THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

INSURGENT DYNAMICS:

THE COMING OF THE CHINESE REBELLIONS, 1850-1873

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2016

To My Family

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Padgett, Fall 2009), "Sociological Inquiry II" (by John Levi Martin, Winter 2010), "Seminar: Power" (by Andrew Abbott, Winter 2010), "Topics in the History of Capitalism" (by William Sewell, Jr., Spring 2010), "Reading course: Comparative Historical Sociology" (with Elisabeth Clemens, Spring 2010), "Library Methods for the Social Sciences" (by Andrew Abbott, Winter 2011), and "Seminar: Chinese Revolutions" (by Dingxin Zhao, Winter 2011). The instructors of these courses gave helpful feedback on my term papers, research proposals, and/or response papers, all of which were related to the dissertation topic. My ideas became clear in dialogues with these great thinkers and teachers. Although the dissertation themes have continued shifting since then, many core elements crystallized in these courses.

Another course, "Reading Qing Documents" (by Guy Alitto, Fall 2011) helped me prepare for the archival fieldwork in China. During the dissertation write-up period, I audited two history courses from Kenneth Pomeranz—"State and Society in Late Imperial and Modern China" (Spring 2013), and "Research Seminar in Qing Social and Political History" (Fall 2013). These two courses equipped me with new progress on modern Chinese historiography, and helped me develop the dissertation in the post-fieldwork period.

I deeply appreciate the workshop system at The University of Chicago. My dissertation proposal and chapters were circulated, presented, and discussed several times in the Social Theory and Evidence Workshop, Social Theory Workshop, Politics, History, and Society Workshop, East Asia Workshop, and the Chinese Political Sociology Workshop (at the University's Beijing Center). I received helpful comments and critiques from the discussants and workshop participants, including: Marco Garrido, Kimberly Hoang, Cheol-Sung Lee, Ellis Monk,

awarded the "Robert E. Park Lectureship," I had the opportunity to teach the course of "Contentious Collective Action" in Winter 2015. By engaging talented undergraduates in the class discussion, I learned to introduce and critique ideas of other scholars.

good listener and friend with whom to exchange ideas about both research and

professionalization, despite that our backgrounds are respectively sociology and psychology.

Finally, my son, Zhang Weihang, brought enormous enjoyment and a stronger sense of

responsibility to my life. Watching his reaction to the world often inspired me to new ideas on

human/environment relations, a key theme of my research. This dissertation is dedicated to them.

Abstract

My dissertation offers a dynamic, relational explanation of the emergence of mid-19th century rebellions in the Qing Empire of China—the bloodiest insurgent civil war in human history. This turbulent era witnessed the formation of widespread and protracted uprisings, including not only the landmark Christian-inspired Taiping Rebellion but also a conjunction of sectarian, ethnic, and religious revolts. Theoretically, my thesis moves beyond the structural, eventful, and endogenous models, and further develops the dynamic model that has been emerging in the field of contentious politics and historical sociology. I employ multiple methods—including subnational and sequential comparison—to analyze a large volume of primary sources such as internal government communications, diaries of officials, records of rebels, memoirs of missionaries, and local sources.

My dissertation makes a central theoretical contention: that revolutions and rebellions usually emerge from processual interactions among multiple organizational actors rather than being determined by pre-existing structural conditions or static, categorical identities (i.e., class, religious, or ethnic identities). This contention contains three interrelated claims: first, insurgent actions and events are often produced in reaction to the revolutionary process rather than preexisting structures; second, the emergence of rebellions is the result of dynamic interactions among relational actors; third, the unfolding of rebellions is thus sensitive to temporalities, albeit in patterned ways. By elaborating these claims, my dissertation makes distinctive contributions to the understanding of the origins and processes of large-scale movements.

In the empirical analysis, I focus on a few critical episodes during this rebellious wave,

including: the abrupt transformation of the Taiping movement from an indigenous Christian society to a revolution, the divergence of initially defensive elite militias into rebels and repressors, the crystallization of Muslim mobilization in distinct directions across three regions, and the frequent defection from and division of originally coherent coalitions. Structural conditions and pre-existing identities offer a limited explanation of these phenomena. Instead, rebellious mobilization and development often unfolded as short-term, unintended outcomes of iterative interactions among key actors—including central and local state actors, militia commanders, communal elites, and religious leaders—who often employed emerging organizational frameworks to respond to their local rivals, competitors, and patrons in changing situations. In a nutshell, by uncovering underlying mechanisms from complicated historical processes, the dynamic, relational model proves crucial to the unpacking of puzzles about the emergence, transformations, and divergence of these consequential movements.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Revolutions and great rebellions are the most radical form of social change, creating

spectacular scenes and producing far-reaching consequences. Moreover, many revolutions and

rebellions last long, spread across regions, and affect multiple groups and dimensions. As

historian Lefebvre (1947) states in *The Coming of the French Revolution*, not one, but four

successive revolutions built upon each other and created what we call "the French Revolution."

Cases such as the French Revolution or the mid-19th-century Chinese rebellions, should thus be

conceived "not as a single, uniform, grand uprising but a conjunction of autonomous rebellions

that come together to constitute a seemingly single event" (Sohrabi 2005:306). If this statement

is valid, how do we explain such revolutions and great rebellions? Why do they occur? How do

they develop?

Comparative historical sociologists have offered three models with distinctive assumptions

about causalities and temporalities. A *structural* model says the answer lies in certain underlying

structural conditions or long-term structural changes prior to the contentious era (e.g., Moore

1966; Skocpol 1979; Goldstone 1991; Goodwin 2001; Mann 2012). In contrast, an *eventful*

model stresses heterogeneous temporal and spatial causalities and historical contingencies during

a revolutionary process (e.g., Traugott 1980; Sewell 1996a, 1996b; Markoff 1997; Kurzman

2009). In the middle of the two stands an *endogenous* model that considers the formation of

insurgencies as a self-sustaining process driven by certain positive feedback mechanisms after a

critical juncture, which itself is contingent and exogenous (e.g., Mahoney 2000, 2001; Beissinger

2003; Pierson 2004). All three perspectives, however, overlook that the structures and rebellions

progressively constitute, reconfigure, and transform each other in a highly interactive yet patterned way, thus facilitating or constraining subsequent insurrections. A fourth model, a *dynamic,* relational model is thus proposed in this dissertation to account for the insurgency formation as the product of interactions among multiple organizational forces.

The case of the mid-19th-century Chinese rebellions is used to evaluate the four models and, specifically, to illustrate the dynamic model. Perhaps the largest rebellious wave in world history, this turbulent era witnessed the formation of widespread and protracted rebellions. It was above all marked by the Christian-inspired Taiping Rebellion, which emerged in South China and soon built a rebel regime, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (1851-1864).[1] In addition, this era also witnessed a conjunction of sectarian, ethnic, and religious revolts across the empire over two decades (1850-1873).

Each of the three existing models could offer interpretations for this case. Can the rise of these rebellions be explained by preexisting structural conditions? Were they contingent events arising out of spatially and temporally peculiar causalities and accidental happenings? Did these rebellions emerge as endogenous processes after a tipping point, in this case, the Taiping rebels' regime building in 1853? Needless to say, the most popular explanations come from the structural tradition: for example, three paradigmatic works on the mid-19th-century Chinese rebellions all highlight structural forces—respectively, rural class cleavage (Moore 1966), the

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[1] The nature of the Taiping movement is controversial: Taiping rebels perceived themselves as revolutionaries against the imperial system (Reilly 2004). Furthermore, both republican revolutionaries and Communists in China took the Taiping as a respectively nationalist or social revolution. In academia, it is called the Taiping Revolution (Marx 1853; Hsu 2000:221; Osterhammel 2009: 547), the Taiping Revolutionary Movement (Jen 1973), the Taiping Rebellion (Kuhn 1970; Skocpol 1979; Goldstone 1991), or the Taiping Civil War (Platt 2012; Meyer-Fong 2012). In my dissertation, I use these terms interchangeably. Following standard historical works (Kuhn 1978), I sometimes use "the Taiping" to indicate the organization and "Taipings" to refer to members of the organization.

nature of the state (Skocpol 1979), and demography-related social changes (Goldstone 1991). However, these structural works do not offer a satisfactory explanation to this case, and have not revealed or explained the actual emergence and patterns of the development of these rebellions.

I contend that rebellions emerge and unfold in the interactions among (potential) rebels, state actors, and other organizational forces rather than being determined by preexisting structures or static, categorical identities (i.e., class, religious, and ethnic identities). The unfolding of consequential political movements is thus best revealed by paying close attention to the underlying patterns of continually changing relationships among key organizational actors. It also means a distinct understanding of temporality beyond structural determinism or eventful contingency: collective actions unfold progressively, patterned by continually shifting contexts. My theory hence echoes a call for a relational and processual turn in historical sociology and contentious politics (e.g., Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Brubaker 1996; Emirbayer 1997; Abbott 2001; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

I apply this theoretical approach to explain the patterns of major revolts in the mid-19th century. My strategy is to focus on several critical episodes in which new rebellions abruptly rose, old allies unexpectedly divided, and key actors reoriented their identities. These episodes include: the *transformation* of the Taiping movement from an indigenous Christian society to a revolution, the *divergence* of initially defensive elite militias into rebels and repressors, the *emergence* of Muslim uprisings and ethnic identities as two interweaving processes, and the *recurrent rise* of rebellions over the entire period. My empirical analysis is built upon a large volume of primary sources including internal communications between the imperial center and provincial officials

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as well as local sources and contemporaries' records. I employ a diverse set of methods to analyze these data, including sub-national comparisons, historical narrative, protest event analysis, and spatial analysis.

My work makes distinctive contributions to the understanding of large-scale political movements. Despite the massive scale of my case, similar kinds of hybrid, extensive, and protracted rebellions have repeatedly occurred in many early modern empires/states and contemporary "weak" states (Sohrabi 2005:306; Kalyvas 2006; Mukhopadhyay 2014). Identifying and explaining key patterns in the course of a rebellion wave, my thesis fills the gap between structural origins and contingent happenings of the grand event. In general terms, my work conceives consequential political and social changes as dynamic processes in which collective forces progressively determine outcomes. It embodies the very significance of historical social sciences—to uncover underlying mechanisms without losing a deep sense of temporality in human life. My work thus continues historical sociology's great tradition of decoding the complicated natures of time, agency, and causality.

Patterns and Puzzles

The Qing Empire of China (1640-1911) was overwhelmed by rebellions during the middle nineteenth century, the most turbulent and violent era in imperial Chinese history and the largest civil war in world history. From 1850 to 1873, numerous rebel groups arose all over the empire and fought against various repressive forces including standing armies, regional armies, and local militias. Thousands of battles involving millions of soldiers, rebels, and other combatants were fought. At a time when China's total population was 430 million, 50 to 70 million people died

from wars, mass killings, famines, plagues, etc.[2] Although eventually suppressed by the empire

in the 1870s, these rebellions devastated the imperial rule and Chinese society.

This turbulent period was marked by a master movement—that could be defined as the

predominating rebellion among others—the Christian-inspired Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864) in

my case. The leader of this rebellion had founded a protestant society—the "Association of God

Worshippers"—in South China during the 1840s, and later called himself the Chinese Son of

God. In 1850, the Taiping suddenly assembled thousands of its adherents together, turned the

religious society into a rebel force, and proclaimed the founding of the Taiping Heavenly

Kingdom in early 1851. After two years of roving wars, Taipings took over the city of Nanjing

and built a rival regime in the Lower Yangzi Delta, the most populous and prosperous region of

the empire (Michael 1966; Jen 1973; Spence 1996).

The Taiping is surely an interesting case, but it was just one of many rebellions that rose

over the empire in this period. Other major uprisings included: the guerrilla Nien Rebellion in

North China, Muslim rebellions in the Southwest and Northwest, the "Miao" aboriginal and

White Lotus insurgencies in Guizhou Province, and the Triad Rebellions in South China (Table

1.1). In the case of the Nien Rebellion, a number of communal groups turned from community

defenders into a rebellion coalition, and eventually became the largest rebel force in North China.

In Northwest and Southwest China, extensive Muslim mobilization eventually led to three

distinct kinds of rebellions and conflicts.

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[2] The Taiping Rebellion alone caused 20-30 million deaths. Rebellions in the Northwest and Southwest killed roughly 70% of the population in these regions. By comparison, an estimate of the direct death toll in global domestic conflicts between 1945 and 1999 is 16.2 million (Fearon & Laitin 2003:75).

Table 1.1. Major rebellions in China, 1850-1873

Name	Duration	Active Regions
Taiping Rebellion	1850-1864	South China, Lower and Middle Yangzi Delta
Triad Rebels	1850-1870s	Guangdong Province in South China
Nien Rebellion	1853-1868	North China
Miao Rebellion	1854-1873	Guizhou Province in Southwest China
Panthay Muslim Rebellion	1856-1872	Yunnan Province in Southwest China
Li & Lan Rebellion	1859-1864	Southwest and Northwest China
Dungan Muslim Rebellion	1862-1873	Shanxi & Gansu in Northwest China

In addition to these major rebel forces, many parts of the empire also saw the rise and fall of endemic small-scale rebel and bandit groups throughout the entire period. They plundered cities and towns, controlled turfs, and fought with each other as well as larger forces (e.g., Wakeman 1966; Kuhn 1970; Bernhardt 1992; Jenks 1994). Furthermore, facing rebellions from every side, the Qing standing army was fragmented into numerous relatively independent and unruly forces. Simultaneously, local militias emerged, ostensibly for communal defense, but some soon turned into predators, warlord armies, or even outright rebels.

