "Clientelism in Communist Systems: A Comparative Perspective." Studies in Comparative Communism, vol.XIV, no.2&3, Summer/Autumn 1981, pp.233-245.

________. Patrons, Clients, and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Eisenstadt, S. N., and Rene Lemarchand, eds. Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development. London: Sage Publications, 1981.

Endicott, Stephen. Red Earth: Revolution in a Sichuan Village. London: I.B. Tauris & Co.Ltd., 1988.

Escobar, Cristina. "Clientelism and Social Protest: Peasant Politics in Northern Colombia." In Luis Roniger and Ayse Gunes-Ayata, eds. Democracy, Clientelism, and Civil Society, pp.65-86. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1994.

Esherick, Joseph W., and Mary Backus Rankin, eds. Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Falkenheim, Victor C. "Political Participation in China." Problems of Communism, vol.27, no.3, May-June 1978, pp.18-32

________. "Autonomy and Control in Chinese Organization: Dilemmas of Rural Administrative Reform." In Sidney L. Greenblatt, Richard W. Wilson, and Amy Auerbacher Wilson, eds. Organizational Behavior in Chinese Society. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981.

________. "Participation, Communication, and Political Integration." In Godwin C. Chu and Francis L. K. Hsu, eds. China's New Social Fabric, pp.47-61. London: Kegan Paul International, 1983.

________. "Citizen and Group Politics in China: An Introduction." In Victor C. Falkenheim, ed. Citizen and Groups in Contemporary China. Michigan Monographs in Chinese Studies. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1987.

Flynn, Peter. "Class, Clientelism, and Coercion: Some Mechanisms of Internal Dependency and Control." Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, vol.12, no.2, 1974, pp.133-156.

Foster, George M. "The Dyadic Contract: A Model for the Social Structure of a Mexican Peasant Village." In Jack M. Potter, May N. Diaz, and George M. Foster, eds. Peasant Society: A Reader. Boston: Little, Brown and Company (Inc), 1967.

Freedman, Maurice. Lineage Organization in Southeastern China. London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1958.

________. Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwantung. London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1966.

________., ed. Family and Kinship in Chinese Society. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970.

Fried, Morton Herbert. Fabric of Chinese Society: A Study of Social Life of a Chinese County Seat. New York: Octagon Books, 1969.

Friedman, Edward, Paul G. Pickowicz and Mark Selden. Chinese Village, Socialist State. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

Frolic, B. Michael. Mao's People: Sixteen Portraits of Life in Revolutionary China. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Gao, Xiaoshen. The Broken Betrothal. Beijing: Chinese Literature Press, 1987.

Goodman, David S. G., ed. Groups and Politics in the People's Republic of China. Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1984.

Gouldner, Alvin W. "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.28-43. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Graziano, Luigi. "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.360-378. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Greenblatt, Sidney L., Richard W. Wilson, and Amy Auerbacher Wilson, eds. Organizational Behavior in Chinese Society. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981.

Gu Hua. A Small Town Called Hibiscus. Gladys Yang, trans. Beijing: Chinese Literature Press, 1983.

Guasti, Laura. "Peru: Clientelism and Internal Control." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.422-438. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Hall, Anthony. "Patron-Client Relations: Concepts and Terms." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.510-512. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Hinton, William. Shenfan. New York: Random House, 1983.

Huang, Philip C. C. The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta, 1350-1988. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.

Huang, Shu-min. The Spiral Road: Change in a Chinese Village Through the Eyes of a Communist Party Leader. Boulder: Westview Press, 1989.

Huntington, Samuel P., and Joan M. Nelson. No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Johnston, Michael. "The Political Consequences of Corruption: A Reassessment." Comparative Politics, vol.18, no.4, July 1986, pp.459-477.

Jowitt, Ken. "Soviet Neotraditionalism: The Political Corruption of a Leninist Regime." Soviet Studies, vol.XXXV, no.3, July 1983, pp.275-296.

