

**Charity Schools and Society in Nineteenth-Century
Ba County**

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Abstract

Scholars have used Qing-era elementary schools to shed light on the strengthening Qing state in rural and peripheral areas, and on the increasing participation of non-bureaucratic elites in local public affairs in the form of monetary support and managerial duties. Using county government archives, local gazetteers and county officials' administrative notes, this thesis builds on existing research by providing a case study of Ba County. It explores the understudied question of how elementary schools were promoted and established at the subcounty level, and how the emergence of these schools changed local power dynamics. Chapter one investigates the process through which the court, local officials, and subcounty non-bureaucratic elites together led to the countywide establishment of charity schools in Ba County, all for their own reasons. The court wished to extend the official school system to the subcounty level to select bureaucrats, promote a uniform culture, and carry out moral transformation. Yet the county government of Ba did not manage to formally regulate these schools throughout the nineteenth century. The endorsement of the government was more symbolic. Almost all charity schools in Ba were locally sponsored and managed. For local non-bureaucratic elites, charity schools were not the extension of official schools established for the purpose of imperial interests, but organizations that aimed to provide financial aid to the poor and help to better develop the community. Chapter two shifts its focus to local society and explores how the school expansion changed local power dynamics. There was an anticlerical trend in the process of establishing charity schools. In addition, the community designation of school trustees for limited terms of office became a common way to run charity schools. Compared to having the donors and the donors' descendants operate the schools, the new school trustee system was friendlier to migrants; it allowed them to share the benefits brought by charity schools. By putting trustees in charge of charity schools, the community in fact chose a more open strategy.

Keywords: Late Imperial China; Ba County; State-Society Dynamics

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Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One. Policy Meets Locality: The Expansion of Charity Schools in the Subcounty Context.....	9
The Promotion of Charity Schools by the Court	10
Building Charity Schools with Government Endorsement.....	16
Reproposing Subcounty Schools in the Mid-Nineteenth Century	22
Local Motives	24
Conclusion: Building the Same Charity Schools for Different Reasons	27
Chapter Two. Local Dynamics in the School Expansion	28
Building Charity Schools as Anti-Clericalist Practices	29
The Popularization of Grassroots Confucianists' Values	33
The Rise to Power of School Trustees.....	36
Conclusion: School-ization of Communal Property	44
Epilogue: Building Schools for the State with the Schools of the Community.....	47
Bibliography	52
Appendix A. The Establishment of Charity Schools in Ba County	55

List of Tables

Table 1. The Expansion of the Property of the Charity School at Guanyin- jielongchang.....	40
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List of Figures

Figure 1. Ba County in Qing China, 1820.....	2
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Introduction

China historians have considered clan schools (族學), community schools (社學) and charity schools (義學) as the closest Qing-era (1636–1912) equivalents to public elementary schools.¹ Promoted and sponsored by the state, the community, and sometimes both, these publicly funded schools provided free entry-level education for children from humble backgrounds. Scholars have used these Qing-era elementary schools to shed light on the strengthening Qing state in the rural and peripheral areas, and on the increasing participation of non-bureaucratic elites in local public affairs in the form of monetary support and managerial duties.² Yet how elementary schools were promoted and established at the subcounty level remains unclear. What motives drove the state and the community to build elementary schools? How did various local interest groups interact with each other in the expansion of elementary schools? How did the emergence of subcounty schools change the local power dynamics? This thesis explores these remaining questions through a case study of Ba County.

The geographical scope of Ba County during the nineteenth century, on which this thesis focuses, roughly overlapped with that of the current Chongqing metropolitan area (Figure 1). The county government (衙門) was located in the then Chongqing city, which is now Chongqing's downtown Yuzhong district. The county was then a commercial hub located far from the political center of the empire. In late-Ming wars and disasters, the population and the cultivated fields in Sichuan, where Ba County was located, suffered a blow. In order to recover the provincial fiscal capacity, the Qing court vigorously encouraged immigration and reclamation. This process of massive and deep

¹ For examples, see Evelyn Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1979), 24–53; Angela Leung, “Education in the Lower Yangtze Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600–1900*, ed. Benjamin Elman and Alexander Woodside (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 381–382.

² See the next part of this introduction.



Figure 1. Ba County in Qing China, 1820.

Note: This figure is my adaptation of Wikimedia Commons contributors' map of Qing China 1820. For the original work, see Wikimedia Commons contributors, "File: Qing China 1820.png," *Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository*, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Qing_China_1820.png&oldid=397325749 (accessed July 15, 2020).

development of Sichuan began in early years of Qing's reign and was completed during the Qianlong era (1736–1796).³ The historian Cao Shuji inferred that by 1777, migrants made up more than 60 percent of the province's population.⁴ Connecting the broad land of southwestern China and the middle-lower reaches of the Yangtze with its developed water courses, Ba attracted immigrant farmers, businessmen and workers to gather there.

³ Wang Di, *跨出封闭的世界：长江上游区域社会研究 (1644–1911) (Stepping out from an Enclosed World: Social Studies of the Upper Basin of the Yangtze River (1644–1911))* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 52–54.

⁴ Cao Shuji, *中国移民史：第六卷 (The History of Migrants in China: Volume 6)* (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1997), 96.

They formed associations tied by native places, by networks of economic activities, and by settlements.

This thesis argues that the prosperity of publicly funded elementary schools in Ba County benefited from the formation of an immigrant society and eventually further promoted population mobility. I have found seventy-two cases of elementary schools in Ba County from the primary sources, all being locally sponsored charity schools.⁵ Chapter one discovers that the establishment of these schools in Ba County was an urban practice rooted in the rise of the market network. Chapter two shows that school management innovation by the local community was characterized by its openness and friendliness to migrants and newcomers.

Focusing on the practices of promoting and running these schools which were locally sponsored and officially endorsed, this thesis is more than a history of education. It contributes to the discussion on broader questions of state-society relationship and local politics in nineteenth-century China. In fact, some scholars have discussed the expansion of education from the same perspective. The following section of this introduction first introduces the educational expansion, and then discusses the scholarship on the topic of state-society relationship reflected in the expansion.

The Qing system of official schools paralleled the hierarchical structure of the imperial administration. The highest-level Dynastic School (國子監, or 太學) stood in the imperial capital. What ranked below it were the ones maintained by provinces, prefectures, and counties (府州縣學). These schools did not teach basic literacy; students must have already gained an elementary education and mastered the Confucian classics in order to compete for entry.⁶

The major providers of elementary education were family members and private tutors. Still, outside the private sphere, there were free elementary schools sponsored by

⁵ For more details on schools' locations and funds, see Appendix A.

⁶ Liu Lianli, “清代学校及其考试制度” (Schools and the Examinations in the Qing Period), *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu*, no. 25 (1999): 64.

local elites, who enjoyed recognizable prestige in local communities and were independent from the bureaucratic state, and by the government.

The court began to promote publicly funded elementary schools in 1652.⁷ According to historians Evelyn Rawski and Alexander Woodside's research, the court's promotion was effective in that it brought about a wave of establishing elementary schools across China. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the number of charitable and community schools generally increased.⁸ The promotion was ineffective, however, in that the school expansion barely increased the availability of education. At least in North China, charity schools had difficulty sustaining themselves.⁹ In addition, these schools were not attractive enough for peasants; some Qing-era writers noticed that peasant families would rather let their children be vagrants or wanderers than students.¹⁰

The stunted results of expanded schooling raise the following questions: who were the beneficiaries of the expansion if the school expansion did not enable more children to access educational resources? What drove the school sponsors to establish schools over the two centuries if most schools failed to provide adequate educational opportunities in the end? What local power dynamics does this process of establishing schools in the subcounty society reveal?

The existing literature has approached these questions by investigating the changing relationship between the state and society. Scholars have discovered that the Qing state attempted to reach deeper into the grassroots and the border areas through the school expansion, and that the active participation of local non-bureaucratic elites in school affairs helped to promote their authoritative status in local society.

⁷ *XZQS*, 73: 1.

⁸ Evelyn Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China*, 89–92.

⁹ Benjamin Elman and Alexander Woodside, afterword to *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 400.

¹⁰ Alexander Woodside, "Some Mid-Qing Theorists of Popular Schools: Their Innovations, Inhibitions, and Attitudes toward the Poor," *Modern China*, no. 1 (1983): 6–7.

The establishment of elementary schools in the frontier showed the strengthening state power. Having investigated charity schools in the southwest frontier, historian Wang Meifang regards the educational expansion as part of the Qing court's policy of "turning the frontier into the hinterland."¹¹ William Rowe pays particular attention to the southwest frontier Yunnan province. He regards school building as attempts of the Qing government and higher-level officials at cultural hegemony.¹² Chinese-language regional studies have also revealed that the promotion of elementary schools in border provinces was a product of the court's efforts to better control these areas.¹³

Meanwhile, scholars have revealed the rise of local power in school building. Focusing on the lower Yangzi region, Angela Leung has noticed that charity schools became the major form of voluntary elementary institutions during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. These schools, which in this area were mainly operated by local leaders, gradually replaced state-sponsored elementary schools. Leung regards this trend as part of the popular philanthropic movement led by non-bureaucratic elites since the late sixteenth century.¹⁴ Sarah Schneewind also discovers that as early as in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), there was a "downward shift in initiative on community schools"; the main promoters of community schools shifted from the imperial court to high officials, to resident administrators, and finally to the local community itself.¹⁵

Although having two different foci, all of the above studies take the whole China or at least one to several provinces as their research scope. While they have well illustrated the overall picture of the elementary expansion and the state-society

¹¹ Wang Meifang, "清朝西南地區義學的經費與管理" (Fund Sources and Management of Southwest Charity schools in Qing Dynasty), *Taiwan shida lishi xuebao*, no. 37 (2007): 27–84.

¹² William Rowe, "Education and Empire in Southwest China: Ch'en Hung-mou in Yunnan, 1733–38," *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600–1900*, 417–57.

¹³ Yu Xiaoyan, "清代滇黔义学比较" (A Comparative Study on Charity schools in Yunnan and Guizhou during the Qing Dynasty), *Yunnan shifan daxue xuebao*, no. 1 (2008): 105–111; Song Rongkai, "清代贵州民族地区义学试探" (The Qing-era Charity schools in Guizhou), *Guizhou minzu yanjiu*, no. 4 (2009): 187–190.

¹⁴ Angela Leung, "Elementary Education in the Lower Yangtze Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600–1900*, 381–416.

¹⁵ Sarah Schneewind, *Community Schools and the State in Ming China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

relationship reflected in the expansion, what happened at the grassroots remains unclear. In fact, despite the central policies of establishing schools, there was no homogeneous mode of school building and operation.¹⁶ Charity schools, for example, were funded by the community in the lower Yangzi, but by the government in Yunnan.¹⁷ To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the elementary school expansion, it is necessary to conduct smaller-scale studies.

Local governance under the county level reflected in the school expansion has also been left understudied by the existing literature. Because research scopes have been interprovincial and even empirewide, the literature has explored the agendas, strategies, and actions of the court and higher-level officials. This approach has assumed that the state could be equated with the top bureaucracy. How lower-level officials implemented the project of building more subcounty schools remains unexamined. Meanwhile, in exploring the relationship between state and society, the established literature tends to view local society as a monolithic system. The dynamics among different local interest groups are unclear.