In short, under the surface of the well-known "Qing VS Taiping" scenario was a protracted period of civil war fought by multiple and frequently changing players. Even in regions mostly affected by the Taiping, far more than a war between the Qing and the Taiping, was "a hard-fought and confusing war produced locally by militias, bandits, captives, mercenaries, and regional armies, many of whom were ambivalent and unreliable allies" (Meyer-Fong 2012:11).

The sudden emergence and duration of this rebellious wave is clear. Figure 1.1 shows mass incidents and organized battles, by year, for the period between 1820 and 1875. Before 1850, the empire was quite peaceful, with few mass incidents and almost no organized battles. The

numbers of both mass incidents and organized battles began to increase around 1850 and

especially surged from 1853, the year the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was declared. If we further

extend the historical horizon, the number of organized battles in 1850-1873 constituted more

than 90% of all such battles between 1796 and 1911, the year the Qing Empire fell (Yang 1975).
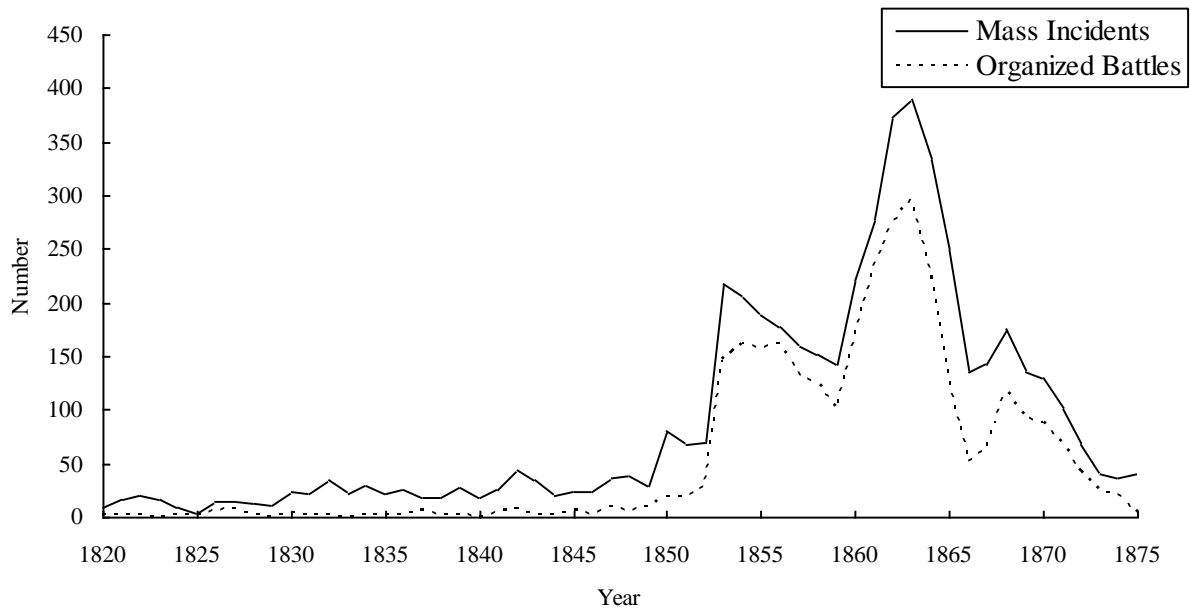
Figure 1.1. Mass action incidents and organized battles by year, 1820-1875.
Sources: Yang 1975; Chan 1983[3].
Note: "Mass action incident" is defined as "involving five or more participants and creating
public issues ranging from famine riots to battles of rebellion" (Yang 1975: 174-175); Yang
divided all mass action incidents into 24 categories: Nearly half of the incidents belonged to the
category "battles between government forces and organized groups" (Yang 1975: 189-191), or
"organized battles" for short.

This rebellious age was not only characterized by a large number of contentious events, but

also massive geographic size. Figure 1.2 marks the frequency of these mid-century mass action

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[3] Yang and his team manually coded mass incidents (1796-1911) from 2,247 volumes of *Veritable Records of the Qing Emperors* (or *Qing Shilu*) (Yang 1975:174). *Qing Shilu* was selectively compiled by Qing officials from original edicts and memorials into daily records of imperial affairs, including rebellions and protests. It thus contained continuous and extensive, although incomplete, information. As a result it was better for identifying long-term trends than for examining a single case in detail.

incidents in different provinces. The entire Empire, especially its 18 inner provinces, was

overwhelmed by rebellions during this period. The Taiping Rebellion started in Guangxi

Province in South China, then marched north into the Lower Yangzi Delta, and built the Taiping

Heavenly Kingdom in the city of Nanjing. The Nien Rebellion was active in several provinces in

North China, sometimes even close to Beijing, the capital city of the Qing Empire. Northwest

and Southwest China were areas of Muslim uprisings. These regions were by far the most

rebellious areas.
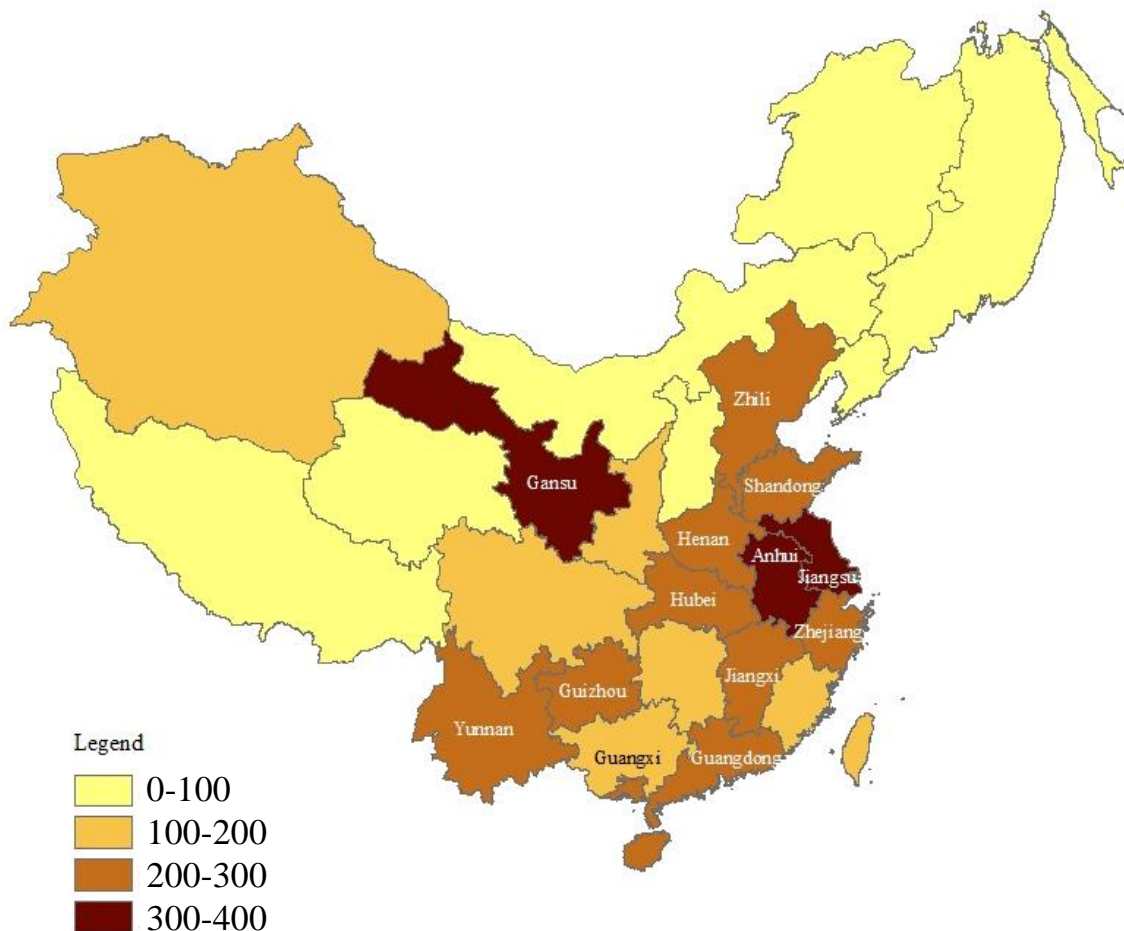
Figure 1.2. Provincial distribution of mass action incidents, 1846-1875.
Source: Yang 1975.
Background database: CHGIS.

The central task of my thesis is to answer this general research question: how did these rebellions emerge and develop to such a scale? This task has two interrelated parts: First, did these rebellions arise from certain pre-existing structural conditions such as the breakdown of the central political authority? Second, if such structural conditions were absent, why and how did rebellions emerge and evolve into such a massive scale? To answer the two questions, we have to turn to the processual and relational nature of rebellion formation.

Based on these general research questions, I address *specific*, *significant*, and *surprising* puzzles in the empirical chapters to cover different aspects of the overarching task. Chapter 2 offers a negative answer to the question of whether structural conditions were ripe for this great upheaval. Then in each of the remaining empirical chapters, I tackle one significant phenomenon or patterns from the processual perspective: why did the Taiping *transform* from a Christian movement to a rebellion and achieve such enormous success? (Chapter 3) Why did a number of initially defensive communal groups *convert* and become rebellious? (Chapter 4) Why did Muslim uprisings *become* ethnicized in some regions but deethnicized in others? (Chapter 5)

In other words, my dissertation seeks to not only address the rise of the master rebellion of the Taiping, but also account for subsequent rebellions. It especially focuses on a set of underlying patterns that, while mentioned, have not been sufficiently addressed in previous studies. For example, Chapter 4 seeks to explain the puzzling phenomenon that many militia groups, initially established as counter-insurgent forces and endorsed by the state, joined rebel forces or became rebels themselves (Kuhn 1970; Perry 1980; Marks 1984; Zheng 2009). An adequate theory would be expected to explain these underlying patterns.

The Structural Model and its Alternatives

Since "structure" has long been such a central concept in sociological theory, the structural model is also the dominant theory employed in the field of revolution studies and comparative historical sociology (For recent reviews, see: Goldstone 2001; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003). This section will review the structural model and address its limitations. I will show that there are three different versions of processual critiques: eventful, endogenous, and dynamic.[4] Discussing the eventful and endogenous models in this section, I will leave an elaboration of the dynamic model—which I believe has the greatest potential of becoming an alternative to the structural model—to the section that follows.

The Structural Model

Since the 1960s, the structural view—that revolutions and rebellions are the product of preexisting structural conditions and/or long-term structural changes—has been the conventional wisdom, although scholars may disagree over which structural factors are the most important. The key analytic task is thus to compare and identify certain kinds of structural conditions that lead to particular kinds of popular uprisings. Comparative method gives structuralists methodological weapons to build causal connections between these structural conditions and revolutions. In doing this, divergent opinions develop on which kind of structure should be given

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[4] I do not discuss the Natural History School, which theorizes the revolution as a sequence of stages (Edwards 1927; Brinton 1938; Pettee 1938; for a recent revisit, see Stone 2013). While it has a certain broad descriptive utility, many scholars have found it wanting, not only because it seems to prescribe a rigid temporal trajectory but also because it offers no clear explanation to the dynamics that shape or drive these stages (for a critique, see: Skocpol 1979: 37-38). Cycle theory is a modern form of natural history theory, which instead examines the "natural theory" of a protest wave rather than an individual movement (Tarrow 1989; Koopman 2004). Accordingly, it simplifies the revolutionary trajectories to a fixed "parabolic" form with nearly invariant stages, which parallels the problem of the Natural History School, if considering events at the population rather than organization level. As reflected by Tarrow: "the theory's weakness was that it remained largely a stage theory based on a deductively posited phase of mobilization followed by a distinct phase of demobilization, failing to account for mobilizations that emerge at various stages of the cycle" (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001:66).

theoretical primacy: class (Moore 1966; Wolf 1969; Paige 1977), regime nature and state

capacity (Skocpol 1979; Goodwin and Skocpol 1989; Wickham-Crowley 1992; Tilly 1993;

Foran 1997; Goodwin 2001), international economic and political contexts (Wolf 1969;

Wallerstein 1979; Walton 1984; Skocpol 1979; Collins 1997), ideological structure (Sewell 1985;

Parsa 2000; Sobrari 2005; Beck 2011), military power (Wickham-Crowley 1992; Mann 2012), or

population pressure (Goldstone 1991). Recently, Foran (2005) synthesizes five structural

conditions for revolutions, while Mann (2012) contends all four sources of social power matter

in revolution. "Revolutions are not made; they come" becomes the most well-known slogan for

the structural model (Skocpol 1979:17).

The social-structural model makes an incisive point that certain kinds of structural

conditions are more likely to have systemic crisis, facilitate insurgent identity, grievance, and

mobilization, and thus produce great insurrections (Goldstone 2003). For example, state-centered

theorists often contend that "certain types of state or regime are structurally more vulnerable to

revolutions than others" (Wickham-Crowley 1992:6): Skocpol (1979) says that a bureaucratic

monarch under geopolitical and fiscal crisis facilitated great revolutions; Goodwin (2001) reveals

that violent, exclusionary yet weak colonial regimes are most vulnerable to revolutionary

movements in the third world; McDaniel (1991) shows that modernization under autocratic

dictatorship often leads to revolutions.