Karnow, Stanley. "Why They Fled: Refugee Accounts." In Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell, eds. Communist China: Revolutionary Reconstruction and International Confrontation, 1949 to the Present. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.

Kaufman, Robert R. "The Patron-Client Concept and Macro-Politics." Comparative Studies in Society and History, vol.16, no.3, June 1974, pp.284-308.

Kelliher, Daniel. Peasant Power in China: The Era of Rural Reform, 1979-88. New Have: Yale University Press, 1992.

Kraus, Richard Curt. Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

Lande, Carl H. "Introduction: The Dyadic Basis in Clientelism." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.xiii-xxxvii. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

________. "Networks and Groups in Southeast Asia: Some Observations on the Group Theory of Politics." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.75-99. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

________. "Group Politics and Dyadic Politics:Notes for a Theory." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.506-510. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Lardy, Nicholas R. Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

________. "State Intervention and Peasant Opportunities." In William L. Parish, ed. Chinese Rural Development: The Great Transformation, pp.33-56. New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1985.

Lemarchand, Rene. "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation-Building." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.100-123. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Lemarchand, Rene and Keith Legg. "Political Clientelism and Development." Comparative Politics, vol.4, no.2, January 1972, pp.149-178.

Madsen, Richard. Morality and Power in a Chinese Village. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Maxwell, Neville, and Peter Nolan. "The Procurement of Grain." China Quarterly, no.82, June 1980, pp.304-307.

Meisner, Mitch. "Dazhai: The Mass Line in Practice." Modern China, vol.4, no.1, January 1978, pp.27-62.

________. "Horizontal Mobilization and Communication for Conflict Resolution." In Godwin C. Chu and Francis L. K. Hsu, eds. China's New Social Fabric, pp.225-247. London: Kegan Paul International, 1983.

Mosher, Steven W. Broken Earth: The Rural Chinese. New York: The Free Press, 1983.

Nathan, Andrew. "China's Work-point System: A Study in Agricultural 'Splittism'." Current Scene: Developments in Mainland China. vol.II, no.31, April 15, 1964, pp.1-13.

________. "A Factional Model for CCP Politics." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp. 382-401. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Nee, Victor. Social Exchange and Political Process in Maoist China. New York: Garland Publishing, 1991.

________. "Between Center and Locality: State, Militia, and Village." In David Mozingo and Victor Nee, eds. State and Society in Contemporary China. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Oi, Jean, C. State and Peasant in Contemporary: The Political Economy of Village Government. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

________. "Partial Market Reform and Corruption in Rural China." In Richard Baum, ed. Reform and Reaction in Post-Mao China: The Road to Tiananmen. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Oksenberg, Michel. "Occupational Groups in Chinese Society and the Cultural Revolution." In Michel Oksenberg, Carl Riskin, Robert A. Scalapino and Ezra F. Vogel, eds. The Cultural Revolution: 1967 in Review. Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, No.2. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1968.

________. "Local Leaders in Rural China, 1962-65: Individual Attributes, Bureaucratic Positions, and Political Recruitment." In A. Doak Barnett, ed. Chinese Communist Politics in Action, pp.155-215. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969.

________. "Methods of Communication Within the Chinese Bureaucracy." China Quarterly, no.57, January-March 1974, pp.1-39.

Parish, William L., ed. Chinese Rural Development: The Great Transformation. New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1985.

Parish, William L., and Martin King Whyte. Village and Family in Contemporary China. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Perry, Elizabeth J. "Rural Violence in Socialist China." China Quarterly. vol.103, September 1985, pp.414-440.

Perry, Elizabeth J., and Christine Wong, eds. The Political Economy of Reform in Post-Mao China. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Pitt-Rivers, Julian. The People of Sierra. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954.

Popkin, Samuel. The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

Potter, Jack M. "Land and Lineage in Traditional China." In Maurice Freedman, ed. Family and Kinship in Chinese Society, pp.121-138. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970.