Part of the reason that the scholarship adopts a macro perspective has been the restrictions built into primary sources. The most often used sources to study Qing-era elementary schools have been central policies, local gazetteers and administrative books (官箴書). Central policies reflected the motives of the court and hardly recorded the situation in the grassroots society. The ubiquity of gazetteers makes them useful in studying the general picture of Qing-era elementary education. But because most gazetteers only gave brief descriptions of local institutions, they provide inadequate information for in-depth investigations into local governance and on interactions among different local interest groups in the process of school expansion. As for administrative books, more scholarly attention has been paid to works by higher-level officials than

¹⁶ Evelyn Rawski, *Education and popular literacy in Ch'ing China*, 54–79; Wang Rigen, “‘社学即官办初等教育说’质疑” (A Refutation of the Assertion that Community Schools Were Officially Established Elementary Schools), *Lishi yanjiu*, no. 6 (1996): 174.

¹⁷ Angela Leung, “Elementary Education in the Lower Yangtze Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” 381–416. William Rowe, “Education and Empire in Southwest China,” 417–57.

those by county governors. For instance, administrative books by Chen Hongmou (1696–1771), the provincial governor of Yunnan during 1733–1738, have drawn intense scholarly attention. Accordingly, the development of elementary schools during Chen’s tenure has been well studied.¹⁸ In contrast, no literature uses county magistrates’ books to examine educational expansion at the county level and below.

Using county government archives, local gazetteers, and county magistrates’ notes, this thesis builds on existing research by focusing on one single county, Ba. Compared to many other places, the countywide establishment of entry-level schools began relatively late in Ba County. Although the court made its first call to build subcounty schools as early as 1652, Ba County did not take this project forward until more than one-and-a-half century later. In addition to the later timing, what also characterized the school expansion in Ba was that community schools, which were common in other regions, did not appear there. No records show that Ba people had ever built community schools. Locally sponsored charity schools were the only form of publicly funded elementary institutions in the Qing-era Ba.

The scholarly significance of this case study not only lies in the particular characteristics of Ba County, but also a new perspective to understand the state and local society. First, established research on the Qing state has relied heavily on central policies and higher-level officials. This thesis shifts the focus to local government. Ba County attempted to promote and regulate charity schools around 1815–26 and 1850–57 respectively.¹⁹ Chapter 1 investigates how the county government understood and carried out the court’s project of an empire-wide network of elementary schools. While the court regarded charity schools as the extension of official Confucian schools at the subcounty level, in reality, charity schools were not under direct control of the government as the

¹⁸ William Rowe, “Education and Empire in Southwest China,” 417–57; Yu Xiaoyan, “清代云南官办民助初等教育义学探析” (A Research on Qing-era Government-Run and Privately Aided Elementary Education and Charity Schools), *Yunnan minzu daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)*, no. 3 (2007): 154; Li Wenlong, “清中期边疆教育与国家认同教育——陈宏谋与义学发展” (Frontier Education and National Identity Education in the Middle of Qing Dynasty: Chen Hongmou and the Development of Charity Schools), *Minzu jiaoyu yanjiu*, no. 1 (2019): 115–19.

¹⁹ *BX*, 6-4-1142.

court had wished. Second, this microscopic study also enriches our understanding of local society. The establishment of charity schools in Ba showed that instead of a community of interest independent from the state, local society was formed by various interest groups. Chapter 2 investigates the interactions among them. It shows that the establishment of charity schools was accompanied by the decline of Buddhist clergies and temples, and the rise to power of middle- and lower-class Confucianists and school trustees.

Chapter One.

Policy Meets Locality: The Expansion of Charity Schools in the Subcounty Context

Both local gazetteers and county archives show that before the 1820s, there were only sporadic cases of schools in Ba County that served beyond the private sphere. At that time, officially sponsored schools located in the county seat were the only non-private educational institutions. During 1815–26, local officials began to promote subcounty-level charity schools. With the government’s endorsement, local leaders used private donations and communal property to establish schools. The practices of building charity schools lasted until the court initiated Wuxu (1898) and New Policies reforms (1901–1911). The reforms fundamentally changed the imperial educational system and put an end to charity schools in Ba.

Historian Angela Leung regards the expansion of subcounty-level schools during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as part of a philanthropic movement led by non-bureaucratic local leaders. According to Leung, this locally sponsored movement did not conflict with the state’s interest, as both sides had strong motives to use subcounty-level education to fight against the moral degradation at that time.²⁰

Based on a case study of the nineteenth-century Ba County, this chapter agrees that the wave to build charity schools was part of the locally-led philanthropic movement. Charity schools in Ba were all locally sponsored and operated. Local school promoters emphasized the schools’ charitable nature and did operate the schools as charitable organizations. Yet this chapter also shows the new development of the philanthropic movement in the nineteenth century. While the local school expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as Leung discovers, accorded with the state’s ambition to restore imperial-Confucian values, school promoters in Ba emphasized the interests of

²⁰ Angela Leung, “Elementary Education in the Lower Yangtze Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” 402.

community over moral transformation. In other words, while the state aimed for “schools for the empire,” in reality, there were only “schools for the community.”

This chapter is organized chronologically. I begin with an analysis of the court’s promotion of charity schools before the nineteenth century. Next is an examination of the establishment of charity schools in Ba that began in the 1820s. The government vigorously promoted subcounty education around 1850 again. The last two sections examine different understandings of charity schools from central and local perspectives.

The Promotion of Charity Schools by the Court

The Comprehensive Book on Education Policies Authorized by the Emperors (欽定學政全書) collected the central policies of charity schools from 1652 to 1776. How do these policies show what drove the court to promote school and education? What was the nature of charity schools in the court’s eyes? Historian Chen Shengyong regards subcounty-level schools as part of the Qing-era official school system. The system, in Chen’s opinion, provided education that was divided into stages from elementary to advanced, and was aimed at the cultivation of obedient Qing subjects.²¹ Wang Rigen, on the other hand, questions Chen’s assertion that subcounty schools were official elementary schools. He points out that schooling modes had shown great regional differences, as the community played a significant role in building subcounty schools. Wang thus maintains that subcounty schools should not be regarded as formal institutions of the Qing dynasty.²²

The disagreement between Chen and Wang stems from their different perspectives. I argue that central policies did reveal the court’s ambition to construct a formal system of official schools, although, as later sections will show, district

²¹ Chen Shengyong, “清代社学与中国古代官办初等教育体制” (Qing-era Community Schools and the Ancient Chinese Officially Established Elementary Educational System), *Lishi yanjiu*, no. 5 (1995): 59–75.

²² Wang Rigen, “‘社学即官办初等教育说’质疑,” 172–75.

magistrates and local elites did not carry out the expansion of charity schools as the court had envisioned.

The court did not establish schools to deliver practical knowledge for the populace. On the contrary, the schools were not for the populace. The student quota in official Confucian schools was limited. For example, the school of Chongqing Prefecture, where Ba County was located, accepted twenty students annually. The school of Ba County accepted twelve students annually (increased to twenty-two in 1868).²³ The quota was disproportionate to the population; in 1812, the number of male residents between age sixteen to sixty (丁) throughout the prefecture was 1.25 million, the number of Ba County being 120, 000.²⁴ In other words, official schools were not accessible to most people.

Official schools, in this regard, were not institutions of mass education. One of the major functions of these schools was imperial appointment. The entrance exams for official schools were the starting point of the imperial career path. As soon as one gained the *shengyuan* (生員) degree and became qualified to enter the official Confucian schools, one became a candidate of the civil service examination, on which court appointments were based.²⁵

Another aim of the court in sponsoring schools was moral transformation. Qing rulers devoted themselves to maintaining the cultural hegemony of Confucianism. The civil service exam during the Qing dynasty was based on Confucian classics. In addition, Qing rulers conferred prestige on Confucius and his offspring. In 1644, when Qing cavalries were still heading south and their wars with the Ming were still on, the Shunzhi emperor granted noble title to Kong Yunzhi, the offspring of Confucius. Later, the

²³ *XZQS*, 57: 1–2; *MGZ*, 7: 16–7.

²⁴ *JQCTZ*, 65: 4–6.

²⁵ Liu Lianli, “清代学校及其考试制度” (Schools of the Qing Dynasty and The Examination System), *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu*, no. 25 (1999): 63–8.

Kangxi emperor and Qianlong emperor made a pilgrimage to Qufu, the birthplace of Confucius.²⁶

Nonetheless, the court tried to keep the exaltation of Confucius and his doctrine under control. The Ming court in fact had already simplified the Confucius worship in 1530, ordering official schools to replace all material idols with standardized wooden memorial tablets (木主), and replace the posthumous name of Confucius (“Lord Wenxuan”) with “the sage teacher.”²⁷ A statue of Confucius was still placed and worshipped in the county school in Ba during the Qing dynasty. When compiling the county gazetteer in the early years of the Qianlong emperor’s reign (1736–1795), Wang Erjian, the county magistrate of Ba, asked the elderly why the statue remained there.²⁸ Wang’s question reflected that although people were still worshipping Confucius’s statue during the Qing era, the Qing dynasty regarded the simplified worship as more proper.

Confucius was not the only guiding element in the official school system. Above all, students were supposed to acknowledge allegiance to the empire. The Qing court strictly controlled the literati’s speeches and associations. In 1652, the Shunzhi emperor ordered every provincial school to erect a stone tablet, on which the following content was inscribed:

The court builds schools, selects qualified students ..., to cultivate talents to fulfill the needs of the court. Students should repay the imperial favor (國恩) upwardly and be the standard of human character (人品) downwardly ... Students should aspire to be loyal and incorruptible officials.²⁹

According to this guideline, official schools were not the places to train specialists, but to cultivate loyal and qualified officials for the monarchs and the empire.

²⁶ Wang Bingzhao, 简明中国教育史 (A Brief History of Chinese Education) (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008), 197–98.

²⁷ *QLZ*, 4: 5–6.

²⁸ *QLZ*, 4: 3.

²⁹ Wang Bingzhao, 简明中国教育史, 200.

The same year when the court admonished students to be loyal and incorruptible, the Shunzhi emperor made the Qing's first call to build subcounty schools; the 1652 order instructed every *xiang* (鄉), the village-level administrative unit, to establish schools. It also exempted tutors from servile labor (差役) to better promote these schools. In addition to rural areas, another concern of the Shunzhi emperor was the frontier. The next edict issued in 1658 authorized ethnic minority communities in border areas to ask for official sponsorship to build village-level schools.³⁰

The subsequent orders during the early- and mid-Qing dynasty showed that for the court, the most pressing issue regarding education was to form a unified culture through moral education and conversion (教化) in the frontier.³¹ The later three Qing emperors, Kangxi (r. 1662–1723), Yongzheng (r. 1723–1736), and Qianlong (r. 1736–1796), promulgated twenty-six edicts to promote charity schools. Among them, eighteen highlighted border areas. Special attention had been paid to frontier provinces such as Guizhou, Yunnan, Guangxi and Guangdong.³² The content of minority education included official language, Confucian classics, and morality.

The Kangxi emperor attempted to use educational expansion to transform local leadership. By the end of his reign, the succession of leadership in Qing's ethnic minority frontier had been hereditary. Kangxi's earlier orders to promote schools instructed the descendants of ethnic minority leaders to learn the imperial morality and Confucian classics. According to his 1705 edict, the emperor wished to “wait for the educated descendants' inheritance” of the leadership.³³ His later order in 1720 expanded the reach of education to the minority children of non-leaders.³⁴ This shift showed the emperor's attempt for a top-down reform in the frontier which aimed for cultural uniformity. If the Kangxi emperor could realize his project, the court would be able to celebrate the triumph

³⁰ *XZQS*, 73: 1.

³¹ *XZQS*, 73: 1–10.

³² *XZQS*, 73: 1–10.

³³ *XZQS*, 73: 1.

³⁴ *XZQS*, 73: 2–10.

of imperial-Confucian ideas and cultural uniformity in the frontier without changing the hereditary system.