However, the sociological-structural model has been criticized from several alternative

theories, usually developing from the other side of the "structure" in alternative conceptual

dichotomies.[5] The major contributions of the "fourth" (and "post-structural") generation of

revolutionary theorists include: *culture*[6] (e.g., Sewell 1985; Aminzade 1993; Foran 1997, 2005;

Parsa 2000; Sohrabi 2011), *agency* (e.g., Kurzman 1992; Colburn 1994; Selbin 1997, 2009;

Lachmann 1997; Riga 2011; Sohrabi 2011), and *perceived opportunity* (vs. structural opportunity)

(e.g., Kurzman 1996, 2009; Kadivar 2013). While all of these critiques are important, I contend

that the weakness of the structural model can be further revealed and remedied by a *processual*

perspective. From this processual view, I argue that the structural model suffers from four

problems: 1) it at most explains the structural potential, not actual emergence and development

of revolutions/rebellions; 2) some structural conditions are reasoned in a teleological way; 3)

structural models often overlook short-term dynamics; and 4) the pre-existing structure itself is

changed by the unfolding of revolutionary events.[7]

Above all, structural conditions, even if adequately identified, merely help account for

conditions conducive to the rise of revolutions/rebellions, but do not really explain their actual

emergence and development. At best, they create greater potentials on sufficient conditions for

revolutionary happenings, but are never deterministic. In other words, "structural variables

mainly set the stage for conflicts. They are inadequate to explain the dynamics of mobilization

and collective action" (Parsa 2000:10). Unfortunately, when employing Millian or Boolean

comparative logic (Skocpol 1979; Ragin 1987), structural scholarship increasingly invests energy

into identifying "necessary" conditions while overlooking the dynamic nature of revolutions (e.g.,

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[5] In other words I do not discuss the internal critiques and development within the structural tradition, such as state theory's critique on Marxian theory or the recent rediscovery of "the international" (vs. domestic structures).
[6] Culture could be incorporated into the structural analysis as "ideological structure" (Sewell 1985; Foran 2005).
[7] In this chapter I will only review and criticize the structural model in theoretical terms, while leaving a detailed discussion of how different structural theories fail to offer adequate explanations to the Chinese rebellions to Chapter 2.

Foran 2005). However, by "finding causes and then comparing outcomes, while leaving the revolutions themselves as largely unstudied black boxes" (Lachmann 2013:54), it is ultimately an unsatisfactory approach.

Even worse, in a few structural models, some structural factors are exaggerated in a teleological, *ex post* reasoning, as scholars "suffer a great temptation to treat their periods as preparations for the great revolutions they contained. Everything converges on 1640, 1688, 1789, 1905, or 1917" (Tilly 1993:17; see also Sewell 2005:83-85). In other words, structural explanations are often entrapped in *teleology*, "the besetting sins in analyses of revolution" (Tilly 1993:17). In those teleological analyses, "earlier events lose their contingency, cause and effect reverse, the possibility of other outcomes than the revolution that actually occurred disappear" (Tilly 1993:17). Even worse, some structural explanations are found to "retroactively predict" unexpected revolutions after their actual happenings, further harming the credibility of the structural theory (Beissinger 2003; Kurzman 2009: 4). To remedy the teleological problems of the field, Roger Gould once warned us that "what makes this observation more than a tautology is that 'instability' can be defined and measured independently of insurgency" (Gould 2005:293).

Furthermore, by overemphasizing structural determinism, the structural model overlooks processes and contingency in the short-term time span, merely tackling them in the format of narrative (for critiques, see: McAdam *et al*. 2001:194-195; Walder 2009b). However, structural conditions unfold in short-term historical processes (Kurzman 2009); furthermore, "some very important things sometimes come together in a very short span of time that are not adequately accounted for by long-term processes" (Markoff 1997: 1114-1115). As a result, these short-term

processes and dynamics should be theorized in an adequate way rather than merely taken as remnants of the theory in the format of narrative. As Goldstone, once a leading scholar of the structural approach admitted: "many of the processes and outcomes of revolutions are emergent, unknowable until they are produced in reaction to the events of the revolutionary process itself" (Goldstone 2003: 82-83).

Finally, an even more important question is: do structural conditions themselves change over the course of a prolonged revolution? If they do change, do the changed structures have ongoing effects on subsequent revolutions? If yes, how should we theorize this interactive relationship between structures and insurgent actions? Since some structural aspects are continuously altered during the revolutionary process, rather than merely as the outcome of revolutions, it becomes critical to examine the structure itself through a dynamic lens.

Eventful Model

"*Historical events as transformation of structures*" (Sewell 1996b). The first processual alternative to the structural model is an eventful model (Sewell 1996a, 1996b; Traugott 1980, 1985; Markoff 1997; Shapiro and Bedi 2007; Sohrabi 2011; Reed 2013), which "assumes that social relations are characterized by path dependency,[8] temporally heterogeneous causalities, and global contingency" (Sewell 2005: 102). Also applied in other contexts (e.g., Brubaker 1996), the eventful model is particularly suitable when analyzing revolution that is transformative in essence. Instead of assuming a pre-existing structure plays a general effect, the eventful model highlights the role of transformative events, sequence, temporally and spatially heterogeneous

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[8] Mahoney makes it very clear that Sewell's conceptualization of path dependency is too broad to be qualified as a "path dependence explanation" (Mahoney 2000:510; Sewell 1996:262-263).

causalities, and the role of accidents. Taken together, social processes, revolutions included, "are inherently contingent, discontinuous, and open-ended" (Sewell 2005:110). An eventful analysis would thus identify these critical historical events, which are "dislocations and transformative rearticulations of structure" (Sewell 1996b:245) and "results in a durable transformation of structures" (Sewell 1996b:245). Since causalities are not uniform but contextually heterogeneous, and "contingency is global, that it characterizes not only the surface but the core or the depths of social relations" (Sewell 2005: 102), any effort to build a general structural model would be futile. As revolutionary events are "contingent, unexpected, and inherently unpredictable", narrative and interpretation are the basic toolkit for an eventful model.

The eventful model offsets the structural model since they nearly constitute two extreme stances regarding their views of the temporal dimensions of the revolution. However, the eventful model highlights historical contingency too much, while under-theorizing the pattern of unfolding processes. As a result, it is more suitable for analyzing a few historic events, such as the taking of the Bastille (Sewell 1996b), than for tackling complicated relationships among multiple forces over a longer period. Revolution does unfold progressively, but the dynamics of these processes need to be explained rather than merely taken as entirely contingent happenings. Furthermore, it is well said that events have a cascading character—"historical events produce more events. Events are sequences of ruptures that effect transformations of structure" (Sewell 1996b/2005:255)—yet it is less clear whether later events are merely produced by early events or also shaped the continually altering structures. Finally, in the eventful model, the ability of historical events to transform the structure is by large limited to the modification and creation of

the cultural schemas (Sewell 1996b; Sohrabi 2011; Reed 2013). Finally, even contingency has its own patterns or structures that deserves further theorization (Beissinger 2011; Ermakoff 2015). To make a metaphor, like the "residual" in the regression model, contingency is "random," "accidental," and thus "non-explainable" in a specific case, but its patterns across multiple cases could be identified and explained. Therefore, alternative analytic toolkits are needed to complete this task.

Endogenous Model

Another alternative to the structural model is the endogenous model (or path dependent model). It devalues the explanatory power of pre-existing structures (or what it calls "initial/antecedent conditions") because multiple possible outcomes could be produced by these initial structures. What matters is a "critical juncture" or "contingent breakpoint", when certain (often exogenous) historical events[9] suddenly appear and produce reinforcing mechanisms (or positive feedback) to sustain an endogenous process of a series of events that finally leads to outcomes, which are unpredicted by the initial conditions (Mahoney 2000:535; Paulson 2004; Slater 2009). Another mechanism is the "recursivity of events," the impact of contentious action itself on subsequent action (Beissinger 2003). In this way the endogenous model explains significant historical events "from the impossible to the inevitable" (Beissinger 2003: 3), such as the nationalist mobilization and breakdown of the Soviet Union.[10] The endogenous model constitutes an important critique to the structural theories since the initial conditions are open to

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[9] Possible critical junctures for a revolution could be an abrupt implementation of a reform policy, the death or sudden removal of a top leader, an urgent conference, or the unexpected outbreak of a sizable insurrection.
[10] Other diffusion mechanisms also offer an endogenous mechanism to tackle the homogeneity of contentions (Tarrow 1989; Koopman 2004; Weyland 2014).

many possibilities and play little role in the process. Accordingly, it is no longer the case that "teleological explanation celebrates the determination of structure over agency" (Beissinger 2003:7).

The endogenous model's critique of the structural model is powerful, but the endogenous model itself suffers serious limitations. First, it is noted that the path dependence analysis is simultaneously "too contingent and too deterministic" (Thelen 1999:385) and the choosing of critical juncture is too arbitrary—"When accounting for historical turns down one road rather than another, path dependency emphasizes contingency…In explaining subsequent continuities, by contrast, path dependency offers a much more deterministic account" (Haydu 1998:352). Second, in path dependence analysis, the "critical junctures" are usually exogenous, or "contingent occurrences that cannot be explained on the basis of prior events or 'initial conditions'" (Mahoney 2000:511). However the critical juncture is never a completely contingent event, but itself is partly constrained and produced by an initial condition. Third, path dependence analysis takes the endogenous, positive mechanism as a fixed causation for all subsequent events, thus devaluing the dynamic interactions between the structures and agencies. However, these dynamic interactions can continually change the pre-existing structure (initial conditions) while in turn shaping subsequent processes. Overlooking this dynamic, the endogenous models "rarely deal with multiple switch points that form more encompassing sequences" (Haydu 1998:353; See also Lachmann 2009).[11]

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[11] Recently, advocates of critical juncture have also reflected its limitations: "If institutions are constantly vulnerable to piecemeal modification and reinterpretation and their shape changes continuously in accordance with shifts in power and influence among the relevant actors, then there is little reason to study in detail the politics of their origins" (Capoccia 2015:174-175; also see: Mahoney and Thelen 2010).

One way or another, none of these three models has yet noticed that the structural conditions could be continually reconfigured in the revolutionary process and play critical roles in subsequent insurrectionary events and actions. This theoretical gap should be filled.

A Dynamic Model of Revolutions and Rebellions

A dynamic model offers a third (and the most promising) alternative to the structural model. It is developed in line with the recent relational and processual turn in contentious politics (McAdam *et al*. 2001; Tilly 2003; Goldstone 2004; Walder 2006; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Della Porta 2012; Beissinger 2014), historical sociology (Brubaker 1996; Lachmann 2000; Walder 2009a), and social theory (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Emirbayer 1997; Abbott 2001; Sewell 2005). Put succinctly, revolutions and rebellions usually emerge from processual interactions among multiple organizational actors rather than being determined by pre-existing structural conditions. The dynamic model contains three interrelated theoretical claims. First, insurgent actions and events are often produced in reaction to the revolutionary process rather than preexisting structures; second, the emergence of rebellions is the result of dynamic interactions among relational actors; third, the unfolding of rebellions is thus sensitive to temporalities, especially turning points, albeit in patterned ways.

Even when structural models dominated the studies of revolutions, a few works noticed the emergent nature of insurgent identity and actions, especially at the micro level (e.g., Traugott 1980, 1985; Markoff 1996, 1997; for theoretical overviews, see: Sewell 2005; Walder 2009b). In analyzing revolts of Parisian militias in 1848, for example, Traugott points out that "revolutionary conflict must be seen as a dynamic social process in which collective forces

determine outcomes progressively…" (Traugott 1980:47-48). Markoff contends that abolishing feudalism was not a result of the prior structural opposition between the monarch and elites or peasants; instead, "both elite action and insurrectionary mobilization were shaping each other" and eventually made the revolutionary transformation possible (Markoff 1997:1113). Walder emphasizes the importance of the shifting political context in the making of factional divisions and rebellious identities during the Cultural Revolution, which cannot be predicted by pre-existing social positions and networks (Walder 2006, 2009a).[12] However, in focusing on the micro-level insurgent actions/identities as emergent, most empirical works have not touched upon how insurgent actions/events alter and transform pre-existing, macro structures, which in turn affect subsequent insurrections. They have not yet developed a dynamic theory as systematic as the structural model (e.g., Skocpol 1979; Goldstone 1991; Goodwin 2001).

Leading structuralist scholars such as Goldstone (2001, 2003, 2004, 2013) now also urge a 'processual" turn of revolution studies: he advocates "a process-centered view" that theorizes "revolution as an emergent phenomenon" (Goldstone 2001:173). Likewise, in the synthetic contentious politics paradigm, scholars who "come from a structuralist tradition" (McAdam *et al*. 2001:22) began to be dissatisfied with the static, structural understanding of political contentions, as it seldom explains the unfoldings and rapid changes during a revolution but, at most, the initial structural potential or individual preference. They not only reject the structural accounts since the outcomes "could not have been predicted with either structural or cultural determinism" (McAdam *et al.* 2001:223) but also point out the limitation of the eventful model: "Contingent

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[12] There is also emerging literature on the micro-level situational dynamics in collective violence (Collins 2009, 2012; Klusemann 2010; Luft 2015).

events are not only happenstance; they trigger mechanisms that shape the subsequent dynamics of contention" (McAdam *et al.* 2001:224). They hence urge a "*relational*" approach to replace the "*structural*" approach, while also making distinctive contributions to a dynamic understanding of contentious politics.