Potter, Sulamith Heins and Jack M. Potter. China's Peasants: The Anthropology of a Revolution. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Powell, John Duncan. "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.147-161. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Putterman, Louis. Continuity and Change in China's Rural Development: Collective and Reform Eras in Perspective. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Pye, Lucian W., and Sidney Verba, eds. The Citizen and Politics: A Comparative Perspective. Stamford: Greylock Inc., 1978.

Roniger, Luis. "The Comparative Study of Clientelism and the Changing Nature of Civil Society in the Contemporary World." In Luis Roniger and Ayse Gunes-Ayata, eds. Democracy, Clientelism, and Civil Society, pp.1-18. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1994.

________. "Conclusions: The Transformation of Clientelism and Civil Society." In Luis Roniger and Ayse Gunes-Ayata, eds. Democracy, Clientelism and Civil Society. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1994.

Schmidt, Steffen W., Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Schurmann, Franz. "Peasants." In Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell, eds. Communist China:Revolutionary Reconstruction and International Confrontation 1949 to the Present. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.

Scott, James C. "Corruption, Machine Politics, and Political Change." American Political Science Review, vol.63, December 1969, pp.1142-1158.

________. "The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds and Social Change in Rural Southeast Asia." Journal of Asian Studies, vol.32, November 1972, pp.5-37.

________. "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.123-146. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Scott, James C., and Benedict J. Kerkvliet. "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy: A Theory with Special Reference to Southeast Asia." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds. Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.439-458. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Selden, Mark and Victor Lippit, eds. The Transition to Socialism in China. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1982.

________. The Political Economy of Chinese Development. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1993.

Shinichiro, Sato. "A Report of the Production Team: A Personal Investigation." Issues & Studies. vol.XI, no.3, March 1975, pp.79-85.

Shue, Vivienne. Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development Towards Socialism, 1949-1956. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

________. The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

________. "State Power and Social Organization in China." In Joel S.Migdal, Atul Kohli and Vivienne Shue, eds. State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World, pp.65-88. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Skilling, William G. "Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China (Part One)." In Jack M. Potter, May N. Diaz and George M. Foster, eds. Peasant Society: A Reader. Boston: Little, Brown and Company (Inc), 1967.

Stavis, Benedict. People's Communes and Rural Development in China. Rev.ed. Ithaca: Rural Development Committee, 1977.

Taeuber, Irene B. "The Families of Chinese Farmers." In Maurice Freedman, ed. Family and Kinship in Chinese Society, pp.63-86. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970.

Tarkowski, Jacek. "Poland: Patrons and Clients in a Planned Economy." In S. N. Eisenstadt and Rene Lemarchand, eds. Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development. London: Sage Publications, 1981.

Townsend, James R. Political Participation in Communist China. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

Unger, Jonathan. "Remuneration, Ideology, and Personal Interests in a Chinese Village, 1960-1980." In William L. Parish, ed. Chinese Rural Development: The Great Transformation. New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1985.

Verba, Sidney. "The Parochial and the Polity." In Sidney Verba and Lucain W. Pye, eds. The Citizen and Politics: A Comparative Perspective. Stamford: Greylock Publishers, 1978.

Verba, Sidney, Norman H. Nie and Jae-On Kim. Participation and Political Equality: A Seven Nation Comparison. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Vogel, Ezra F. "From Friendship to Comradeship: The Change in Personal Relations in Communist China." China Quarterly, no.21, January-March 1965, pp.46-60.

Walder, Andrew G. Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Walker, Kenneth R. Food Grain Procurement and Consumption in China. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Weingrod, Alex. "Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties." In Steffen Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds., Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.323-327. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Whyte, Martin King. Small Groups and Political Rituals in China. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Wolf, Eric R. "Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies." In Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Lande, and James C. Scott, eds., Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, pp.167-177. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Yang, C.K. Chinese Communist Society: The Family and the Village. Cambridge: M.I.T.Press, 1959.

Yang, Dali L. Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society and Institutional Change Since the Great Leap Famine. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Yang, Mayfair Mei-hui. Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relations in China. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Zweig, David. Agrarian Radicalism in China. 1968-1981. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.