The Yongzheng emperor started to change the hereditary system into a bureaucratic one. As the reform went on, the establishment of charity schools in the frontier was also vigorously carried forward.³⁵ In Yunnan, for example, the provincial governor Chen Hongmou established nearly seven hundred charity schools during his tenure (1733–1738).³⁶ In addition to the impressive number of schools, Chen also initiated a formal system of schooling and school management. Chen attempted to build a three-tier graded hierarchical school system, which consisted of charity schools and higher-level official schools.³⁷ Meanwhile, he made school affairs the direct responsibility of district magistrates. Magistrates were required to publicly announce school budgets in their offices and reported to the province regularly.³⁸

The initiative to have local officials directly manage charity schools was not unique to Chen Hongmou. In fact, the court intended to build a formal school system. This system, in the court's eyes, covered the grassroots administrative units and was under direct control of the government. The policies never affirmed that schools could be run by the private sector.³⁹ On the contrary, in 1730, 1737, and 1740 respectively, the court explicitly ordered that the district magistrates would be responsible for subcounty charity schools.⁴⁰

Among the edicts promulgated by the Qing court to promote charity schools, besides those concerning the border minority areas, the remaining ones were aimed at rural areas, including villages near the capital and those in other regions.⁴¹ In 1723, the newly crowned Yongzheng emperor repropounded the 1652 policy of building schools in

³⁵ Wang Meifang, “清朝西南地區義學的經費與管理,” 27–84.

³⁶ William Rowe, “Education and Empire in Southwest China,” 430.

³⁷ William Rowe, “Education and Empire in Southwest China,” 437.

³⁸ William Rowe, “Education and Empire in Southwest China,” 434–35.

³⁹ *XZQS*, 73: 1–10.

⁴⁰ *XZQS*, 73: 4, 6–7.

⁴¹ *XZQS*, 73: 1–10.

rural villages. Yongzheng pointed out that the then existing schools were almost located in cities and towns (城市), while villagers (鄉民) could not access educational resources because of their remote residences.⁴²

Based on the foregoing examination of central policies, I argue that for three reasons, charity schools were the court's extension of the official system of Confucian schools. First, charity schools served the frontier and rural areas, places the then existing official schools were not able to cover. Second, similar to the managerial procedures of official schools, the court viewed charity schools as part of the bureaucracy, direct responsibilities of local officials. Third, for the court, charity schools had the same aims as those of the official schools—the selection of imperial bureaucrats and the inculcation of Confucian-imperial morality. Central policies encouraged local officials to promote students from charity schools via civil service exams. Most edicts emphasized moral transformation.

Is it sound to conclude that the court promoted charity schools to better control the frontier and rural areas? William Rowe argues that provincial governor Chen Hongmou's promotion of charity schools in Yunnan was to “bridge rather than reinforce boundaries between privileged and subordinated ethnic groups and between elite and plebeian cultures.”⁴³ In a similar manner, court policies aimed to blur cultural boundaries between the Han and non-Han groups, and between the urban elites and rural residents. The policy of promoting charity schools focused on providing educational resources and promotion channels to children in border and rural regions, while showed no intention to derive greater economic benefits from these areas through education. The Yongzheng emperor even made it clear in 1730 that the establishment of charity schools should not increase the economic burden on ordinary people.⁴⁴

Still, the court did not try to provide equal access to education and promotion for the children from the frontier and rural areas. The primary aim of the court was cultural

⁴² *XZQS*, 73: 3.

⁴³ William Rowe, “Education and Empire in Southwest China,” 447.

⁴⁴ *XZQS*, 73: 4.

uniformity, which was characterized by the unimpeachable orthodoxy of Confucianism and the imperial power. Policies show that the court paid more attention to the ethnic minority groups' education of language, Confucian classics, and moral transformation than that they paid to Han children. The promotion of charity schools preceded the reform of the hereditary succession system during the Yongzheng era; the Qing court was already eagerly promoting schools at a time when minority children could not enter the bureaucracy.

By promoting charity schools, the court aimed to expand official institutions at the subcounty level. It wished to take control of subcounty education to promote a uniform culture and select future bureaucrats. One problem was that although the edicts made school establishment the direct responsibilities of local officials, the edicts did not provide the latter with concrete guidance on how to carry out school expansion at the subcounty level. How did local leaders handle this?

Building Charity Schools with Government Endorsement

As a Han-dominated migrant hub away from the capital area and imperial border, Ba received relatively less attention from the court in terms of education. Both the county gazetteer compiled during the mid-Qianlong era (1736–1795) and the county government archives showed that it was not until around 1820s that Ba County began to build charity schools.

Local officials of Ba did not fulfill the court's vision of expanding official Confucian schools at the subcounty level. Unlike the court, the county government did not pursue direct control of the fundraising and managerial procedures of charity schools. In fact, the county government attempted to establish a school system under indirect official supervision. Yet throughout the nineteenth century, there was no effective formal regulation of these schools. The endorsement of the government was more symbolic than substantive. Almost all charity schools in Ba were locally sponsored and managed.

Multiple sources attributed the initiative of charity schools in Ba to the district magistrate Liu Heng (1776–1841), who took office during 1825–1827.⁴⁵ A survey of subcounty schools by the local government in 1850–51 showed that the first wave of building subcounty schools in Ba began approximately during Liu’s tenure. Among the 36 charity schools by the survey time, at least 27 were set up by 1831, 20 established during 1814–1827.⁴⁶

It is difficult to speculate about Liu’s motives in promoting charity schools based on existing primary sources. Yet it is certain that unlike the court, Liu paid little attention to talent selection and cultural uniformity. We see this in his textbook choices show that instead of Confucian classics and morality books, Liu selected a verse book that taught entry-level language and *The Treatise on Farming and Mulberry Production with Illustrations* (農桑圖說), a book about agricultural techniques.⁴⁷ His choice could neither help students prepare for the civil service exam nor advance moral transformation. Instead, Liu highlighted practical knowledge and skills.

Although Liu was driven by motives different from those of the court, Liu’s promotion of charity schools did not completely go against the court’s project. He did attempt to set up a formal school system. The court did not provide local officials with detailed instructions about how to regulate subcounty schools. Liu Heng’s own solution was to use *baojia* (保甲), the grassroots administrative system that registered every rural household into decimal organizational divisions in order to ensure social stability and security. By the 1760s, the Qing court had standardized the *baojia* system. The system was supposed to group every ten households into one *pai* (牌), every ten *pai* into one *jia* (甲), and every ten *jia* into one *bao* (保).⁴⁸ Beginning in 1824, the provincial governor Dai Sanxi (1758–1830) urged magistrates throughout Sichuan to strictly reinforce the

⁴⁵ *BX*, 6-6-6085:8; 6-6-6026:1; 6-4-1142: 64; *MGZ*, 7:20.

⁴⁶ *BX*, 6-4-1142.

⁴⁷ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 64.

⁴⁸ Guo Songyi, Li Xinda and Yang Zhen, 中国政治制度通史：第十卷，清代 (A Comprehensive History of Chinese Political Institutions: vol. 10, the Qing Dynasty) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1996), 216–21.

system.⁴⁹ Under Dai's order, Liu reorganized *baojia* during his tenure.⁵⁰ In Liu's administrative books, he referred to the establishment of charity schools once. The passage was Liu's comment attached to his *baojia* regulations. Liu included charity schools in a comprehensive array of services that *baojia*, in his mind, should eventually supply:

As for every *bao*'s affairs of promoting the Sacred Edicts, elaborating official announcements, checking on heterodoxy religions, tracking down criminals, eliminating theft, providing relief, prohibiting gambling, banishing prostitution, building irrigation works, stocking against famine, setting up charitable granaries (義倉), establishing charity schools (義學), and nursing orphans and the poor, as long as [every *bao*] could take actions according to local conditions, popularize good plans and propagate the favours from the superior officials, these affairs should all be achieved one by one. When the organization of *baojia* has been completed, [I] will enforce regulations and encourage every *bao* to handle these affairs with care.⁵¹

Liu's passage about the future direction of the *baojia* system showed that he regarded *baojia* not only as a system for social security, but as an institution of subcounty-level governance, based on which governors and local leaders advanced moral transformation, fought against crime, and organized charities. The establishment of charity schools, for Liu, was part of the *baojia* system.

While the court envisioned charity schools as institutions that should be directly funded and supervised by government, in Liu's plan based on *baojia*, the county government's intervention in school affairs was indirect. First, Liu had no intention to offer charity schools official sponsorship. In fact, throughout the nineteenth century, the county government had never included charity schools into the official school system whose finance should be the government's responsibility. Appendix A shows the investigation on the establishment of charity schools in Ba. Almost all of the schools were locally funded. Second, there was no formal regulation. Every *bao*, which covered approximately one thousand households, was supposed to organize community affairs by itself. According to Liu's report to the provincial government, county government was

⁴⁹ Dai Sanxi, “道光四年署理川督戴三锡札” (A Document by the Acting Governor of Sichuan Dai Sanxi in 1824), *QJD* (2), 286–87.

⁵⁰ *YLYY*, 21.

⁵¹ *YLYY*, 25.

not directly involved in personnel appointments for the *baojia* system in Ba. *Baozheng* (保正), the heads of *bao*, were elected by prestigious local scholars and elders. *Baozheng* selected the heads of *jia* and *pai*.⁵² The only formal regulatory mechanism mentioned in Liu's regulations was for *baozheng* to report to the magistrate once a year about the registers of households.⁵³ In addition, the magistrate might conduct random checks. *Baozheng* also had the right to report directly to the magistrate on official business if needed.⁵⁴ Beyond that, no formal administrative mechanism ensured that the services mentioned by Liu, charity schools included, could be uniformly implemented under the supervision of the county government.

Indeed, Liu proposed enforcing regulations after *baojia* had been set up. Yet later sources showed that Liu had never effectively done so. An official countywide survey conducted in 1850–51 by the district magistrate at that time showed that there had been no regular reports or official records on charity schools by the time of the survey.⁵⁵ In addition, the county government archives showed that the establishment and managerial procedures of charity schools varied widely throughout Ba County, which reflected the absence of any uniform regulation.

In fact, even Liu's vision of indirectly controlling charity schools by using the *baojia* system was not realized. At least forty-seven out of the seventy-two institutions were based on one type of settlement—market towns (*chang*, or *changzhen*), the extra-village commercial center.⁵⁶ In the county government archives, one common phrase for school operators to refer to their schools was “*benchang yixue*” (本場義學), which meant “the charity school of our market town.” The phrase reflected that residents from the same market towns had formed social groups whose membership was identifiable for the school founders, and thus was likely also identifiable for the other people. Market towns were not only charity schools' location, but also their purpose, as school operators

⁵² *YLYY*, 20.

⁵³ *YLYY*, 24.

⁵⁴ *YLYY*, 25.

⁵⁵ *BX*, 6-4-1142.

⁵⁶ See Appendix A.

regarded charity schools as affairs of their market towns. Charity schools were based on the market town system, not on *baojia*.

Successors of the magistrate Liu Heng adopted market town, instead of *baojia*, as the basic unit of the administration on charity schools. During 1850–51, the magistrate Jueluoxiang conducted a survey of school boards, tutors, funds, and expenditures.⁵⁷ The survey covered thirty-five charity schools, thirty of which were located in market towns. At the time of the investigation, the magistrate divided the county into three sections and sent out his government runners (差役) accordingly. The people in charge of the charity schools of market towns reported to the runners. And the runners reported to the magistrate. Among the grassroots reporters, in addition to the school board members, in as many as in fourteen cases out of the thirty, the market heads (場約) were also the reporters.