Continuing this line, my work strives to build a general, dynamic model by: 1) further elaborating the evolving relationship between structures and actions (e.g., Abrams 1982; Mann 1986[13]; Sewell 1992[14]) in the context of revolutions and rebellions; 2) conceiving this dynamic process in *interactional* more than *institutional* terms (e.g., Brubaker 1996; Lachmann 2000; Goldstone 2004); and 3) paying particular attention to the temporalities of revolutionary unfoldings (Isaac and Griffin 1989; Aminzade 1992; Griffin 1993; Haydu 1998; Abbott 2001; Sewell and McAdam 2001; Clemens 2007). By bringing the three lines of literature together, we can specify the causalities, relationalities, and temporalities of the dynamic model that can serve a solid foundation for analyzing revolutions or other consequential political movements. In what follows, I will elaborate each of these theoretical statements in turn.

A Dynamic View of Structure and Action

Above all I stress a dynamic view of structures and events in the context of revolutions and rebellions. Abandoning rigid, reified structuralism (Emirbayer 1997) does not mean abandoning the concept of "structure" (Sewell 1992; Martin 2008), as "structure is an unavoidable epistemic

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[13] Unfortunately, in Mann's recent empirical and theoretical analysis, he did "not depart greatly from" structural accounts (Mann 2012: 170). Methodologically, Mann once (1986) said that historical, rather than comparative, sociology is the best approach to examine social changes. However, in his recent works (2012, 2013), he relied more on a variable-based comparative method, which constrained him from taking revolution as a dynamic process. Accordingly, I follow his original theoretical and methodological statement (1986) rather than his empirical studies on revolutions (2012).

[14] Sewell (1992) lays out a different and more balanced sociological foundation for studying revolutions than his later works (1996a, 1996b), which have a predominant focus on the eventful and cultural nature of revolutions.

metaphor in the social sciences" (Sewell 1992/2005:151). Structures contain two interrelated, not necessarily contradictory, aspects (*institutional* and *interactional*)[15]: they are considered either as *durable institutional arrangements* (Sewell 1992[16]; Clemens and Cook 1999), or to be *represented by and reproduced throughout recurring interactions among organizational collectivities/actors* (Mann 1986; Brubaker 1996:8[17]; Lachmann 2000; Martin 2008:9).

In other words, structures reproduce and constrain social actions, but actions can simultaneously modify, redefine, and transform structures. The latter can be analyzed in two ways. The first approach is a "structuring" approach:[18] certain transformative events/actions can, directly, rapidly, and forcefully, alter a structure (Sewell 1992).[19] The second approach is a "relational" approach that will be elaborated in the next subsection. A short explanation of this approach, though is this: in most circumstances actions/events can destabilize the recurring interactions while creating new relational patterns, to an extent that makes the structural transformation possible. In any case, "structure is dynamic, not static; it is the continually evolving outcome and matrix of a process of social interaction" (Sewell 1992:27; see also: Giddens 1979; Clemens 2007:532). Furthermore, the altered institutional and relational patterns create new opportunities, resources, and visibilities for further transformative events.

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[15] An institutional definition: "constituted by mutually sustaining cultural schemas and sets of resources that empower and constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by that action" (Sewell 1992:27/151); a relational/interactional definition: "recurring patterns of social interactions" (Martin 2008:9). The two are not contradictory but complementary.

[16] The difference between multiple, intersecting, and overlapping structures (Sewell 1992/2005:140, 143) and "multiple overlapping and intersecting socio-spatial networks of power" (Mann 1986:1) is only understood as a terminological one.

[17] For example, structure is understood as a "relational nexus, linked by continuous mutual monitoring and interaction". They are not "fixed entities but fields of differentiated and competing positions, arenas of struggle among competing stances" (Brubaker 1996:8).

[18] This approach is rooted in Marxian dialectics between social structure and practice (Marx 1978), further theorized in Giddens' structuration theory and Bourdieu's habitus theory, i.e., the notion of 'structuring structure' of habituated practices, and later developed by historical anthropologists (Sahlins 1981), historical sociologists (Abrams 1982), and historians (Sewell 1992).

[19] Structures are transformable "because structures are multiple and intersecting, because schemas are transposable, and because resources are polysemic and accumulate unpredictably" (Sewell 1992:16, 27; Sewell 2005:143). Likewise, Clemens and Cook (1999:448) summarize three sources for institutional change: mutability, internal contradictions, and multiplicity.

Accordingly, "structuring, the reciprocal flow of action and structures, is manifold and endless" (Abrams 1982: 192), so structures and events constitute and transform each other not merely as the "outcome", but over the entire sequence.[20]

Revolution is probably the most radical and powerful collective action to change institutional structures such as the regime nature and to change the recurring relationships among collective actors, not merely as revolutionary outcomes. Structures are continuously reshaped, restructured, and transformed, even if only partially, from the onset of revolutionary processes.[21] The transformative power of revolutionary events on institutional structures has already been masterfully shown in Sewell's eventful model (1996b). More likely, revolutionary actions/events can change certain relations among major organizational actors (e.g., state actors, elites, regional armies, rebel groups, militias, warlords, etc.), gradually making the alteration of the overarching institutions possible. Overall, during unsettled revolutionary periods, *structures should be examined as malleable rather fixed entities, with interactive rather unidirectional causality, in a dynamic rather than static perspective*.

This dynamic perspective is sharply different from the structural model. In developing "a structural perspective" against a purposive and voluntarist model on revolution, Skocpol says: "In historical revolutions, differently situated and motivated groups have become participants in complex unfoldings of multiple conflicts. These conflicts have been powerfully shaped and limited by existing socioeconomic and international conditions" (Skocpol 1979:17). Her

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[20] In even radical processual expression of this dialectic, "social structure is itself the memory of the social process" (Abbott 2001:259), and "structures can be viewed as artifacts of past chains of agency" (Lachmann 2000:14).
[21] This is unlike average social movements that seldom shake the overarching sociopolitical structures.

emphasis on sociopolitical structures is valuable, but the existing socioeconomic and political conditions have also been powerfully shaped and transformed by emerging revolutionary actions and events. It is also true that "the logic of these conflicts has not been controlled by any one class or group, no matter how seemingly central in the revolutionary process" (Skocpol 1979:17-18). However, the dynamic perspective does not mean that revolutionary process and outcomes are the planned results of any single group, but rather of the continuing interactions of multiple groups. Likewise, employing the metaphor of earthquakes, Goldstone argues that the seemingly sudden revolutions and great rebellions have actually all been predated and caused by some long-term, fundamental, structural changes (Goldstone 1991:35-36). However, the value of this metaphor is limited: most earthquakes last a few hours, while revolutions and great rebellions often last several months or even decades. Even if they have some structural origins, comparable to the geological conditions of earthquakes, the dynamics within the revolutionary unfolding should not be overlooked.

To give a better sense of the reciprocal flow of action and structures, below I use the four most mentioned structures in the literature—political, cultural, class, and international structures (e.g., Skocpol 1979; Sewell 1985; Foran 2005)—as examples to illustrate how structures could be altered by and in turn affect revolutionary actions and events.

First, political structure is usually reshaped by powerful revolutionary actions and state responses related to the emerging insurrections. Revolutionary action can intensify elite struggles and power reconfigurations in the center, such as the abolition of the monarchy during the French Revolution (Markoff 1997). The reconfiguration of regional states and the central/peripheral

political relationship is no less important since local power cleavages and insurgent dynamics are not necessarily congruent with, but often disjunct from the national cleavage structure even during the most representative "central revolution" (Tilly 1964; Markoff 1996).[22] For extensive provincial insurrections without a major crisis in the center, local state is directly responsible for identifying and responding to insurgents. Accordingly, the relations between central and local state actors are rapidly altered by revolutionary actions and in turn shape further unfoldings.

Second, both revolutionary ideological structure and the state's cultural schemas of order/resistance are remade in the insurrectionary unfolding. As the revolution is the most unsettled, uncertain, and ambiguous, the symbolic relationship between the state and societal forces is broken and reconfigured, and becomes ambiguous, confused, and incoherent (Swidler 1986), thus creating multiple possibilities for ideological transformation (Sewell 1985; Skocpol 1985). Above all, the master revolution can create a national ideological cleavage against the ruling culture (Foran 2005; Sohrabi 2011). In addition, other new, heterodox, or oppositional ideological frames compete with one another and with the ruling culture (Skocpol 1985; Swidler 1986: 280). Finally, since the relationship these social groups share with each other and the state is so fractured, the state's cultural schema of rebellions and societal forces' cultural schema of state legitimacy continually changes, allowing them to categorize each other as either allies or enemies in a fluctuating way (Selbin 1997, 2009; Parsa 2000). The mutual identification and classification are made progressively, rapidly shifting over the entire sequence.

Third, while class structure is relatively stable, certain revolutionary actions can change the

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[22] State-centered does not necessarily mean central state-centered.

class relationship/structure, which in turn activates and mobilizes beneficial classes to participate in the subsequent insurrections. The classical example, interestingly, was depicted by Skocpol: in the most obviously peasant revolution in China, the pre-existing condition of "agrarian sociopolitical structures" was ironically unfavorable to the revolutionary mobilization (Skocpol 1979:148-150, 153); instead, it was the Chinese Communist Party that changed this agrarian class structure through land reform, thus mobilizing otherwise unorganized peasants into the revolutionary wars (Skocpol 1979:153-154, 259-262). In short, peasant revolution did not "*come*" with initial agrarian structures, but was "*made*" by the party during the revolution.[23] Similarly, the conflicts between the monarch, aristocracy, and the third class in the French Revolution inspired succeeding revolutionary and counterrevolutionary actions of other class actors (Lefebvre 1947; Tilly 1964; Markoff 1996).

Fourth, the international structure can also be altered by domestic revolutionary actions, thereby shaping subsequent revolutionary actions, though less frequently. For example, the French Revolution changed the European power balance, incurred a joint foreign army, which triggered the radicalization of the revolution, civic nationalism, and mass military mobilization (Skocpol 1979, 1988; Bertaud 1988; Forrest 1990). Even some relatively small revolutions in average-size countries can possibly shake the international context, which further affects subsequent revolutionary actions or occurrences, such as the recent Orange Revolution in Ukraine (Tarrow 2015). In other words, the international context is less a compilation of

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[23] In this sense, Skocpol's *empirical* analysis is closer to a dynamic view rather than a structural one (Sewell 1996/2005:97-98). In Chapter 2, I will further show how agrarian class structure was irrelevant to the mid-19th century Chinese rebellions.

structural conditions[24](e.g., Skocpol 1979; Katz 1997; Foran 2005; Beck 2011) than of changing

relational actors, in making the revolution (Sohrabi 2011; Lawson 2015). A dynamic model

hence contends that domestic revolutionary actions and international situations are mutually

constitutive and continually interactive (Lawson 2015).

Indeed, some dimensions of structures (political and military) are more malleable while

others are more stable or fixed (class and international) (Sewell 1992). Furthermore, because

these structures are overlapping and intersecting, a dislocation of one aspect would possibly

cause rupture in another. As a result, which structural factors will be taken into consideration in a

dynamic perspective is an empirical question.[25]

Changing Relations of Key Organizational Actors

As the structure has an interactional/relational dimension—i.e., social structure is a

continually evolving outcome in the process of social interaction—a dynamic view of revolution

requires relational analysis (Brubaker 1996; Markoff 1997; McAdam *et al.* 2001; Goldstone

2004; della Porta 2012). Interestingly, the intrinsic connection between the two has been

mentioned from the other side: the relational model "depicts social reality in dynamic,

continuous and processual terms, and sees relations between social terms and units as

preeminently dynamic in nature, as unfolding, ongoing processes rather than as static ties among

inert substances" (Emirbayer 1997: 289). We thus need to disassemble and reassemble state

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[24] It is true that in many situations, geopolitical pressure is exerted by exogenous, structural conditions, and not necessarily generated by revolutionary events (e.g., Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s is nearly irrelevant to the nascent communist revolution). However, even in those cases, the later interactions between foreign forces, national regimes, and the revolutionaries could be better revealed by the dynamic model.

[25] I do not intend to discuss which structure is of primacy in making the revolution (Mann 1986), partly because their weight is continually in flux during the revolutionary process.

actors and other social groups, and examine the relational dynamics among these multiple actors in making rebellions over time. The analytic task thus includes two parts: 1) how revolutionary actions change the recurring relationships; 2) how the changing relationships generate new insurgent actions and events.

Actors in collective actions are *relational people*, focusing their attention "on interpersonal processes that promote, inhibit, or channel collective violence and connect it with nonviolent politics" (Tilly 2003:20).[26] To examine contentious politics, we need to incorporate state actors, supporting and counter-movement groups, and other important actors (McAdam *et al.* 2001:22-24; Goldstone 2004; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; della Porta 2012). The relational perspective is also critical for studying major actors during a rebellion: *they are relational rebels or repressors*. In light of this perspective, for instance, the state is not only "janus-faced" (Skocpol 1979:32), or of cognitively heterogeneous actors (Wilson 2011); it is made up *of relational actors*, who interpret the situations, adjust their stances, make decisions/identification, and take critical actions, in relation to other closely connected state actors and societal forces. The state is overall "a complex interactional structure filled with competing subgroups" (Abbott 2005: 247; also see: Migdal 2001: 22).

It is the continually reconfiguring relationships that have the enduring, far-reaching, and deep effects on subsequent insurrectionary activities. They cause the ambiguity of authority, the stress of resources, and the creation of new meaning. Since relations among state actors, elites,

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[26] While echoing the emphasis on "agency" by recent revolution scholarship (e.g., Selbin 1997, 2009; Lachmann 1997; Parsa 2000; Riga 2008; Sohrabi 2011), my approach takes agency as fundamentally "*relational agency*," enabling as well as constraining changing structures (Brubaker 1996).

and other groups are quickly shifting after the onset of the revolution, the making of

insurrections is the result of changing, rather than fixed, relationships among different forces.

New opportunities, new identities, new interests, new alignments, and new cleavages are

generated to sustain and enlarge revolutionary actions (Walder 2006).

This relational perspective thus also differs from the structural model. Admittedly, it is

unfair to say that structural models have not paid attention to the relationships among social

groups. For example, Skocpol highlights the importance of "focusing simultaneously upon the

institutionally determined situations and relations of groups within society and upon the

interrelations of societies within world-historically developing international structures" (Skocpol

1979:18). Goldstone (1991:48-49) also asks us to examine the relationship among different

social groups, especially elites. However, their focus on relationships differs from what I call a

"relational" perspective for two primary reasons. First, they pay most of their attention to the

pre-existing relationships of these international and national groups before the unfolding of a

revolution, such as pre-revolution geopolitical relationships (Skocpol 1979) or elite competition

before the revolution (Goldstone 1991), while the dynamic model emphasizes the inter-group

relationship as an ongoing process during a revolution.[27] Second, most structural models take

categorical actors, especially classes, as the basic units in the relationship structure (Moore 1966;

Wolf 1969; Paige 1977; Skocpol 1979), while the dynamic model focuses on the relationships

among concrete organizational forces (Lachmann 2000; Brubaker 2004).

Below I give a few critical relational dimensions linking the shifting structures and

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[27] In other words, "contentious politics does not simply activate preexisting actors but engage actors in a series of interactive performances – our repertoires – that proceed through incessant improvisation" (McAdam *et al*. 2001:56-57).

revolutionary unfolding and that will later be applied in my empirical analysis. First, the

incumbent state and the master revolution, as rival regimes with deep ideological cleavages and

sometimes military antagonism, make a national oppositional structure, thus continuously

generating subsequent insurrections and mobilizing new forces. They together constitute master

relational actors during a revolution/rebellion era.

Second, revolutionary actions often intensify power struggles and drive political splits

within the ruling regime. The newly emergent and rapidly shifting splits create the fragmentation

and ambiguity of political authority, greatly inhibiting state coordination against its power

contenders. In cases such as provincial revolutions, this power reconfiguration also includes the

shifting relationship between central/regional state actors. As power decentralization becomes

imperative for handling extensive insurgencies, local state actors begin to have more autonomy

with their own interests, identities, and motivations, disconnecting themselves from the central

state and competing with one another.

Third, revolutionary actions/events can also intensify (often elite-led) group conflicts and

create polarized group identities and shifting realignments. Moreover, twisted authority

structures would create multiple conflicts among different actors that have been previously

ordered. Many insurgent groups with merely local concerns are also born in this milieu. These

separate, local cleavage structures are further potentially aligned with the national cleavage

structure (Kalyvas 2006). Accordingly, many actors progressively participate in revolutions as

the result of intensified conflicts and unintentional alignments, rather than pre-existing insurgent

identities. New alliances are created across boundaries, finally leading to divergence as allies or

enemies of the state (Walder 2006).

Fourth, revolutionary actions can provide new opportunities for new actors who might initially be indifferent and/or unorganized, igniting their resistant consciousness or insurgent identities and activating their organizational power. As mentioned earlier, certain revolutionary actions can change class relationships, which in turn activate and mobilize beneficiaries to participate in the subsequent insurrections. In many cases, peasant revolutions did not "come" with initial agrarian structures, but were progressively "made" by radicalized actions of the revolutionary vanguards.

Fifth, revolutionary actions/events can change seemingly distant and exogenous relationships and even involve foreign actors. In both the French Revolution and the recent Ukraine Orange Revolution, for example, international actors were mutually constitutive and continually interactive with domestic actors (Sohrabi 2011; Lawson 2015). Needless to say, foreign invaders and colonizers are essential, constitutive (hence not exogenous) actors in the decolonization revolutions (Goodwin 2001).

In sum, revolutionary actions can alter the relationship structure in various ways, by making national binary oppositions, intensifying intrastate struggle, generating elite cleavage and alignment, activating insurgent identities of new actors, and internalizing exogenous forces in the national opposition.[28] While unthinkable at the onset, in the course of a revolution, splits and alliances among various groups across state/society, elite/commoner, secular/religious, and

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[28] As shown above, among all types of relationship, competition is highlighted (Stinchcombe 1965; Olzak 1992; Abbott 2005; Zhao 2015), while coalition or coordination is considered to be intrinsically linked with competition. Specifically, when the spatial context is also considered, I call the totality of the relationship structure between rebels and repressors an "ecology." This idea will be elaborated in Chapter 3 to explain the "interstitial emergence" of the Taiping Rebellion in its regional rebellion ecology.

domestic/international boundaries become possible, leading to new possibilities of rebellion

formation. In short, relationship structures and revolutions/rebellions are mutually constitutive

and highly interactive. They simply coevolve.

Temporality and Turning Points

If we take revolutionary unfolding as *dynamic* processes interplayed among multiple

relational actors, we have to pay theoretical attention to the *temporal* patterns of this process

(Abrams 1982, Chap. 7; Haydu 1998; Abbott 2001; Büthe 2002; Pierson 2004; Clemens 2007;

Grzymala-Busse 2011; also see: Koselleck 2004; Ricoeur 2010), rather than either taking it as a

natural outcome of pre-existing structural conditions, or simply putting it in the form of narrative

as a set of purely contingent happenings. In a general sense, "the mutually constitutive interplay

of social structure and social action is a fundamental social dynamic continuously occurring *in*

time and *through* time" (Giddens 1979). On the *structure* side, even if we treat structural factors

as a chef's ingredients, their effects are still dependent upon the timing when they are combined

(Pierson 2004: 1; Clemens 2007: 530). On the *event* side, the significance of revolutionary

unfolding is "established primarily in terms of its location in time, in relation to a course or chain

of other happenings" (Abrams 1982:191). Accordingly, we need to not only contextualize the

theory in time, but also internalize the time in our theory.[29] In what follows, I will focus on

discussing two points: temporality and turning points in the dynamic model.[30]

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[29] Many structural models do not pay theoretical attention to the temporal dimensions of revolutionary unfolding, but merely take them as outcomes of structural causes in narratives. As criticized by Isaac and Griffin (1989:876): "Ahistorical time typically is qualitatively undifferentiated time, a smooth homogeneous magnitude viewed as external to the events and relationships of history, except as an index of chronology".

[30] Other important temporal dimensions include duration, pace, trajectory, and cycle (Aminzade 1992), which I do not discuss but will employ in the empirical analysis when there is a need.

Above all, the dynamic model presumes a new kind of temporality in examining

revolutionary processes that is different from structural, endogenous, and eventful models.[31]

Before elaborating the dynamic temporality in detail, let me start with the structural and eventful

temporality. According to the structural model, as causality flows from "deep" sociopolitical

structures to revolutionary events, temporality is also divided into a long-term pre-revolution

period with deep structural changes and the short-term eruption of social volcanoes (or

earthquakes).[32] Structuralists treat events as some superficial occurrences in a specific

time/space, nothing but froth and foam, interesting only when they reveal something about the

underlying structure or historical trends.[33] Events are taken as either "surface manifestations of

large-scale and long-term processes of change" (Aminzade 1992:456), or an indispensable prism

of social structure and process (Abrams 1982:192), having little or only accidental influences on

historical changes (Wallerstein 1979). For structural theorists, attention should be paid to the

deep structural origins or long-term structural changes. In contrast, the temporality of the

revolutionary unfolding itself is of secondary importance: for example, "the problem of the

suddenness of revolutions or rebellions likewise derives from proportional thought. That is, one

might think that a sudden event must have a sudden cause" (Goldstone 1991:35). In recent

modified structural models of revolutions, events are theorized together with social structures to

provide a conjunctural explanation: "a particular combination of structural causes and events, in

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[31] Elsewhere Sewell (2005) identifies three distinct temporalities in historical sociology: teleological, experimental, and eventful.
[32] On the ontological level, structural models assume that the social world consists of fixed entities with varying measurable properties and thus causality flows from some large, structural, and stable properties to usually small, changeable entities, often in a-historical time (Abbott 2001:285-287).
[33] For example, Braudel (1980) famously divides the time span into three levels: structure, conjuncture, and event that is unable to change social structure but is shaped by the deep structure.

a particular time and place, may create unique outcomes that will not necessarily be repeated in other contexts" (Paige 1999:782). However, events are still theorized as residual causes; in effect, a secondary "variable" compared with structural factors.

In contrast, eventful temporality is highlighted in the eventful model of revolutions (Sewell 1996a, 1996b). In studying the French Revolution, Markoff argues that "deep, long-run processes may also not be enough: we need to look at the contingencies of the moment as well, for if long-run processes may realign interests and resources, short-run contingencies may provide vital opportunities" (Markoff 1997:1123). Likewise, nationalist mobilization is considered "as an event, as something that suddenly crystallizes rather than gradually develops" (Brubaker 1996:19). Accidents and historical contingency are given theoretical significance in the eventful temporality.

The dynamic model works out a middle way, between structural determinism and eventful contingency, to tackle temporalities: collective actions unfold progressively, patterned by continually shifting (rather than static) contexts. To that end, I above all incorporate the idea of a trilogy rather than a dichotomy of social changes for understanding major yet abrupt emergence (Leach 1954; Mann 1986; Goldstone 2002).[34] Revolutionary unfoldings are often understood as a two-step story—from political order to revolution—in both structural and eventful models,

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[34] Here I only sketch the basic idea. Respectively, there are three steps in Leach's account of the change of Burmese political system, Mann's account of the emergence of human civilization, and Goldstone's account of the rise of capitalism: for Leach (1954) anarchic *gumlao*, ordered *gumsa*, and bureaucratic Shan state; for Mann (1986), egalitarian society, ranked society, and stratified society (i.e., civilization); for Goldstone (2002), economic stasis, "efflorescence", and industrial capitalism. Passage from the first to the second step was recurrent in history, but humans usually failed when trying to make the third step because of institutional, ecological, and demographic constraints. When they failed, the society might return to the first step (i.e., *devolution*). So the eventual rise of human civilization or capitalism is often not the first attempt; it is instead a rare, unexpected, and transformative event. It is hence problematic to take these rare "transformations" as the automatic *evolution* from the second to the third step and to identify "structural" prerequisites in a teleological, retroactive manner.

although they give contrasting theoretical significance to the two parts. In line with the trilogy of social changes, I conceive revolutionary emergence often as a three-part story between political order, endemic rebellions, and the groundbreaking revolution. The actual rise of the revolution is the first surprising yet successful attempt among many preceding "endemic rebellions" that also try to disrupt the "political order." It thus requires us to examine the local structures that are altered by local rebellions to make the first breakthrough possible.[35]

One key difference among the dynamic, structural, and eventful models is therefore about the nature and number of turning points, defined as "*short*, consequential shifts that redirect a process" (Abbott 2001:258). The structural model highlights the pre-existing structural changes, and thus devalues the importance of historical events as turning points, since they have already been mostly determined by pre-existing structural forces. The eventful model considers that there are multiple contingent historical events/turning points, each of which is causally heterogeneous. The path dependent model highlights a single point as a critical juncture. In the dynamic model, during a revolution there are multiple, successive, and hierarchical turning points, which are constrained by shifting relational structures while also reshaping the subsequent patterns of insurrections. They could be understood as "the 'moments' of tracklaying, and of converting to a new gauge" (Mann 1986:28),[36] which greatly shape successive patterns of insurgent actions until the next switching point. Revolutionary processes could thus be understood as a series of changing patterns of occurrences, linked by successive turning points such as the outbreak of

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[35] This means that the dynamic model also differs from the endogenous model, which is intrinsically a "punctuated equilibrium model" (Mahoney 2000:544; Pierson 2004; see also: Kuhn 1962; Gersick 1991).
[36] Mann's metaphor of multiple, unpredictable moments of tracklaying excels Weber's switchmen metaphor simply because the latter is teleological, assuming certain directions of historical change.

major rebellions or landmark crackdowns.

The nature of the first (and sometimes the largest) revolutionary events/action deserve our further theorization. It often emerges abruptly, as "societies have never been sufficiently institutionalized to prevent interstitial emergence" (Mann 1986:16). However, different models offer a distinct causal flow to it. Structural models generally agree that it is the product of a combination of "*ripe*" structural factors as sufficient condition, thus being a representation of structural forces—albeit in a surprising way.[37] In the endogenous model, it is understood as a critical juncture, linking the contingent and deterministic periods. In the eventful model, it is the first of many historical events which are themselves contingent happenings. The stance of the dynamic model is in the middle: it is neither structurally deterministic nor purely contingent. Building upon the differentiation between major/global and minor/local turning points (Abbott 2001:257),[38] we can now rearticulate the temporal nature of the first major turning point.