The market-based school system differed from Liu's *baojia*-based plan in two ways. First, the network of market town was not the formal system of the Qing-era grassroots administration. The *baojia* system was created by the Qing government for grassroots administration, while market towns were initially spontaneously formed because of economic activities. The role the local government had played was only to recognize of market towns' legitimacy. Take Tiancichang as an example. The market town became prosperous around 1816 thanks to its great location and crop harvests. For social order and security, the local militia head (團首) Liu, after soliciting the opinions of market residents (場眾), appointed two market heads. Liu then reported the appointment to Ba County. The county government recognized the appointment by issuing the two market heads certifications.⁵⁸ In another 1773 case, fourteen wealthy businessmen funded Sizhushanchang. Officially appointed subcounty leaders *xiangbao* (鄉保) then reported

⁵⁷ *BX*, 6-4-1142.

⁵⁸ “嘉庆二十一年刘大顺等稟” (The Report from Liu Dashun et al. in 1816), *QJD* (2), 205.

the establishment of the market to the county to seek official recognition and certification.⁵⁹

Second, *baojia* was the official grassroots administrative institution that covered the entire area outside the county seat, while market towns were areas of higher levels of urbanization. According to David Faure's definitions, a town in late-imperial China was a settlement that admitted newcomers who might not have the same ancestor with the existing residents, while a village was a settlement that only allowed the offspring of the same ancestor to live there and use common resources.⁶⁰ Qing-era Ba had both types of settlements. Market town communities in Ba were not groups tied by blood. Residents included a large percentage of migrants. A census of Lengshuichang in 1823 showed that residents there had different family names and thus different ancestors.⁶¹ The county government understood the difference between the two settlements. Liu Heng used *chang* (場) and *cun* (村) to refer to the two settlements.⁶² He incorporated both into the *baojia* system and attempted to regulate them in different ways.⁶³ That said, by incorporating charity schools within *baojia*, Liu Heng envisioned a project of charity schools for all. Yet in reality, the establishment of charity schools was only an urban practice.

Since the 1820s, as the court and local officials had wished, charity schools flourished in Ba County. The endorsement of the government helped increase the number of charity schools. Yet the school expansion did not proceed in accordance with the government's plans. The official intervention was indirect though not negligible. There was no effective formal mechanism for the government to sponsor, regulate and supervise the schools. Almost all of the charity schools were locally funded and should not be

⁵⁹ “乾隆三十八年一月二十六日彭正明稟” (Report from Peng Zhengming on February 17, 1773), *QJD* (2), 201; “乾隆三十八年二月八日彭正明稟” (Report from Peng Zhengming on February 28, 1773), *QJD* (2), 201.

⁶⁰ David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 4–5.

⁶¹ “道光三年十一月冷水场户口册自然构成统计表” (The Statistical Table on the Natural Composition of the Population of Lengshuichang in December 1823), *QJD* (2), 330.

⁶² *YLYY*, 22.

⁶³ *YLYY*, 19–26.

regarded as official institutions. In addition, the network of these subcounty-level schools did not realize the government's vision of education for all. They were only found in the more urbanized areas.

Reproposing Subcounty Schools in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

Around 1850, both the court and Sichuan Province once again addressed the significance of subcounty-level schools. Moral transformation had been a recurring theme in central and provincial education policies. In 1849, Xu Zechun (1787–1858), the governor of Sichuan, instructed local officials to investigate and revive all subcounty schools. In Xu's understanding, "the priority of governance is to guide the common folk to practice [goodness]. Establishing village schools is the priority of promoting [moral] practices."⁶⁴ For Xu, moral education served a practical end. In 1850, Xu Zechun revealed what motivated him to promote subcounty-level schools:

There have been several times more homicide and robbery cases in Sichuan than in other provinces. There have also been many other crimes, such as murders sparked by adultery (因姦謀命), which have been unusual in other provinces. The ultimate explanation is that village schools are not widespread, and thus there is no way to transform and guide [the customs in Sichuan] and eradicate the existing evil customs.⁶⁵ Therefore, last year (1849), I, as the provincial governor, ordered local authorities to investigate and restore village schools.⁶⁶

In Xu's view, moral transformation served a practical end. It was the solution to the increasing crimes in Sichuan. To restore the imperial-Confucian social order, widespread moral education needed to be carried out in subcounty schools.

Xu's textbook choice also highlighted moral education. He ordered subcounty schools to use *Comprehensive Instructions in the Sacred Edicts* (聖諭廣訓) and *Records of Seeking for Disasters and Fortune on One's Own* (禍福自求錄) as textbooks. The

⁶⁴ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 15.

⁶⁵ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 15.

⁶⁶ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 15.

latter was compiled by Xu himself, using stories of karma to stimulate people to embody Confucian goodness.⁶⁷

At the same time that Xu promoted school restoration, the court readdressed moral transformation in order to target heterodox religious activities. On January 13, 1851, the Xianfeng emperor (r. 1850–1861) blamed local officials for their failure in education:

In recent years, heterodox teachings have been prevalent throughout the provinces. At the very beginning, those teachings just committed extortion through incense burning and incited the ignorant folk. After a while, [those teachings] gradually developed into assemblies making trouble. The problem is ultimately caused by local officials' negligence on [moral] transformation and guidance. Meanwhile, fathers, elder brothers, teachers, and seniors at the grassroots (民間) have failed to teach [their subordinates] all the time.⁶⁸

In this sense, provincial governor Xu and the Xianfeng emperor shared the view that moral transformation would lead to good behaviour. The emperor had the vision that if everyone could be familiar with the morality book *Comprehensive Instructions in the Sacred Edicts*, “heterodox teachings will be transformed without official bans.”⁶⁹

Under the call from the province, the district magistrate Jueluoxiang conducted a survey of charity schools. It is difficult to ascertain Jueluoxiang's exact motives in promoting charity schools. Nevertheless, the survey questions showed that he did not aim to use charity schools to advance morality and restore social order. Questions that could help evaluate the quality of moral education, such as textbooks, the students' behaviors, and teaching methods, did not concern the magistrate.⁷⁰ Later two surveys by the successors of Jueluoxiang during the 1850s showed similar characteristics.⁷¹ Unlike the court and higher-level officials, local officials did not pursue moral transformation.

⁶⁷ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 15.

⁶⁸ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 21.

⁶⁹ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 21.

⁷⁰ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 17.

⁷¹ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 79, 86.

Instead, managerial procedure and school property were more significant factors for the county government. The survey asked about the situation of school managers, tutors, and school funds and expenditures. In fact, the emphasis on management and property over moral education conformed to the local point of view on the nature of charity schools. At the local level, charity schools were not a tool used by the state to fulfill its project of cultural uniformity. How did the local community understand and operate these schools?

Local Motives

Community leaders and school trustees commonly used two phrases to refer to charity schools—“good deeds” (善舉) and “communal/public affairs” (公事). The two phrases indeed reflected what charity schools looked like in the eyes of local school promoters; they highlighted the schools’ charitable nature and their role as community centers. For the community, charity schools were local institutions through which society provided community service and managed communal affairs.

Above all, charity schools in Ba took poverty alleviation as their primary goal. Two families who funded a charity school in 1836 claimed that their aim was to “teach children from poor families.”⁷² In a similar manner, the school promoters from Fengshengchang also maintained that they built schools in order to help children from poor families get education in 1872.⁷³ The local emphasis on poverty alleviation lasted until the last years of the Qing era. In a 1903 case, school boards from Xinglongchang interpreted the aim of the governmental endorsement of charity schools during the 1820s as the “cultivation of poor children.”⁷⁴

The organization of charity schools was similar to that of folk charities. Angela Leung has characterized institutionalized charities as possessing two points: formalized

⁷² *BX*, 6-23-1116: 1.

⁷³ *BX*, 6-23-1229: 1.

⁷⁴ *BX*, 6-6-6085: 8.

revenue and the establishment of a management system.⁷⁵ Charity schools in Ba County had both.

The major types of their start-up funds, as shown in Appendix A, included donations and existing collective property. Although the major start-up funds of charity schools were provisional donations and temporary aid from collective property, funding for schools was in fact stable. On the contrary, most schools relied on fixed-rent income from real estate investment. There was also one case in which the school used interest charges on loans to support its budget. In other words, charity schools in Ba had formal and regular revenue to sustain themselves.

In addition to regular income, the schools adopted commonly used managerial methods of folk charitable institutions (善堂): the rotating presidency system (輪值, or 輪管) and the board system (首事, or 首人). Under the rotating presidency system, the school had a fixed group of managers. They took charge of school affairs in turn. During the handover of leadership, they settled accounts. From school to school, there were slight differences in the rotating presidency system. For example, in Hongwen Charity School, the management group was formed by donors and their offspring, while in Taihe Charity School and in Jiangjiachang, school managers were selected by the community.⁷⁶ Yet the basic form remained the same. Under the board system, one or more people served as managers for limited terms. In the case of Ti'en Charity School, for example, an elite group represented the community and selected two students from official Confucian schools as school managers every three years.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, some smaller-scale charity schools operated as *shanhui* (善會), charitable associations. Many *shanhui* during the late imperial era had no physical offices.⁷⁸ Charity schools in Mudong Town, Longyinchang and Xinfachang, for example,

⁷⁵ Angela Leung, 施善与教化 (Benevolence and Conversion) (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2013), 101–12.

⁷⁶ *BX*, 6-6-6069: 11; 6-23-1231; 6-33-5967: 1.

⁷⁷ *BX*, 6-6-6024.

⁷⁸ Angela Leung, 施善与教化, 161.

did not have school buildings either. Instead of teaching children in classrooms, these schools directly gave the poor families educational funds. They were encouraged to use the money to get entry-level education from private schools or tutors nearby.⁷⁹ Lower-class Confucian scholars also benefited. The charity school in Xiemachang directly paid salaries to private tutors nearby.⁸⁰

In addition, the development of market towns was also the purpose of the establishment of charity schools. When a Confucian scholar from Changyanping proposed establishing a charity school in 1865, he admitted that the impetus to build the school was that “market towns nearby all had charity schools, while Changyanping still had many poor residents who need relief.”⁸¹ In some relatively affluent market towns, charity schools functioned as social organizations that manage funds for the market town community. In Lujiaochang, for example, part of the fixed income of the charity schools was saved as the charitable granary “in case natural disasters appear and the residents might have a hard time surviving.”⁸² In Jielongchang, when there was a budget surplus of the charity school in 1875, the school boards (學董) used the money to renovate the Wantian Temple, where the local deity Lord of Rivers (川主) was worshipped.⁸³

From a local perspective, charity schools were not the extension of official schools established for the purpose of morality transformation, but organizations that aimed to provide financial aid to the poor and help better develop the local community.

⁷⁹ *BX*, 6-6-6077: 4, 6, 11; 6-6-6111: 8–9.

⁸⁰ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 29.

⁸¹ *BX*, 6-23-1216: 1.

⁸² *BX*, 6-4-1142: 39.

⁸³ *BX*, 6-34-6026: 6. For a discussion on the close relationship between the worship of the Lord of Rivers and the self-identity of Sichuanese people, and on the significant role of this worship in the integration of the immigrant society in Sichuan, see Wang Dongjie, 国中的异乡——近代四川的文化、社会与地方认同 (A Foreign Land Within the Country: Culture, Society and the Local Identity in the Modern Sichuan) (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2016), 47–57.

Conclusion: Building the Same Charity Schools for Different Reasons

There was a clear gap between central and local motives in promoting charity schools. Throughout the nineteenth century, though established under the local government's call, none of charity schools in Ba was underwritten or operated by the state. Other than symbolic endorsement, the government's influence on the operation of charity schools was if not negligible. While the court and higher-level officials tried to use school expansion to select bureaucrats and advance moral education, their aims were not the concerns of local school promoters. Instead, communities sponsored and operated charity schools for the purpose of poverty relief and communal interests.

Even though the state and community had different motives, a countywide network of charity schools was established during the nineteenth century. The gap did not result in any real conflicts between the state and community during the nineteenth century. Both sides recognized the benefits of building subcounty schools and tolerated each other's different purposes.

Chapter Two.

Local Dynamics in the School Expansion

Scholars have used subcounty schools to shed light on the rise of local power in the process of building schools.⁸⁴ This chapter builds on this thread of scholarship by providing a microscopic study of local society. The chapter shows that subcounty society was not a monolithic whole. Various groups intervened in the process of building and running charity schools.

Historian Liang Yong has noticed that a large part of the communal property of market towns in Ba belonged to temples and temple associations (*miaohui*). Accordingly, the managerial system of communal property was based on temple heads (*miaoshou*) and association heads (*huishou*) as the management core.⁸⁵ Liang thinks that the decline of temples and temple associations in local society began in the last decade of the Qing Dynasty, when the court initiated educational reforms that instructed community leaders to use temple property to build new-style schools. As a result of the reforms, Liang argues, the temple-association system lost its control over the local society and communal property. It was replaced by an administrative education system centred on school trustees.⁸⁶

While Liang points out the rupture between communal property systems and local power before and after the New Policies, this chapter explores the continuity between the two. I start with an investigation of the institutional competition between temples and charity schools, showing that there was indeed a trend to transform temples into schools

⁸⁴ Angela Leung, "Elementary Education in the Lower Yangtze Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," 381–416; Sarah Schneewind, *Community Schools and the State in Ming China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

⁸⁵ Liang Yong, "清末‘庙产兴学’与乡村权势的转移——以巴县为中心" ('Build Schools with Temple Property' in the Late Qing Era and the Shifts of Rural Power: A Case Study Focusing on Baxian), *Shehuixue yanjiu*, no. 1 (2008): 103–106.

⁸⁶ Liang Yong, "清末‘庙产兴学’与乡村权势的转移," 102–119.

during the nineteenth century. I then shift to analyze the rise of middle- and lower-class Confucianists and school trustees in the local society during the nineteenth century.

Building Charity Schools as Anti-Clericalist Practices

The earliest recorded charity school in Ba County was originally a Buddhist temple in the market town Zhongxingchang. The temple was donated by several wealthy households (糧戶 in the original text, meaning taxpayers) and managed by the Buddhist monk Faying. According to local gentry (紳士) from Zhongxingchang, in 1814, Faying violated monastic rules by stealing. He also pawned the land property of the temple for personal gain. Because Faying was the manager and not the owner of the temple, his pawning was illegal. The gentry urged the county government to expel the Buddhist monk. Meanwhile, maintaining that the temple was too remote to supervise, and that it would be hard to ensure that similar cases would not happen again, the gentry proposed to transform the temple into a subcounty school that served the market town. As for the pawned farmland, they showed willingness to redeem it in order to sustain the school with the rental income.⁸⁷

This transformation was opposed by eight monks. Another person accused the gentry in the name of a temple abbot. With the exception of the monks, all the other people involved in the case were on the side of the Confucianists and expressed their support for the establishment of the charity school. The magistrate authorized the transformation at the gentry's first proposal. The local militia heads (團約) claimed that someone had stolen the abbot's name and then falsely accused the Confucianists. In addition, Faying's creditors voluntarily transferred their claims to the school. The eight monks eventually agreed to the transformation as well. The charity school was then established as the gentry had proposed. One of the gentry members became the first school trustee.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ *BX*, 6-3-585: 3.

⁸⁸ *BX*, 6-3-585: 3.

The Zhongxingchang charity school was not an isolated case where the school was built with temple property and temple space. The Zhao family established Tanhua Temple and employed a monk to manage it. After the monk violated some regulations, the Zhaos expelled the monk, transformed the temple into a charity school and employed another lay manager (看司).⁸⁹ Hongwen Charity School was built with temple property as well. Fourteen people, including a *jiansheng* (監生), Student in the Directorate of Education by Purchase, bought the temple property in 1862 and built Hongwen. The *jiansheng* became one of the first school board members.⁹⁰

In fact, the school establishment itself did not conflict with the maintenance of temples. On the contrary, there was a long tradition in imperial China to use temple spaces for communal education. The Song-era official and poet Fan Zhongyan (989–1052), who lived in a poor family as a child, used to study in a temple.⁹¹ In nineteenth-century Ba County, temples were still common places to set up schools. In Shizichang, the charity school established in 1826 was established in a temple where there were shrines for Wenchang, Guandi, and Confucius.⁹² An 1872 document showed that a charity school had run for years at Sansheng Temple.⁹³

Confucian scholar Zhu Tingchen commented that “people are establishing schools in temples everywhere” after his proposal of further expanding the school was rejected by the monks.⁹⁴ If Zhu’s words might include bias, there was another incident that happened in 1865. The district magistrate at that time denied a group of Confucianists’ request to establish a school at Yuhuang Temple. Nevertheless, he still commented that “it is normal to build schools in temples.”⁹⁵ Since the magistrate had denied the proposal, he had no

⁸⁹ *BX*, 6-6-39059.

⁹⁰ *BX*, 6-6-6069.

⁹¹ Xiao Peng, 宋词通史 (The Comprehensive History of Song-era Poetry) (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2013), 158.

⁹² *BX*, 6-6-6033.

⁹³ *BX*, 6-23-1117.

⁹⁴ *BX*, 6-23-1117.

⁹⁵ *BX*, 6-23-1246.

reason to claim the prevalence of the practice of building schools in temples if it was not true.

Therefore, it was reasonable for the Zhongxingchang gentry, the Zhao family, and the *jiansheng* to establish charity schools in temples. What is noteworthy in these cases is that at the same time they set up schools, they abolished temples, expelled monks and no longer invited or employed Buddhist priests as administrators of the schools and school property.

In these examples from nineteenth-century Ba County, the transformations from temples to charity schools were all locally led. This community-driven approach was in contrast with state-led temple-for-school projects in other periods. In the sixteenth-century Ming, there were at least forty officials who actively promoted voluntary community schools while knocking down the cults they regarded as improper.⁹⁶ During the twentieth century, the Qing court and the Nationalist government again regarded temples as the solution to the funding shortage for subcounty elementary schools.⁹⁷ These state-led projects in the sixteenth and twentieth century were respectively accompanied by the state's spreading of propaganda against the improper shrines (淫祀) and against superstition (迷信).⁹⁸ According to the anti-*yinsi* and anti-*mixin* ideology, those religious institutions which did not go according to the state's aim of state building had no reason to exist.

In contrast, the locally-led abolition of the temples and the managerial role of Buddhist priests in the nineteenth-century Ba was not fundamental; it was not driven by any philosophy or belief that advocated schools over temples and Confucianists over Buddhists.

⁹⁶ Sarah Schneewind, "Competing Institutions: Community Schools and 'Improper Shrines' in Sixteenth Century China," *Late Imperial China* 20, no. 1 (1999): 87.

⁹⁷ Vincent Goossaert, "1898: The Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion?," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65, no. 2 (2006): 307–308.

⁹⁸ Sarah Schneewind, "Competing Institutions;" Vincent Goossaert, "1898."

In the cases of Miaolang Temple and Tanhua Temple, school builders needed to justify the deprivation of the monks' property management qualifications by playing up the monks' wrongdoing. Meanwhile, in the cases of Miaolang and Hongwen, as the school builders were not the property owners, they transformed the farmland that belonged to the temples into school property through normal transactions; they bought the property instead of confiscating it. That said, nineteenth-century Ba County lacked similar ideologies to the anti-*yinsi* and anti-*mixin* ideas that could endorse the transformation from temples to schools. Otherwise the transformation would have been justified even if the monks did not commit crimes and they did not pay for the temple property.

The hostility towards Buddhist temples and priests in fact existed at the time in the intellectual world. Historian Vincent Goossaert has pointed out that Confucian fundamentalism and anticlericalism had been the discursive trend regarding religion in the mental world of the late-imperial intellectuals before the Wuxu Reform in 1898. Confucian fundamentalists rejected “all ideas and practices absent from the Confucian canonical scriptures,” while anticlericalists opposed the institutionalization of Buddhism and Daoism, especially the clergy who “lived off liturgical services.”⁹⁹ Although the scriptures of Buddhism and Daoism were still revered, hostility toward the two religions prevailed among Confucian scholars and imperial bureaucrats way earlier than the anti-superstition trend dominating the ideological sphere during the twentieth century.¹⁰⁰

Goossaert deems that despite the prevalence of Confucian fundamentalism and anticlericalism, unlike later anti-superstition policies, imperial religious ideas were not areligious and had not led to iconoclasm on the ground. Instead, the Qing bureaucrats and intellectuals held these ideas only to improve Chinese religion by returning it to a Confucian-centered and scripture-based version.¹⁰¹ Yet in the Ba County cases at the grassroots, different from Goossaert's discoveries on the higher-level classes, the

⁹⁹ Vincent Goossaert, “1898,” 308.

¹⁰⁰ Vincent Goossaert, “1898,” 317–320.

¹⁰¹ Goossaert, “1898,” 325–26.

practices of Confucian fundamentalism and anticlericalism preceded the general acceptance of the ideas. In three cases in Ba County that I have discovered, the community expelled monks and abolished temples, which would not have been necessary if one only wished to set up schools. Meanwhile, none of the parties justified their abolition with anticlerical ideas.

The Ba cases thus show that there was a tendency to abolish temples and weaken the status of the Buddhist priests without the popularization of Confucian fundamentalist and anticlerical ideas. This tendency might have eventually developed into a mass base for the anti-superstition movement later in the twentieth century, but this topic needs further exploration and is beyond the scope of this thesis.

After the transformation from temples to schools, the managerial system of communal property changed. The Buddhist priests could no longer intervene. Local Confucianists and school board members began to have more control over the managerial procedures.

The Popularization of Grassroots Confucianists' Values

Angela Leung has discovered that the development of Chinese charitable organizations in the nineteenth century represented the interests of middle- and lower-class Confucianists. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the population increased significantly. The number of students whose lives were centered on Confucian classics and the civil service exam also increased. But as places nominated for imperial examinations stayed the same, there were more and more students who were not paid back with a career in the bureaucratic system and good economic conditions. The development of charitable organizations during this period promoted the values advocated by this new stratum, such as the worship of Lord Wenchang, and praise for chaste widows. In addition to highlighting the ideology of this class, charity organizations at this stage were no longer geographically limited to larger cities. They began to spread to smaller communities away from regional centers of culture and politics. The middle- and lower-class Confucianists active in these communities directly intervened in the

fundraising and managerial procedures of charities. Their increasing participation in communal affairs made them an important social force in local society.¹⁰²

Leung's research on charitable organizations does not specifically investigate charity schools. Charity schools were one of the institutions that gave middle- and lower-class Confucianists respectable jobs. The development of charity schools in Ba County helped to promote their authoritative status in grassroots society and the values they promoted.

Limited by the sources, for now it is unknown what percentage of the donors and managers of charity schools were middle- and lower-class Confucianists and to what extent they had influence on school affairs; in many charity schools, the documents do not specify the identities of the stakeholders. To illustrate the middle- and lower-class Confucianists' increasing influence on charity schools and communal affairs, this section first investigates several cases about *tongsheng* (童生), the group who had participated in but failed the entry examinations for the official Confucian schools and did not obtain the lowest-level imperial examination merit of *shengyuan* (生員).