Admittedly, the first major turning point is often the most important event in the revolutionary process partially because the first large outbreak is invisible to state actors and thus surprising while later uprisings, albeit consequential, are more visible and predictable. However, the dynamic model contends that the first event (even if the largest turning point) is not unique as a watershed between the "contingent" and "deterministic" stages of the entire sequence. First, the first major turning point is not always a big bang, but is more possibly a scale shift of minor

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[37] This point is clearly addressed by Goldstone's metaphor of revolution as earthquakes: Like earthquakes, the first sudden events of revolutions and great rebellions "can be considered as 'triggers,' or 'releases,' of pent-up social forces, but they are not the fundamental causes. Indeed, such 'releasing' events are themselves generally the result of cumulating social pressures" (Goldstone 1991:35-36).
[38] Abbott presents a general process of how minor turning points are lined up to form a major turning point: "If some actors take that action, the result could be a minor turning point, the larger structure going on invulnerable. But once in a while, this minor turning point may line up with other minor turning points to create an opening in the overarching, master structure. Then we have a potential major turning point, in which a whole general regime can change if the proper action is taken".

turning points, or the cumulative effects of the partial alteration of institutional relationships, or the lineup of multiple, local turning points. Second, and accordingly, the first major turning point is not contingent/accidental, if we examine it on a smaller scale, as it often originates as the product of subterranean changes in the local/regional relationship structure. Third, successive turning points also strengthen or switch historical directions, so subsequent events are still open-ended stories, only partially patterned by the altering structures (Haydu 1998; Abbott 2001; Lachmann 2009:57). In other words, turning points could be derailed rather than directional. In sum, the first major turning point merely initiates "a long chain of subsequent open-ended events that eventually and far from inevitably led to the emergence of" subsequent revolutionary events (Sewell 1996b/2005:87). After all, it makes more sense when it is viewed retrospectively rather than prospectively (Abbott 2001:248).

In other words, big revolutions might have small origins. Disagreeing with structural temporality and its earthquake metaphor, I argue that great revolutions could start from a small origin and often unfold in trajectories that cannot be predicted by the initial revolutionary situation. The appearance of the new forces/events is often the result of a series of smaller-level relational changes altered by local insurrections. Most local uprisings are suppressed, but under rare circumstances, they successfully transform the local relationship structure to such a point that a major revolutionary uprising breaks out as the first turning point. It thus merely represents a critical escalation of the already existing struggle and signals the onset of a new phase (McAdam and Scott 2005:32[39]). In this regard, the emergence of the "great" revolutionary

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[39] For example, McAdam, with Scott (2005:32), reflects the causality and temporality of the Civil Rights Movement in this way,

organization is neither as "inevitable" as assumed by the structural model, nor as "contingent" as

assumed by the endogenous and eventful model, but needs to be understood by considering its

relations with other small groups and local happenings (Gould 2005).[40]

Finally, as for the subsequent revolutionary process, it often involves "uneven

development"—the "leading edge" (Mann 1986:31, 509) might change from one group to

another, one aspect to another, and one area to another, hinged by different kinds of switching

points. As there are multiple lineages in relatively stable trajectories, although we may find

fractal and recursive patterns of formation in new rebellions/events (Goldstone 1991; Sewell

1996; Beissinger 2003; Biggs 2005), a "stage" or "cycle" metaphor (essential in natural history

and endogenous models) for the entire period is not necessary. Given the intersecting alteration

of relationship structures and those intertwining turning point lineages, revolutionary unfoldings

seem much messier than the picture given by structural or endogenous models. Nevertheless, by

dissecting the winding processes, the dynamic model still aims to reveal temporal patterns, since

"much of the contingency unfolding" in the narratives actually "results from the concatenation of

different mechanisms" (McAdam *et al*. 2001:224).

A Note on Military Power and Relations

Above I have presented the three key elements of the dynamic model. Before summarizing

my theory, I would like to give a special note on one often overlooked dimension—the

military—to further elaborate the dynamic model: how military relationships can be altered by

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"rather than Montgomery making the movement, the reverse is actually true. It was the prior onset of the national conflict that granted the local struggle in Montgomery so much significance".
[40] This understanding of temporality and turning points is applied to the explanation of the rise of the Taiping Rebellion from a local force to the first empire-wide rebel force in Chapter 3.

revolutionary actions and in turn affect later events. While the above examples are mainly drawn

from the most mentioned structural dimensions—i.e., state, class, ideological, and international

structures—military relations certainly deserve a special discussion.[41] The purpose of this

discussion is not to add another structural dimension (Mann 2012; Tarrow 2015),[42] but to

elaborate the dynamic model in the prism of military relations during the revolutions/rebellions.

To begin, military-related factors are not merely necessary pre-existing conditions for the

onset of revolutions (Skocpol 1979; Collins 1997; Kurzman 2009), or outcomes of a social

revolution (Skocpol 1988; Carter, Bernhard, and Palmer 2012), but constitute intrinsic parts of

revolution itself (Mann 2013; Tarrow 2015).[43] Following Janowitz (1964), Hintze (1975),

McNeill (1982), Mann (1986), Tilly (1990), Finer (1997), and Zhao (2015), I treat political and

military power as two distinct, not necessarily overlapping but closely interrelated aspects: "the

military organization is central to the establishment and perpetuation of the political community,

the regime, and the ruling authorities" (Finer 1997:15).[44] A few pioneer scholars did take on the

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[41] For example, Foran's recent synthesis (2005:18) covers economic ("economic downturn"), political ("exclusionary personalist or colonial state or open polity"), geo-political ("colonial state" *per se*), geo-economic ("dependent development"), cultural ("political culture of opposition"), and geo-cultural ("world-system opening") conditions, with no place for the military. In these structural accounts, revolutionary wars become a contingent factor that serves the role of narrative in the shadow of other "structural" variables. In early scholarship, major exceptions are Wickham-Crowley (1992). IR scholars discuss the relationship between revolutions and wars from another side (Walt 1996; Halliday 1999). For a recent critique on the neglect of the military in revolution studies, see: Mann 2012; Tarrow 2015.

[42] In other words, like other structural dimensions, the military is not always critical in revolutions. It is unnecessary to use "military determinism" to replace "class determinism," "state-centered theory," or "cultural determinism." The military is key in cases such as these being analyzed (but not necessarily elsewhere), so I highlight the role of military power and relations throughout my empirical analysis. That's another reason that I provide a special note in the theory part.

[43] Military competition is in the center of studies on interstate relationships (e.g., McNeill 1982; Mann 1986; Tilly 1985, 1990; Downing 1992; Ertman 1997; Centeno 2002), but not in domestic politics that include revolutions. Surprisingly, Tilly has not connected his two major contributions—the military (Tilly 1990) and mobilization (Tilly 1978)—in a single master work.

[44] It should be noted, that the military in early-modern politics was even more important for several reasons: 1) Armies were more frequently used in external and internal wars, to keep the security and social order of the polity. 2) The military was the most important part of the state machine: Soldiers outnumbered civilian officials and military expenditures comprised the majority of state expenditures (Hintze 1975; Mann 1986). 3) Military and civilian offices were not completely separate in most polities, and generals often played crucial roles in politics (Finer 1997). 4) Likewise, soldiers and policemen were not separate: the military also partly served a policing function in domestic security. 5) Unlike the modern professional military system that is typically separated from civil society, militaries were deeply embedded in and interacted with local societies. 6) Non-state professional militaries, such as mercenary, hired militias, and local militias were extensively recruited (Tilly 1990).

military and war elements in revolutions (Russell 1974; Trimberger 1978; Skocpol 1979; Wickham-Crowley 1992), but they mostly take the military as an *external*, structural factor which triggers rebellions/revolutions or is triggered by revolutions (Skocpol 1988; Walt 1990), rather than as an *intrinsic, constitutive, and interactive* part in revolutionary processes. In armed insurrections, however, its role is actually central: "War also continued to determine the form of the revolution itself. Revolution, and in response counterrevolution, became militarized, accompanied by civil war... This was the principal role of military power relations" (Mann 2013:247).[45] In other words, we not only need to bring the military into the analytic center, but also examine it in dynamic processes. Simply put, *revolution makes wars; war makes revolution*.

There are several critical dimensions to military relationships during an armed rebellion/revolution. The key is the continually shifting military power relationship among various forces, including different (and often) conflicting state actors and all kinds of non-state militarized forces such as rebel armies, organized bandit/piracy groups, state-sponsored militias, warlords, foreign colonizers/invaders, foreign mercenaries, local militias, etc.

First, in many long-lasting revolutions/rebellions, the essential task between the state and the master insurgent group is wars; accordingly, the *changing* military balance between the two is the single most important relationship in the revolutionary, insurgent, or guerrilla civil wars: as Mao Zedong once cogently put it, "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun". Likewise, in Latin American, "guerrilla movements must have enough military power to endure and outlast

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[45] For example, the Chinese Communist Revolution cannot be understood "without giving a central place to military power relation"—the revolution was a war, "lasting twenty years" (Mann 2012:421). So did the twenty-year rebellious civil war in the mid-19th-century China.

military repression, and finally to confront the military, or they will be militarily unable to achieve the revolutionary transfer or power" (Wickham-Crowley 1992:8).

Second, insurrections also intensify the control of military power between different factions within the state. Rather than pre-existing structural vulnerability, as Mann argues (2012:170), in the course of coping with insurgents, the central state "might be factionalized, unable to present a united front to the insurgents." The factionalized state certainly facilitated the expansion of the master revolution as well as the emergence of new rebel groups.

Third, insurgencies further restructure the military relationship between the central and regional states. In order to cope with dispersive armed forces, the state sometimes has to disperse its originally "concentrated-coercive" military power (Mann 1986) into more diffusive forms and thus is no longer able to control them firmly. Powerful yet unruly generals may join the rebel army, become warlords, and even take the state power; their dis(loyalty) becomes critical for the success or failure of the revolution/rebellion (Russell 1974). As a result, the central state not only needs to pacify rebellions, but also prevent insurgency from within.

Fourth, elite-led societal militarization and warfare is a very common phenomenon in many revolutions/rebellions—the local cleavage structure might depart from the central cleavage structure, thereby generating different kinds of small-scale rebellions and wars. Pervasive warfare and violence often drives people to join the armed forces for protection and predation, regardless of its political nature (Kalyvas 2006).

Fifth, the alteration in the military power relationship would possibly cause ruptures in other structural dimensions or be affected by the latter. For instance, during a rebellious civil war, the

politics is by and large militaristic as the state's central task is warfare and its preparation. Accordingly, even in states where civilian officials used to control the army, the relationship between civilian and military lines could be blurred during a rebellious civil war: to cope with insurgents, dual administrative structures might coexist in local politics, competing for fiscal resources and manpower. Likewise, insurgent civil wars can also affect international relationships and incur foreign intervention. For instance, foreign military aid is not merely an "exogenous" factor (Wickham-Crowley 1992), but constitutive to the revolutionary progress.

In conclusion, for explaining revolutions/rebellions that involve armed struggles, we not only need to bring the military into the analytic center, but also examine it from a dynamic perspective and in relational terms. Military power, relations, and activities among various groups are intertwined and are constitutive in a revolution.

In sum, my dynamic model contends that: 1) the sociopolitical and cultural structures are altered in the revolutionary process and the changing structures in turn shape the subsequent rebellious events and actions; 2) Succeeding rebellions emerge from processual interactions among various (potential) rebel groups, state actors, and other kinds of organizational actors rather than being determined by pre-existing structural conditions; 3) Revolutionary unfoldings have common temporal patterns rather than temporally peculiar and accidental happenings.

Methodologically, the dynamic model puts the continuous interactions of structures and revolutionary actions/events at the analytic center. It pays close attention to underlying patterns and "leading edges" of rebellious emergence, while also incorporating important events in the

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narrative. This means that it brings *relational* and *processual* analysis together, without losing

sensitivity to *agencies* and *contingencies*. To our surprise, the best epistemological statement of

the dynamic model comes from Barrington Moore, a broadly recognized Marxian structuralist:

"*all that the social historian can do is point to a contingent connection among changes in the*

structure of society" (Moore 1966:29).[46]

    Table 1.2 compares the four models, each of which assumes distinct causalities and

temporalities. First, both structural and dynamic models attribute causal power to some

underlying forces, but the dynamic model highlights the relational dimension and processual

nature of these forces. During a revolution the rapidly changing relational structures have visible

ruptures and are often under-institutionalized, so they are more vulnerable to further challengers

and offer continuous opportunities for strategic actors.[47] The temporally and spatially uneven

rebellious unfoldings cannot be predicted by pre-existing structures, but are revealed by

examining the altering relations. Second, albeit accepting the effect of critical juncture in shaping

subsequent events, the dynamic model considers it as only one of a series and hierarchy of

turning points, and all subsequent history is still open-ended rather than deterministic. Moreover,

it is the changing relationship structure rather than the endogenous mechanism that plays the key

causal roles. Finally, while acknowledging the transformative effects of historical events, the

dynamic model focuses on underlying, common patterns instead of the peculiarity of each

rebellion and temporally and spatially heterogeneous causalities. Compared with spectacular

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[46] Despite his structural theoretical stance, Moore noticed the dynamic nature of structures in his masterful narrative.
[47] In fact, actors sometimes purposively attack vulnerable structures to radicalize contentions. For example, the frequent change of governmental forms during a revolution implies unsettled relationships among major political actors, and hence gives different groups opportunities and motivations to contend for power.

yet-relatively-short-lived and infrequent historical events, the effects of those changing

relationships are still endurable, extensive, and deep, and thus more strongly encompass and

shape any single organizational actor and their actions. In other words, the dynamic model

argues that the underlying yet changing relations among organizational actors provide the

strongest explanation to common insurrectionary patterns.