Most of the charity school tutors were middle- and lower-class scholars. They were the direct beneficiaries of school expansion. Charity schools not only helped the poor families who could not afford education, but also *hanshi* (寒士), poor scholars who could not support themselves. The charity school in Tuqiaochang, for example, employed *tongsheng* Luo Jiamo as the tutor.¹⁰³ Most of the time, primary sources did not record the identities of tutors. Yet these omissions indirectly show that literati who had not obtained any titles accounted for a large proportion of employed tutors; for those who had obtained examination merits, the documents usually mentioned their names and merit titles. Those who had not been mentioned were more likely to be the lower-class scholars. In addition to increasing employment opportunities, private tutors, who were usually lower-class

¹⁰² Angela Leung, 施善与教化, 171–239, 314–318.

¹⁰³ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 50.

scholars, also benefited from school expansion. The charity school in Xiemachang, for example, directly paid money to private tutors nearby.¹⁰⁴

In addition to tutors, *tongsheng* also affected the managerial procedures of charity schools. For example, during 1860–1863, *tongsheng* Cen Kechang managed the charity school in Dayachang. Cen was responsible for the school’s revenue and expenditures, expenses including teachers’ salaries, sacrifices in springs and autumns, taxes, and school renovation.¹⁰⁵ From this position of influence, the *tongsheng* drove some local changes in who could participate and what values were important.

Above all, the literati regarded school affairs as their exclusive duties. In 1892, He Langxuan, a student of martial arts (武童), accused Li Chunxi and Zeng Jiayan of embezzling funds from Dihua Charity School. Li was a student who had not earned any merit title. Zeng was a *shengyuan* who had passed the entry examination of county-level Confucian School. During the trial that followed, Li and He maintained that students of martial arts should stay away from school affairs.¹⁰⁶

In addition to the *tongsheng*’s increasing participation in school affairs, the ideology behind the expansion of charity schools also reflected the rise to power of middle- and lower-class Confucianists. When building and running a school, Confucianists regarded student status as a good thing for the community and the interests of scholars as the interests of the community. This set of values were shown by the earliest case of subcounty-level publicly funded school I have found in the county government archives. In 1814, the local gentry group from Zhongxingchang proposed establishing a charity school. When reporting their motives to the district magistrate, they claimed that “most of the residents are farmers here, while students are few” (耕者多而

¹⁰⁴ *BX*, 6-4-1142: 29.

¹⁰⁵ *BX*, 6-23-1228: 3.

¹⁰⁶ *BX*, 6-34-6077: 15.

讀者少), and that “it is of great benefits to the locality (地方) to turn rural people (鄉民) into good scholars.”¹⁰⁷

In this case, the glory of the community was not about the success of local residents in imperial examinations, but the promotion of education and the increase of the number of scholars. That is to say, these scholars were expressing the idea that all members among the group of scholars were worthy of respect. As scholars who were active in a small local community rather than the regional center Chongqing City, they have elevated their status through their words, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

It was not only Confucianists who equated the construction of charity schools with the interests of their own and of the community. In addition to scholars, various local groups were devoted themselves to school building. Appendix A shows cases where two schools were funded by a migrant businessman and a woman respectively (no. 1 and 42). The support for schools from various social groups illustrates the popularization of the values of Confucianists.

The Rise to Power of School Trustees

Historian Liang Yong reveals the emergence of school trustees as a new class during the New Policies Reform (1901–1911).¹⁰⁸ Yet the Ba County archives show that the school board system had been a commonly adopted method to run charity schools since their birth around 1820. One or more trustees, usually selected by prestigious residents in the community, served as managers for limited terms of office. That said, school trustees had been actively participating in local affairs way earlier than Liang has shown.

Is it then sound to maintain that school trustees emerged as a new class during the expansion of charity schools in the nineteenth century? The answer is no. School trustees

¹⁰⁷ “嘉庆十九年五月二十三日巴县申文” (An Upward Report by Ba County on July 10, 1814), *QJD*, 58.

¹⁰⁸ Liang Yong, “清末‘庙产兴学’与乡村权势的转移,” 102–119.

did not become a uniform social force. They had different backgrounds and identities, from Confucian scholars to wealthy businessmen.¹⁰⁹ They participated in school affairs with different motives and aims. Some saw it as a thankless task, while others used this position for personal gains.¹¹⁰ The operating conditions of charity schools and the power of school trustees also differed greatly. In addition, school trustees served their own schools and communities, and did not form any cross-community groups.

What role did they play in the community? How did their emergence change the local power dynamics? The complexities of school trustees prevent us from any hasty generalized answers. I present below a few specific cases of subcounty-level charity schools before answering these questions. I use italics to mark the locations and time periods of the cases:

The 2nd Jia, Lian Li (1796–1866). During the Jiaqing era (1796–1820), Liu Wenlin established a charity school with the Liu family’s real estate, the house being surrounded by Liu’s farmland. To sustain the school, Liu Wenlin also earmarked a piece of farmland with an annual rent income of 20 dan of rice as the school property. The school’s main expenses included teachers’ salaries, taxes, and maintenance of the building. When the rental income of the school land was not enough to cover expenses, Liu Wenlin paid with his own money. The school was initially run by the Liu family. In 1866, Liu Chengmei, the grandson of Liu Wenlin, entrusted the management rights of the charity school to a Confucian scholar. At the same time, Liu Chengmei sold the farmland surrounding the charity school to a non-family member. The Confucianist, as the school trustee, was worried that the property boundary was not clearly defined, so he reported the transaction to the district magistrate and asked for “erecting a monument that records the boundary and setting the school regulations.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ For an example of scholars being the trustees, see *BX*, 6-23-1228; For an example of businessmen being the trustees, see *BX*, 6-34-6026.

¹¹⁰ For former, see *BX*, 6-23-1231; for the latter, see *BX*, 6-6-39059.

¹¹¹ *BX*, 6-5-1232.

Shizichang (1819–1887). In 1819, a different Liu family established a private school that provided education exclusively to their own children. In 1826, during the first wave of the establishment of charity schools throughout the county, the Liu family donated a piece of farmland and transformed the private school into a charity school, which was accessible to the children from Shizichang. Despite the provision of services to the whole market town, after the charity school's establishment, the operation and management of the school remained under the control of the Liu family for half a century. It was not until 1875 that Liu Zesan turned the management rights over to the community. The group of prestigious community members of Shizichang then selected two trustees for the school, whose term of office was six years.

By the time of the second board change, however, the trustees got involved in disputes with the donor Liu family. In 1887, Liu Zesan charged one of the then board members Ning with embezzlement. After investigation and trial, the county government did not convict Ning. In fact, during his term of office, Ning even paid for the school's renovation out of his own pocket. After the case was closed, the district magistrate admonished Liu Zesan that "although you're the descendant of the donor, you should not cast greedy eyes over the property your ancestors had already donated."¹¹²

Dayachang (1852–1864). The charity school in Dayachang was founded in 1852 by several Confucian scholars, a woman and her son. Since its establishment, the school had been managed by a designated trustee. In 1864, considering that some of the founders and witnesses had passed away, after a discussion with the donors, a Confucian scholar asked the local elite group to select new school trustees. Two wealthy landowners were selected.¹¹³

The 3rd Jia, Zheng Li (1862–1881). Hongwen Charity School was donated by several families together in 1862. Among the donors, the Wang family led by Wang Junze played a major part. Wang Junze became one of the first school board members. Zhang Ruichuan, a *jiansheng* who gained the title of the Confucian scholar by purchase,

¹¹² *BX*, 6-6-6033.

¹¹³ *BX*, 6-23-1228.

claimed that he and his ally financially contributed to the school as well, although the assertion was refuted by Wang. In 1873, Zhang charged Wang, who was still the school trustee at that time, of improperly managing the school. After a trial by the local government, Zhang replaced Wang and became a board member. Later, Wang Junze attempted to sue the new board, which resulted in one trustee's voluntary resignation. Yet Wang did not manage to regain his trustee position. Prestigious members of the community selected another two other people as the new board, neither of which came from the Wang family.¹¹⁴

Guanyin-Jielongchang (1864–1875). In 1826, following a call from local officials, a local lecturer (鄉約) from Guanyinchang raised funds to build a charity school. Ninety-six people donated more than 230 taels of silver yuan and bought real estate. The rental income was used to sustain the charity school. In 1864, thirty-eight years had passed since the establishment of the charity school in Guanyinchang. The school board shut down the school temporarily, claiming that the funds were inadequate for education and charities and thus it would be better to accumulate capital for a while. Knowing the property market well, the trustees reallocated the school assets. They sold several houses, the rent of which had been a major revenue for the school, and then bought a piece of land; according to them, rent was difficult to collect at that time, while it would be more profitable to invest in land.

In 1871, the communal property of another market town, Jielongchang, was consolidated with that of Guanyinchang. Revenue from the rice market, the worshippers' contribution of incense fire money (香火) to Wenchang Temple and to the Buddhist Free Life Pond (放生池), and the rent of several houses at Jielongchang, all became part of the school funds. The same year, in the name of the school, the school board invested six hundred taels of silver into a rotating savings and credit association (錢會); every association member, the charity school included, would pool a fixed amount of silver annually, and they rotated owning and using the common fund. When it was the trustees' turn to take the lump sum, instead of boosting local education, they renovated Wantian

¹¹⁴ BX, 6-6-6069.

Temple, where the local deity Lord of Rivers was worshipped and where the rice market was located. The decision was made in the meeting attended by the board and the headmen of the *lijia* (里甲) system, the imperial administration system, for the household registration and land taxation. Both sides agreed that “we shall rebuild the temple at first. And then we build the academy (書院) with the remaining money if there is any.”¹¹⁵

Year	Place	Income	Investment	Note
1826	Guanyin	Donation of more than 230 taels of silver	Real estate	
1826–1864	Guanyin	Rent income from house property		
1864	Guanyin	House property sold out	Landed estate	School closed down temporarily
1864—	Guanyin	11–12 dan of rice in yearly rent from landed estate		
1871	Jielong	Donation of the local public market with a rice measure (<i>doushi</i>), seven houses also included		
1871	Jielong	Private donation of landed estate		
1871	Guanyin and Jielong		600 silver taels into a local public financial association (<i>qianhui</i>)	
1871—	Jielong	Rent income from the rice measure, house property and landed estate		
1871—	Guanyin and Jielong	Investment return from the financial association		
1875	Jielong			Expenditure on the renovation of the temple Wantian Gong, where the rice market was located
1882	Guanyin		Land property of Yongfeng Temple	
Unclear	Jielong	Income of Wenchang Temple and the Free Life Pond (<i>fangsheng chi</i>)		

Table 1 The Expansion of the Property of the Charity School at Guanyin-Jielongchang

These cases illustrate the complexity of the school board system above all; there was no single uniform model of the trustees’ role in school operation and communal

¹¹⁵ BX, 6-34-6026: 6.

affairs and no uniform purpose to their management. Thus, our discussion on these cases needs to take the specific situations of the localities into consideration.

With regard to the question of the role of the school trustees in local society, the answer depends on the managerial modes of their charity schools, as well as on the influence of the trustees themselves. In Guanyin-Jielongchang, the charity school developed into a communal financial institution in the sense that the school board raised and invested funds and underwrote communal constructions and activities through the school. In this market town, the power of the school board members and no uniform purpose to their management than control educational resources. They operated a large amount of funds, provided a variety of services to the community, and worked with *lijia* heads, the grassroots imperial administrators, to discuss communal affairs. In fact, even if they were not the school trustees, they might still be among the local elites who decided the communal affairs; they had great economic power and had relatives who were higher-level imperial officials.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, Liu Wenlin's school in Lian Li might not be able to make ends meet. The Confucianist who became a trustee after 1866 was only concerned about the preservation and operation of the school property. His work may not have extended beyond the school.