Table 1.2. Four models in explaining revolutions and rebellions

	Structural Model	Eventful Model	Endogenous Model	Dynamic Model
Major theoretical statements	Preexisting structural conditions and long-term structural changes facilitate revolutions and great rebellions	Revolutionary processes are a series of contingent historical events, loosely connected to each other	A critical juncture created by historical contingency will have self-reinforcing forces to sustain endogenous processes of revolutions and rebellions	The changing relational structures produce certain mechanisms to sustain subsequent insurgent actions and mobilization
Causality	Preexisting structural conditions	Transformative events, sequence, temporally and spatially heterogeneous causalities, accidents	Critical juncture followed by positive feedback mechanism	Changing relationships among major organizational forces (central and local state actors, regional armies, rebel groups, elite-led militias, etc.)
Temporality	Structural determinism	Historical contingency	Endogeneity and recursivity of events	Interactional dynamism
Analytic strategies	Identifying key structural factors/variables through comparison, and narrate how they affect rebellions	Identifying a series of loosely connected yet still contingent historical events, narrate the stories and interpret their cultural meaning, analyze how they rearticulate the overlapping structures	Identifying critical junctures, and then finding the crucial endogenous mechanisms that sustain the rebellion formation process.	1) identifying key patterns of rebellious development during the revolutionary process; 2) tracing the major turning points; 3) examining how changing structures shape underlying patterns of insurrectionary movements and actions
Slogan	"Revolutions are not made; they come" (Skocpol 1979:17; from Phillips)	"Historical events as transformation of structures" (Sewell 1996)	"Path dependence occurs when a contingent historical event triggers a subsequent sequence that follows a relatively deterministic pattern" (Mahoney 2000:535)	"All that the social historian can do is point to a contingent connection among changes in the structure of society" (Moore 1966:29)

The four models would arrive at distinct explanations for the rise and unfolding of the mid-19th-century Chinese rebellions. The structural model would offer the most parsimonious explanation by identifying certain structural conditions of Chinese society as the ultimate causal factors for these rebellions. In light of the eventful model, these rebellions could be taken as a series of historically contingent events that were loosely connected with each other, yet were overall discontinuous, unexpected, and accidental. The endogenous model would consider them to be self-sustaining processes following the successful emergence of the Taiping Rebellion as a critical juncture in breaking down the imperial order. Finally, the dynamic model stresses that structural conditions of the Qing Empire and rebellions constituted each other in a highly interactive but also patterned way. Particularly, some early, large-scale rebellions (including but not limited to the Taiping Rebellion) altered political, militaristic, and cultural structures and remade relationships among state actors and societal elites, which in turn generated a series of mechanisms facilitating the protracted and widespread formation of rebellions.

Methods and Materials

The dissertation is comparative in two senses: it is both a single case study conducted in comparative perspective with respect to existing theoretical literature built on key set of cases, and contains multiple subnational comparisons within this case. Overall, it is a single case study on the mid-19th-century rebellions in China, as a way to illustrate the dynamic model when explaining large-scale and prolonged political movements. It is thus also a negative (deviant) case study for the mainstream structural model (Emigh 1997; Kurzman 2009), by answering the question: when structural conditions are absent or at least not ripe (Chapter 2), why do great

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rebellions emerge (Chapters 3-5)? This case is thus valuable not merely because of its historical

significance and influence—though it is—but more because it serves the purpose of theoretical

development. It is certainly not a decisive evaluation of different theories in the positivist sense

(Skocpol 1979; Ragin 1987; Paige 1999), but rather helps reveal the most potential of the new

theory as well as what has not been clearly seen in previous accounts (Emigh 1997).

On the other hand, this dissertation uses a number of subnational comparisons to compare

different groups, areas, and episodes to identify and explain common patterns and critical

variations (Steinmetz 1993; Clemens 1997; Snyder 2001; Wilson 2011).[48] In each of Chapters

3-5, I employ different subnational comparative strategies for specific theoretical purposes,

including negative case study (Chapter 3), common pattern identifying (Chapter 4), and variation

seeking (Chapter 5). Specifically, Chapter 3 uses negative case study to demonstrate why the

inter-group interactions facilitated the rise of some groups but not others, even if they were

similar in other regards (Emigh 1997). In Chapter 4, common pattern identifying is employed to

show that temporally and spatially heterogeneous cases have common patterns that could be

revealed by the dynamic model, albeit not in the positive sense (Gerring 2007:139-142). Chapter

5 uses variation seeking to explain how Muslim groups varied with each other in terms of

employing certain ethno-religious identities and institutions in the rebellious mobilization, due to

their different interactional modes with other groups and the state's incoherence in handling even

similar situations (Steinmetz 2004; Wilson 2011).

In each subnational comparison, rather than claiming "random sampling from a population,"

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[48] To some extent my comparative logic is close to critical realism (Gorski 2004; Steinmetz 2004) rather than positivism
(Skocpol 1979; Ragin 1987; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003).

I follow "theoretical and purposive sampling" (Ragin 1991:7; Walton 1991:121, 124) to select these cases in order to reveal the theory at its greatest potential and "the workings of these causal mechanisms" (Steinmetz 2004:394). Casing strategies are carefully considered in each chapter, so the subnational comparative units in each chapter vary from rebel groups (chapter 3), mobilizing episodes (chapter 4), and contentious areas (chapter 5) (Clemens 2007). Moving back and forth across multiple levels, these comparative case studies allow me to "proceed with explaining similarities and differences among collectivities" (Vaughan 1991: 181), demonstrating the analytic advantages of the dynamic model over other models.

In addition to the use of comparison, other methods are also employed. First, historical narrative is extensively used not only to contextualize the explanation but also "largely to illustrate possible patterns" (Abbott 1991:74). Second, when there is a need, I build datasets of contentious groups/events for the quantitative analysis of rebellious activities for several highlighted regions, relying upon both governmental documents and local sources (Olzak 1989). Third, using the Historical Geography Database of China,[49] I conduct spatial analysis to map contentious activities and explore their spatial patterns (Gieryn 2000; Knowles 2000).

To conduct these analyses, I mainly use three types of materials out of numerous primary sources. Some of these sources were collected in national and provincial archives and libraries in China between 2011 and 2012. The first is government documents, especially the daily communications between the court and provincial officials, i.e., edicts (messages from the court

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[49] Thanks to the historical geographical dataset of China contributed by historical geographers at Harvard and Fudan University in China, GIS analysis is now available for analyzing historical contentious events, such as Hung's study (2011) on protests in the middle Qing (1740-1839).

to provincial officials) and memorials (messages from provincial officials to the court). These documents record how different central and regional state agencies perceived, identified, discussed and responded to important affairs, including rebellions and other forms of contention (Yang 1975; Hung 2009, 2011).[50] Most of these documents were systematically compiled and published in five collections—The *Grand Strategies* (*Fanglue* in Chinese and hereafter) for suppressing the five largest rebellions (1872a, 1872b, 1896a, 1896b, 1896c), each of which contains from dozens of to hundreds of volumes.[51] For other major regional rebellions, basic information can be accessed from the broadly used *The Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty* (*QSL*, hereafter) (Yang 1975).[52] I also collected sources by visiting the First Historical Archive at Beijing and the digital database of court archives edited by the National Palace Museum at Taipei: "Database of Ch'ing Palace Memorials and Archives of the Grand Council."

Second, I use local gazetteers[53] for information on many small-scale, short-lived, contentious groups, and other valuable local information. Understandably, local gazetteers contained more information on small incidents than court archives. Though imperfect, they are edited under common formats and contain relatively consistent and comparable information, and thus serve to at least make descriptive statistics possible. I use local gazetteers to not only find more information for narratives, but more importantly, to build a dataset of contentious activities

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[50] For example, Hung (2011) used these imperial archives to study protests in middle Qing China (1740-1839).
[51] For the Taiping Rebellion, I mainly refer to *Historical Materials from the Archives of the Qing Government's Suppression of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (26 volumes) (*HMAQG*, hereafter), which contains the *Fanglue* and other court documents on the Taiping Rebellion.
[52] Furthermore, the First Historical Archive also compiled a few special collections of archives on smaller rebellions, such as the Triad rebellions in South China in 1849 and 1850 (*TFHA* 1978, 1994a, 1994b, 1995a, 1995b, 1996). They will be referred to when appropriate.
[53] Local gazetteers were usually edited by local officials and gentry to cover a specific period (Mostern 2008). For their use in studying contentious politics in China, see: Tong 1991; Su 2011; Walder 2014.

for further quantitative analysis. Nearly all historical gazetteers have been digitized and are available at the website of the National Library of China.

Finally, I refer to a few records by contemporaries, such as rebels' depositions after their arrest, officials' and generals' diaries and letters, and records of key witnesses such as Christian missionaries to gain insider perspectives of most relevant parties. These accounts are particularly valuable in deciphering hidden processes to illustrate some specific aspects of my theory.

Looking Ahead

Organized both chronologically and thematically, the empirical analysis contains three parts: the next chapter introduces why certain preexisting structures do not offer an adequate explanation either to the rise of the Taiping Rebellion or subsequent rebellions; then in Chapter 3, I discuss how the Taiping Rebellion emerged out of a regional dynamism in its interactions with other rebel groups and state actors; finally, I examine the emergence of subsequent rebellions (Chapters 4-5). The following is a summary of the rest of the dissertation.

Chapter 2, "Were Structural Conditions Ripe?" examines a number of structural conditions (class structure, state/elite relations, and state capacity) and long-term structural changes (geopolitical pressure, geo-economic vulnerability, and demographic conditions) that have been highlighted in extant studies. I argue that preexisting structural conditions explain very little of either the origin or development of the mid-19th century rebellion waves. The examination of macro-structural conditions thus leaves us a puzzle: without a serious crisis of the imperial state or intensified state/elite conflicts or a favorable agrarian structure, why did the widespread and prolonged rebellions emerge?

Chapter 3, "Contentious Turn of a Christian Society," turns to the initiator and master

movement during this era: the Taiping Rebellion. I demonstrate that the key to the rise of the

Taiping was neither the structural conditions of the time nor the Taiping's ideological and

organizational strengths as a Christian society, but the result of interactions beginning in the late

1840s among multiple militarized forces under an inadequate Qing military force in south China.

The Taiping's transformation to a rebellion—militarization, concentration, and

politicization—was its willy-nilly reaction as a new, heterodox religion to the emergent hostile

and violent local conditions rather than being predetermined by the macro-structural conditions.

Chapter 4, "Insurrections of Elite-Led Militias," explains a common yet puzzling

phenomenon during this period: Why did some initially elite-led defensive communal militias

turn into rebellions while others became the state's allies? Drawing upon cases across regions, I

argue that these elite revolts were not the result of preexisting contradiction between the state and

elites (as was often seen in early modern Europe), but were the unintended consequences of the

counter-insurgent mobilization of elites and the state. While the elite-led communal

militarization resulted in the rival alignment and local cleavages, incoherent state reactions to

these rival blocs caused the divergence of initially similar groups. Whether an elite-led militia

turned into rebels or repressors was situational results of a highly ambiguous process, contingent

upon the power and positioning of their major competitors and state patrons.

Chapter 5, "Mobilizing Muslims, Unlike Uprisings" strives to solve a puzzle: Why were

Muslims mobilized on such a massive scale, unprecedented in the imperial history of China?

Arguing against conventional wisdom that often regards Muslim mobilization as the inevitable

outcome of intrinsic cultural confrontation or monolithic ethnic tension, this chapter examines how rebellions came into being out of different ethno-religious identities and institutions across three regions. Under the surface of the seemingly homogenous Muslim Rebellion were three disparate uprisings: de-ethnicization and divergence of Muslim coalitions for ethnic clashes in Yunnan Province, ethnicized conflicts of initially defensive militarization in Shaanxi Province, and balkanized politicization of Sufi solidarities in Gansu Province. Furthermore, none of these were outcomes of the existing ethno-religious conditions, but unfolded as unexpected and unplanned results of major regional actors' reactions to the external Taiping rebels and their iterative interactions with each other.

In Chapter 6, I will summarize the empirical findings of the dissertation, and further make the case that a relational and dynamic perspective is central to our understanding of contentious politics in general. I will also discuss the scope conditions of this model.

Chapter 2 Were Structural Conditions Ripe?