Even though the duties of school trustees varied among schools and localities and they did not form a uniform social force, their emergence in the nineteenth century still changed the local power dynamics, which I describe as a shift from the descendant model to trustee model.

Historian Liang Yong has noticed that the managers of subcounty communal property and the beneficiaries of rent and interest income were often the direct descendants of the donors.¹¹⁷ I call this method of managing communal property and communal affairs the descendant model.

¹¹⁶ *BX*, 6-34-6026.

¹¹⁷ Liang Yong, “清至民初重庆乡村公产的形成及其国家化” (The Formation and Nationalization of Rural Public Property in Chongqing from the Qing Dynasty to the Early Republic of China), *Qingshi yanjiu*, no. 1 (2020): 47–48.

There were many subcounty schools operated by the descendant model. Furen Academy, established in 1862, was managed by Wen Association (文會), which was formed by the donors from different families and their descendants. The association explicitly stated that their school was not an “official academy” (官建書院) and thus should not be regarded as open resources for the people whose families did not fund the academy. Twice a year the academy hosted a religious ceremony and provided a banquet for attendees. While only the donors and the donors’ descendants were eligible to attend the banquet, some residents of the neighborhood impersonated the association members and also attended. The association sued these impostors.¹¹⁸ In addition to this typical case, the above-mentioned three charity schools in Shizichang, Lian Li and Dayachang were initially run by family members and did not cede their management rights of the schools to the community.

In the trustee model, property rights belonged to the community. Donors could not interfere in school affairs directly unless the donors themselves were local leaders or school trustees. In addition, the beneficiaries included members of the whole community. In the case of subcounty schools, for those charity schools that adopted trustee model, the legitimacy of the managers derived not from their identity as descendants of donors, but from the authorization of the community. The beneficiaries went beyond donors and their offspring as well. Students of these schools included children of non-donors. In addition, the school income could be used for community development, such as the maintenance of granaries and local temples.

Local elites from Ershengchang, for example, managed Ti’en Charity School by using the trustee model. After a wealthy resident Zhang Wanyuan donated the school in 1831, local elites designated two students from official schools as school trustees for three years. When it came to the handover, school trustees settled accounts under the supervision from the descendants of the donor and another elite member. The two predecessors then needed to report the name list of the new trustees and accounts to the district magistrate. The archives recorded three handovers from 1887 to 1892. In all

¹¹⁸ *BX*, 6-6-6030:1.

cases, the district magistrate directly approved the reports from the trustees.¹¹⁹ It should be pointed out that details of management varied by schools and regions. The term of office, for instance, was not necessarily three years. In the case of Taihe Charity School, the school board settled accounts and reassigned trustees annually.¹²⁰

Different from family schools and clan schools, schools that used the descendant model as well as the trustee model were open to people from different families and with different surnames. In this sense, both sides could call themselves communal. Donors of the Furen Academy, for example, used community (公) to indicate their in-group benefits; when suing the impostors who attended the banquet, the donors claimed that it was a waste of communal funds (公款). The district magistrate recognized their charges. Nor did the magistrate oppose their claim of communal funds.¹²¹ That said, in nineteenth-century Ba County, “community” was semantically ambiguous. Because Ba County was a migrant society, the community consisted of different families with different ancestors. Yet here was the problem: was the community formed by people from multiple clans obliged to provide resources to newcomers, those who had not made a contribution when the community was established? In the descendant model, it was no, while in the trustee model, it was yes.

This semantic ambiguity had real consequences. In nineteenth-century Ba County, there was no mechanism to ensure that charity schools and other communal property should adopt the trustee model rather than descendant model. Conflicts between the descendants of the donors and the school trustees was common. In Shizichang, after the donor’s descendant gave up management rights of the charity school, he still tried to intervene in school affairs and falsely accused the school trustee of embezzlement. This situation even continued into the early twentieth century. As a local elite from

¹¹⁹ *BX*, 6-6-6024.

¹²⁰ *BX*, 6-6-6070.

¹²¹ *BX*, 6-6-6030:1.

Xinglongchang had observed in 1903, tensions between donors and community that lasted for generations were prevalent, and the ambiguity of “community” was dominant:

In terms of all sorts of charities in Sichuan Province, very often the ancestors donated money, and then later generations got involved in lawsuits. Is it a problem of inheritance? It is in fact a problem of the poorly defined demarcation between *gong* and private (私).¹²²

While this contradiction persisted through the nineteenth century, it was not static. There was a trend to prefer the trustee model over the descendant model. In Shizichang, Lian Li, and Dayachang, the school donors handed over the management rights eventually and theoretically ceased to intervene in school affairs. In the Shizichang dispute, the county government favored the school trustee. In the Lian Li dispute, the non-donors ended up being the trustees.

In addition to the above examples, there was also a case where the school donor took the initiative to explicitly cede property rights. Zhou Bingwen was a businessman who migrated to Ba from Jiangxi Province. When he and his families left Ba for their hometown later on, Zhou donated a schoolhouse for a charitable organization in Liangluchang. Zhou and the charity made a written agreement that Zhou permanently transfer the ownership. In the agreement, they specified that the offspring of Zhou were forbidden to live in the school building.¹²³ In doing so, Zhou attempted to avoid future disputes between his offspring and the community over the property.

In other words, school trustees indeed emerged in nineteenth-century Ba County. Their rise to power did not mean that they formed a unified social force, but the subcounty communities in Ba County began to prefer a managerial model that was more open and accessible for newcomers.

Conclusion: School-ization of Communal Property

¹²² *BX*, 6-6-6085.

¹²³ *BX*, 6-6-6080.

Historian Liang Yong has discovered that by the twentieth century, temples, temple associations and temple heads had become the core of the communal property,¹²⁴ and that the direct descendants of the donors had been the major beneficiaries of the communal property. Yet this chapter shows that that was not the whole story.

Nineteenth-century Ba County witnessed the countywide establishment of charity schools. Limited data means that I do not know to what extent schools replaced temples and temple associations, nor is the proportion of schools in the entire communal property system in nineteenth-century Ba County clear. Yet without a doubt, charity schools had become a significant part of communal property.

The establishment of charity schools was accompanied by the decline of Buddhist clergy and temples, and by the rise to power of the Confucianists' values and the school trustees. In the Qing era, the funds of local institutions usually were not earmarked for specific expenditures. Communities might use the funds of one institution to maintain multiple local endeavours.¹²⁵ In Sichuan Province where Ba County was located, communal property in various forms had been used to support local activities and to pay for various temporary governmental distributions.¹²⁶ In this sense, the expansion of charity schools and its competition with other local institutions were not only about education, but about the managerial method of the community and communal property in general.

The shift from the descendant model to trustee model meant that there was a trend among local school promoters to permit newcomers to share the benefits brought by charity schools. By adopting the more open strategy, according to David Faure's definition that "whether a community evolved into a town or a village depended on the ease with which newcomers could be admitted, given settlement rights, and allowed to

¹²⁴ Liang Yong, "清末'庙产兴学'与乡村权势的转移," 103–106.

¹²⁵ Gong Rufu, "民国时期江西地方公有款产提拨公用纠纷探析" (Disputes on the Confiscation of Communal Property for Public Usage in Republican Jiangxi), *Zhongguo jingjishi yanjiu*, no. 2 (2009): 74.

¹²⁶ Liang Yong, "清末'庙产兴学'与乡村权势的转移," 103–104.

propagate,”¹²⁷ school promoters had chosen a path of urbanization for settlements in Ba County.

School builders’ choices were both the cause and effect of the migrant society of Ba County. Most charity schools were established in market towns, relatively urbanized areas in which many new migrants settled. The management of communal property and local affairs in market towns were different from that of single-name villages. The lineage-centric approach to operate a community, which was widespread in South China, was not applicable in Ba County. The migrant society needed a more open strategy. As a result of the shift from the descendant model to trustee model, the local society of Ba County was more friendly to newcomers, which contributed to further urbanization.

¹²⁷ David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*, 4

Epilogue: Building Schools for the State with the Schools of the Community

During the nineteenth century, the court, higher-level officials, local officials, and the local community of Ba County promoted charity schools for different reasons. They tolerated each other's different agendas. As a result, a countywide network of charity schools was established. In this process, charity schools became a significant way to operate communal property and manage local affairs but with different results in different localities.

When it came to the New Policies reform (1901–1911), the court initiated a project of establishing new-style elementary schools across China. The new-style education was supposed to be a systematic school system divided into stages from kindergartens to universities and include modern science and vocational education as the educational content. The court's emphasis on the quantity of the new-style schools made the New Policies a costly reform. The performance of district magistrates was judged by the numbers of new-style schools established in the counties they governed.¹²⁸ This shift meant that the gap in motives that had not previously caused trouble began to cause conflict between the government and community with these later reforms.

Several documents from the late Guangxu era (1875–1908) reveal the conflicts. In their report about the educational reform to the county government, the market town heads of Qiaopingchang commented about their motives to carry out the reform and build new-style elementary schools: “There were too few wealthy people and too many poor families in Qiaoping. The latter could not afford any education.” The district magistrate, on the other hand, refuted their interpretation of the reform: “According to the Authorized Preschool Regulations, new schools were aimed at the cultivation of talents and advancement of intellects. It is not meant to support poor people and exempt them from

¹²⁸ *NBX*, 218: 1–6.

tuition.”¹²⁹ Another case occurred in 1906, when a gentry member from Huxichang proposed direct financial aid for children from poor families instead of the establishment of more costly new-style schools. The Bureau of Educational Affairs (學務局) turned the proposal down and commented: “It is incomprehensible to aid everybody with the limited public funds.”¹³⁰ Meanwhile, lower-class tutors also lost out. In 1903, the district magistrate instructed the gentry group from Changshengchang that “there was no need to consider the salaries of the poor literati (寒士) in vain without being far-sighted.”¹³¹ While community leaders continued to prioritize subcounty schools over other charitable institutions, magistrates refused to accept the local vision of charity schools.

This shift in the government’s attitude showed the tension between the state and society that had existed since the nineteenth century. For the local government, because of the absence of subcounty finance, it had to rely on the community to promote local construction. The government cooperated with the community by allowing the latter autonomy in building and operating charity schools. On the other hand, the cooperation allowed the local government the possibility of tightening its policies and intervening into local affairs through a tougher approach. When the local government was faced with financial shortages and pressure from higher-level bureaucrats during the late-Qing reforms, they no longer tolerated diverse reasons for building schools.

For the local community, on the one hand, when promoting local development, they sought official endorsement to legitimate their practices. In the process of building subcounty schools, the government sometimes worked as an arbitrator. Fuyuan Charity School, for example, had been run for thirty-one years before the school board reported the school’s existence to the county government; they reported this only because the school became involved in economic disputes, and the school board needed the government to be an arbitrator and their supporter.¹³² On the other hand, the community

¹²⁹ *BX*, 6-56-1309: 1.

¹³⁰ *BX*, 6-6-5964: 15.

¹³¹ *BX*, 6-6-6111: 10.

¹³² *BX*, 6-18-1143.

also tried to maintain a distance from the government to prevent the local resources from being plundered by the latter. When market town heads reported the situation of the charity schools to the magistrate in the 1850–51 survey, many of them specified that “there was no remaining money.”¹³³ In the 1902 survey, a similar situation happened again.¹³⁴

In the late-Qing reforms, the government did not allow local groups to establish schools in the way the latter wanted. Meanwhile, it attempted to transform subcounty schools into state property, which was part of what historian Liang Yong calls the process of nationalization of communal property.¹³⁵ In Ba County, the government’s strategy was to rely on the charity school network, both financially and institutionally.

When Ba County began to carry out the educational reform in 1902, the first thing the county government did was to instruct the heads of every market town to survey and report their communal property, the income and expense of the existing subcounty schools, of which charity schools were the major proportion.¹³⁶ Some of the subcounty schools were directly transformed into new-style elementary schools,¹³⁷ and even continued into the Republican era as official schools.¹³⁸ In addition, charity schools also laid the institutional foundation for the nationalization of communal property. The network of market town, which was the basis of charity schools yet not part of the formal system of the Qing-era grassroots administration, became the unit upon which the county government carried out the reform. The survey of communal property, and the establishment of new-style elementary schools in Ba was all based on market towns. When it came to the Republican era, grassroots administrative units overlapped very much with the network of market towns in the Qing Dynasty.¹³⁹

¹³³ *BX*, 6-4-1142

¹³⁴ *BX*, 6-6-6111.

¹³⁵ Liang Yong, “清至民初重庆乡村公产的形成及其国家化,” 51–55.

¹³⁶ *BX*, 6-6-6111.

¹³⁷ *BX*, 6-6-6111; 6-6-5971.

¹³⁸ *MGZ*, 7: 19–20.

¹³⁹ *MGZ*, 2: 23–26.

The interdependency between the state control and the local autonomy characterized the local governance and politics in the Qing dynasty. On the one side, the state bureaucracy was endeavoring to ensure “its share of society’s resources” and the imperial social order. On the other side, local social units were capable to manage “its internal affairs according to its own procedures and using its own people.”¹⁴⁰ When the modern Chinese state arose in the late Qing, it invented new techniques to mobilize broader public participation beyond the local communities, so that it could access and allocate more social resources into the expensive state making and impose the new social order that was compatible with the more aggressive state agenda than merely the maintenance of social stability — the growth of economic and national power.¹⁴¹

The late-Qing imperial courts and the later party-states devoted themselves in reallocating ritual consumption and investment in spiritual powers from individual households and local organizations into the modernization project of the nation-state. Qing court, an imperial royal family that mainly economically relied on a fixed quota of tax, transformed into modern governments which needed to mobilize local resources as much as possible to build the state. The later temple-for-school policies and anti-superstitious campaigns illustrated that the strengthening state aimed to access and use resources from grassroots societies more effectively. Why this temple-for-school approach was imaginable and feasible for the arising state to obtain more resources? This thesis shows that the establishment and development of subcounty schools paralleled the process during which *chang*, the standard market towns, became a means of relating the local self-governance to the state building. The state did not create a new way to mobilize local resources. Instead, it was able to take the advantage of the established fluidity between the private, the public, and the official spheres, which had been set up through the school expansion since the mid-Qing era.

¹⁴⁰ Philip Kuhn, “Local Self-Government under the Republic: Problems of Control, Autonomy, and Mobilization,” in *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China*, ed. Frederic Wakeman and Carolyn Grant (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 258.

¹⁴¹ Kuhn, “Local Self-government”, 269.

It can be said that the history of charity schools in Ba County during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a history of the formation of local communal property of a migrant society, the promotion of urbanization and the property's eventual nationalization in the twentieth century.

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- JQSCTZ Chang Ming, ed. 四川通志 (Provincial gazetteer of Sichuan). (1816 Edition).
- MGZ Zhu Zhihong and Xiang Chu, ed. 巴縣志 (Gazetteer for Ba County). (1939 Edition).
- NBX Nanchong Municipal Archives, ed. 清代四川南部縣衙門檔案 (The Archives of Nanbu County from the Qing Dynasty). Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2016.
- QJD Sichuan Archives and History Department of Sichuan University, ed. 清代乾嘉道巴縣檔案選編 (A selection of Baxian Archives from 1736 to 1851). Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 1989.
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- TZZ Huo Weifen, ed. 巴縣志 (Gazetteer for Ba County). (1867 Edition).
- XZQS Su'erna et al., comps. 欽定學政全書 [The Authorized Collection of Regulations on Schools and Examinations]. 1775. Reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.
- YLYY Liu Heng. 庸吏庸言·下 (Ordinary Speeches from an Ordinary Bureaucrat (vol. 2)). Suzhou: Jiangsu shuju, 1868.

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Appendix A.

The Establishment of Charity Schools in Ba County

No.	Location	Founding year	Start-up funds	Sources
1	Tanhua Temple, Shuangshengchang	1736–1796	Donation (from a migrant)	<i>TZZ</i> , 2: 41; <i>MGZ</i> , 7:20.
2	Zoumachang	1796–1820	Donations (initiated by local elites)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 36.
3	Tianzichang, the 6th Jia, Ci Li	1796–1820	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 35.
4	Fengshengchang	1796–1820	Donations	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 43.
5	Longyin Town	1814–1819	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 29; <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 21.
6	Zhongxingchang	1814	Penalty and confiscatory income (from a local temple)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 55; 6-3-585; <i>QJD</i> , 57–58; <i>TZZ</i> , 2: 39. <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 19.
7	Tongguan Station	1815	Donations (from three <i>tuan</i>)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 27.
8	Huxichang	1817	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 27.
9	Xiemachang	1817	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 29.
10	Lengshuichang	1818	Donations	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 26.
11	Mudong Town	1819	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 42; <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 20.
12	Xinglongchang	1821	Collective property (of Wenchang Temple Association)	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6085.
13	Daozuo Temple, the 2nd Jia, Jie Li (Yinlongchang)	1821–1835		<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 41.
14	Changshengchang	1821–1850	Donations (initiated by local elites)	<i>MGZ</i> , 7: 20.
15	Huiminchang	1821–1850	Donation (individual)	<i>MGZ</i> , 7: 20–21.
16	the 10th Jia, Ren Li	1821–1850	Penalty and confiscatory income (from a local temple)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 42–43.
17	Changshengchang	1821–1850	Donations (in response to an elder resident's appeals)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 41; <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 20.
18	Tuqiaochang	1824	Local collective property (of Zhangye Association)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 50.
19	Tuzhuchang	1825–1827	Local collective property (of Wen Wu Temple)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 28.
20	Lujiaochang	1825–1827	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 39.
21	the 9th Jia, Xiao Li	1825–1827	Private property (of an academy set up by three families.)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 40.
22	Shuangdongchang	1825–1827	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 45.
23	□□ (document damaged), Jie Li	1825–1827	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 45.
24	Xinxing Temple	1825–1827		<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 49, 55.
25	Tiaoshichang	1825–1827	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 49.

26	Guanyinchang	1826	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 55; 6-34-6026: 1.
27	Gongping Tuan—Taiping Tuan	1826	Donations (from two <i>tuan</i> , initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 48; 6-23-1230.
28	Shizichang (Lingyun Charity School)	1826	Donations (individual)	<i>BX</i> , 6-34-6033: 8; <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 20; <i>TZZ</i> , 2: 41.
29	Gongping Tuan	1828		<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 48.
30	Er'shengchang (Ti'en Charity School)	1831	Donations (individual)	<i>BX</i> , 6-34-6034: 3; <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 20; <i>TZZ</i> , 2: 41.
31	Jiangjiachang	by 1831	Donations (individual)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 46.
32	Wangjia River	1832	Donations (initiated by the government, individual)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 46.
33	Fengshengchang	1836	Donations (initiated by local elites)	<i>BX</i> , 6-23-1116.
34	Huilong Temple, the 3rd Jia, Jie Li	1838	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 45.
35	Er'sheng Hall	1846	Donations (initiated by the government, individual)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 46; 6-34-6034: 3.
36	Shigangchang	1849	Local collective property (of Wen Association)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 48; 6-9-4326.
37	Tiaodengchang	by 1851		<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 27.
38	Tudiya, the 9th Jia, Lian Li	by 1851	Donations (individual)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 41.
39	Taihechang	by 1851	Donations (initiated by the government)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 47.
40	Zhongxingchang	by 1851	Donations	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 48.
41	Jieshichang	by 1851	Donations (from Zhangye Association)	<i>BX</i> , 6-4-1142: 49.
42	Dayachang	1852	Donation (from a widow)	<i>BX</i> , 6-23-1228.
43	Jiangjiachang	1862–1875	Collective property (of Wantian Temple Association)	<i>BX</i> , 6-33-5967: 1.
44	Xinkai Temple, Caijiachang (Yangzheng Charity School)	1863	Collective property (of temple association)	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6111: 11; <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 21
45	Changyanping	1864	Charitable land (<i>jitian</i>) of Mudong Town	<i>BX</i> , 6-23-1216.
46	Dongqingchang (Dunben Charity School)	1864–1871	Donations	<i>BX</i> , 6-34-6128: 11; <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 21.
47	the 3rd Jia, Zheng Li (Hongwen Charity School)	by 1865	Collective property (of Charity School Association)	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6069: 11.
48	Fahua Temple, Maliuchang (Peiyuan Charity School)	1866	Donations	<i>MGZ</i> , 7: 21.
49	Yinglongchang (Yuncheng Charity School)	1866	Donations (initiated by local elites)	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-5971: 1; <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 21.
50	Liangluchang (Leyutang Charity School)	1866	Donation (from a migrant)	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6080: 1; 6-6-5968: 1.
51	Shigu Temple, Xiao Li	by 1867	Donation (from a widow)	<i>TZZ</i> , 2: 40; <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 20.
52	Longtan Temple, Zheng Li	by 1867	Donations (from elites)	<i>TZZ</i> , 2: 41; <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 20.
53	Wenfengchang	by 1867	Donation (individual)	<i>TZZ</i> , 2: 41; <i>MGZ</i> , 7: 20.
54	Jielongchang	1869	Market revenue	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6026: 1.
55	Taihechang, the 7th Jia, Jie Li	by 1873	Donations	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6070: 10.
56	Baishi Station	by 1873	Charitable granary (<i>jicang</i>) of Baishi Station	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6085: 6.

57	Beibeichang	by 1873	Charitable granary (<i>ji</i> cang) of Baishi Station	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6085: 6.
58	Longyin Town (Longshan Charity School)	by 1875	Collective property (of Baolun Temple)	<i>MGZ</i> , 7: 21.
59	Shimiao	by 1878		<i>BX</i> , 6-34-6033: 2.
60	Yutangwan	1882	Monastic property (, in dispute)	<i>BX</i> , 6-36-10089: 10.
61	Jianchaxi	1885	Donation (, individual)	<i>BX</i> , 6-33-5969.
62	Xingfachang	1887	Donations	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6111: 9.
63	Gaoxiechang	1890	Donations	<i>BX</i> , 6-34-6074.
64	Huanggechang	1899	Collective property (of the association organized for the local affairs of the market town)	<i>BX</i> , 6-33-5951.
65	Qishan Temple, Caijiachang	by 1902	Collective property (of temple association)	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6111: 11.
66	Longzhuan Temple, Caijiachang	by 1902	Collective property (of temple association)	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6111: 11.
67	Yudongchang	by 1902	Donations	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6111: 2.
68	Shiqiao	by 1902	Charitable Nursery (<i>ji</i> yingtang)	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6111: 3.
69	Danzichang	by 1902	Donations	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6111: 6.
70	Longmenchang	by 1902	Donations	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6111: 6.
71	Yongxingchang	by 1902	Local charity	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6111: 7.
72	Tuzhuchang	by 1902	Local charity	<i>BX</i> , 6-6-6111: 7.