In this chapter I will examine several structural conditions that were in place before the mid-19th-century Chinese rebellions. Leading up to that discussion, I would like to first sketch a picture of the Qing Empire to offer some historical background. The Qing Empire was built by the minority Manchu conquerors in 1644 and was later pacified following a three-decade civil war (Wakeman 1985). Since then Chinese society entered the prosperous "long eighteenth century" (1680s-1820s) (Naquin and Rawski 1987; Mann 1987; Pomeranz 2001, 2010; Rowe 2002): the agrarian and commercial economies boomed (Pomeranz 2001); cities flourished, especially in the Lower Yangzi Delta (Skinner 1977); the population dramatically increased from less than 100 million in 1680 to 430 million in 1850, an unprecedented level in Chinese history (Cao 2001); the state enjoyed extraordinary military success along its frontiers while also firmly maintaining domestic political order (Perdue 2005; Hung 2011). It is true that the White Lotus Rebellion (1796-1804) signaled certain social crises, but the state soon recovered from this rebellion (Rowe 2011; Wang 2014). At least, between 1805 and 1850, there was no big rebellion except a short, almost accidental uprising in North China in 1813 (Naiquin 1976).[1]

Large-scale rebellions eventually came in the 1850s, nevertheless. To account for the outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion, as well as other uprisings during this period, historians and sociologists have identified a number of structural factors. The influence of the structural model can be seen, for example, in a broadly used historiography of modern China:

> "From this description we get a picture of a country beset with social and

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[1] This uprising has been remembered by historians because it was dramatic rather than sizeable: a few rebels sneaked into the Imperial Palace in Beijing but were soon defeated.

economic problems, military degradation, political corruption, population pressure, natural calamities, and an explosive situation in Kwang-tung. The country was ripe for an upheaval, and it is no coincidence that the largest and most significant convulsion, the Taiping Revolution, broke out in the south" (Hsu 2000:226).

Were structural conditions really ripe?

With so many options, choosing which structural factors to discuss is a point of theoretical judgment. Following major structural works that have touched upon modern Chinese rebellions and revolutions (esp., Moore 1966; Wallerstein 1979; Skocpol 1979; Wolf 1982; Goldstone 1991; Mann 2012), I evaluate six aspects of pre-existing structures or long-term structural changes. I pay special attention to three paradigmatic works in revolution studies because they not only have powerful theory and a sweeping scope, but also all include China as a major case in their empirical analysis (Moore 1966: 213-218; Skocpol 1979:74-75; Goldstone 1991:394-399).[2] Considering their theoretical value and empirical relevance, it would be inappropriate for any sociological work on Chinese rebellions/revolutions to not give them enough attention. Plus, the complexity of their argument also requires a careful examination.[3]

However, the examination below reveals that structural conditions explain little about the origins and development of these rebellions. I organize my evaluation into two parts: "deep sociopolitical structures" that include agrarian class structures, state/elite cleavage, and state capacity; "long-term structural changes" that include geopolitical crisis, geo-economic vulnerability, and demographic pressure. A specific structural explanation might combine some

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[2] Moore and Skocpol mainly analyzed the conditions leading to the communist revolution, but they did include the mid-19th-century rebellions in their analysis and comparison. Goldstone directly discusses the Taiping Rebellion in his empirical analysis.

[3] A similar example is Kurzman's evaluation of structural conditions before the Iran Revolution (Kurzman 2009). Of six empirical chapters, he uses five to review and eventually reject five alternative structural explanations: political, organizational, cultural, economic, and military.

factors in each group—for example, Skocpol's analysis includes agrarian class structures,

state/elite splits, and geopolitical pressure. For the purpose of evaluation, I will first examine

them one-by-one, then provide a discussion on their common problems in explaining my case.

<div align="center">**Deep Sociopolitical Structures**</div>

Agrarian Class Structure

Let's start from the agrarian class structure, stated as one of two conditions for

social-revolutionary situations by Skocpol (1979:154)—"agrarian sociopolitical structures that

facilitated widespread peasant revolts against landlords." The agrarian class structure includes

two elements relating to agrarian uprisings: landlord/peasant class structure and peasant

community structure (Moore 1966; Wolf 1969; Skocpol 1979). Below I evaluate them in turn.

The first theoretically relevant condition is whether agrarian class contradictions were

intense enough to produce strongly resistant identities and grievances, if not direct contentious

action. Despite his general Marxian approach, Moore did not offer substantive argument or

evidence on how agrarian class contradictions contributed to the endemic peasant rebellions in

China. Skocpol, interestingly, acknowledges that although the Chinese Revolution was the most

obviously peasant-based social revolution, its agrarian class contradiction was not as intense as

in France or Russia: "surprising as it may seem, though, the agrarian class and local political

structures of old-regime China, despite some similarities to France and Russia, resembled those

of England and Prussia in key respects" (Skocpol 1979:147-148).

Skocpol's statement is confirmed by evidence from the socioeconomic history of late

imperial China. In the Qing dynasty, China's agrarian structure had "decidedly non-'feudal'

feature" and "fluid class structure" (Rowe 2002:485). "The overwhelming majority of land in all parts of China was more or less freely alienable" and actively marketed (Pomeranz 2001:71; Rowe 2002:485). More importantly, land ownership was open to the lower class (Rowe 2002:485). Accordingly, "China had an unusually low rate of landlessness, even in highly commercialized and densely populated regions" (Pomeranz 2010:190). In poorer North China, most farmers were smallholders while about 15% of the land was farmed by tenants (Huang 1985:103; Pomeranz 2010:191). In the more commercialized and wealthy Yangzi Valley, about 50% of lands were rented (Huang 1990:103; Pomeranz 2001:72). Tenants had secure use rights, and their earnings were about 70% of smallholders (Pomeranz 2001:73, 2010:191, 265).

In this agrarian system, instead of "widespread peasant revolts against landlords" (Skocpol 1979:154), "agrarian unrest rarely took the form of concerted attacks by peasants against landlords within their communities" (Skocpol 1979:150). Instead, peasant revolts "ended up (if they did not begin) under the leadership of gentry, so that actual and potential anti-landlord actions were ultimately suppressed or diverted" (Skocpol 1979: 114; see also: 150-151). This statement is confirmed by several historical studies, even when a generally Marxian theory is applied (Perry 1980; Marks 1984; Bernhardt 1992). For example, Marxian historian Marks acknowledges that in the last half of the nineteenth century, in South China, "the conflict was not marked by landlord-peasant struggles, however, but by struggles between competing groups comprised of both lords and peasants" (Marks 1984:60-61). As summarized by another historian, in the middle 19th-century, "none of the rebellions began in an area known to suffer from land tenure conditions worse than average" (Gray 1990:53).

The second theoretically relevant condition is whether the peasant community was coherent enough for revolutionary mobilization. Interestingly, although both Moore and Skocpol found that the Chinese peasant community lacked solidarity, they arrived at different conclusions. Both of their conclusions are problematic.

In Moore's analysis of China's long pathway from the late imperial era to the success of the Communist Revolution, he offers an interesting discussion on why peasant insurrection was endemic in China, using the case of the Nien Rebellion (Moore 1966:214-217). Overall he argues that the framework of traditional Chinese society drove elusive peasants to become first bandits, then rebels and finally revolutionary armies. According to him, the low cohesiveness of the peasant community and the weak links between the peasantry and landlords "explain why China was especially subject to peasant insurrections" (Moore 1966:213; see also: 208, 468-469, 477-478). Peasants became bandits, who later were recruits for warlords, rebels, or revolutionary armies (Moore 1966: 213, 215). Under these conditions, bandits were continuously reproduced, especially in the presence of natural calamities, famine, or maladministration. Furthermore, "in Manchu times the line between merely predatory banditry and organized rebellion was in any event a thin one" (Moore 1966:215). Even the gentry were coerced to cooperate, especially when rebels took territorial bases.[4]

Moore's "bandit-rebel" model can certainly explain a few banditry rebellions in the middle 19th-century, but careful investigation shows Moore's argument to be incoherent and that it even contradicts his own theory. First, while tenuous, the peasant community is taken as a general

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[4] Moore's "bandit-rebel" model came from social historian Wolfram Eberhard's *Conquerors and Rulers: Social Forces in Medieval China* (1952).

precondition for peasant insurrections (Moore 1966:469), as acknowledged by Moore himself, rebellions cannot hold together without a certain level of solidarity: after all revolutions and rebellions are different from bandit groups. Powerful rebel armies seldom came from bandits during the mid-19th century. Instead, despite little evidence in his time, Moore realized that "the clan, it is worth noticing, formed the basis of the rebel organizations" (Moore 1966:216). In other words, village clans/lineages, rather than wandering bandit groups, were the reliable organizational infrastructure for durable rebellions. Communal solidarity rather than communal alienation mattered. Second and related point, as clans linked the upper class and peasants, it is thus dubious to take landlords and peasants as two distinctive class actors with only weak connections. The clan "was a double-edged sword because it could also hold rebellion together" (Moore 1966: 208). That's why we see that many rebel groups originated as an aggregation of elites and peasants in the same community in this period. Again, both Moore's class interpretation and tenuous community explanation of these mid-19th century Chinese rebellions are inaccurate.

With more evidence from socioeconomic historians, Skocpol better realized that "the peasants of China lacked the kind of structurally pre-existing solidarity and autonomy" that allowed spontaneous peasant uprisings appearing in France and Russia (Skocpol 1979:148). She says that this is why there was no peasant uprising following the Republican Revolution of 1911.

Then Skocpol's structural explanation of the Chinese revolution faces a real challenge. If, according to her empirical analysis, there was neither an intense agrarian class contradiction nor a structurally pre-existing solidarity and autonomy of the peasant community—i.e., the first

necessary condition of revolution did not exist in China—why did peasant revolution eventually

appear in the 20th century? In other words, *why was the most representative peasant revolution*

born in a society with the least favorable agrarian social structures for such a revolution? Even

more puzzlingly, if, as Skocpol argues, the agrarian sociopolitical structures of China were not

transformed until the end of the Communist Revolution,[5] *why did this unchanged structure*

produce different levels of peasant mobilization during the three insurgent waves: widespread

peasant mobilization in 1850-1873, almost zero peasant uprisings in the wake of the Republican

Revolution of 1911, and increasing peasant mobilization during the Communist Revolution

between 1928 and 1949?

In her work, Skocpol partially addresses the variation of peasant mobilization between the

Republican Revolution and the Communist Revolution by highlighting the role of the

Communist Party,[6] but offers no satisfactory answer to peasant mobilization during the

mid-19th-century rebellions. Hence my question still remains: If no favorable agrarian structures

existed before 1850, why were peasants pervasively mobilized to participate into contentious

actions? I contend that a processual perspective is indispensible to answer this question, and will

present this argument in the following chapters.

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[5] Skocpol says (1979:153): "Although imperialism fundamentally dislocated and revolutionized dominant-class and national politics, it did not fundamentally alter the economic and political situation of the vast majority of peasants and rural communities".

[6] In order to explain the difference between the peasant mobilizations of the Republican Revolution and the Communist Revolution, Skocpol finally attributes the variation to the Communist Party, a factor which is not included in her theoretical statements. It is the communist party that offered "a new kind of national political leadership" to reorganize the nevertheless unorganized peasants and mobilize them into the social revolution (Skocpol 1979:153-154). In other words, a newly emerging party leadership (together with a new ideology) rather than the pre-existing agrarian social structures explained the unprecedented peasant mobilization since the 1930s.

State/Elite Cleavage

Intensified pre-revolution elite/state cleavage is said to play a crucial role in making

revolutions and revolts in early modern Europe and elsewhere, especially as states began to

expand their power and penetrate into local societies (Skocpol 1979; Barkey 1991; Tilly 1993;

Gould 1996; Lachmann 2000). In Skocpol's account, the political crisis triggered by geopolitical

failure turns into a political revolution partly because it causes intensified cleavage between the

state and politically powerful upper landlord classes (Skocpol 1979: 75-76, 152; See Sewell's

rearticulation of her argument: 2005:92-93). In this period, elites including Confucian gentry did

take leadership roles in many rebel organizations in the mid-19th-century Chinese rebellions (e.g.,

Kuhn 1970; Perry 1980; Zheng 2009). So, were these rebellions also driven by structural

cleavages between the state and elites, just like those in early modern Europe? Moreover, did the

Qing's military failure in the Opium War (1839-1842) enlarge the state/elite cleavage to a level

that led to the elite insurrections in the 1850s and 1860s?

The answer is clearly no. Above all, during most of the Qing Empire period, the state and

gentry had no intrinsic enmity but shared strong ruling-class culture and interests (Weber 1951;

Moore 1966; Mann 1986; Zhao 2015). In sharp contrast to early modern Europe, where "the

struggle between the nobility and the crown" was "the decisive elements of politics, "the Chinese

landed upper classes did not develop any significant principled opposition to the Imperial system"

(Moore 1966:181). Instead, Qing rulers shared a strong ruling-class identity with Confucian

gentry (Mann 1986:270), while also developing other strategies to incorporate elites in frontier

areas (Elliott 2001; Perdue 2005). In the internal provinces, Confucian gentry enjoyed a variety

of privileges while assisting the state to provide public goods, discipline other social members, and maintain social order (Chang 1955:51-70; Hsiao 1960; Chu 1962).[7]

Furthermore, after its decisive success in frontier wars against inner Asian tribes in the late 1760s (Perdue 2005), the Qing state became a stable rather than an expansive state, with nearly fixed official numbers, military size, and revenue between 1780 and 1850 (see Table 2.1). In particular, the taxation share of the national product might even have dropped from about 5% to 3% from 1780 to 1850, since the land tax that made up of 70% of the Qing revenue until 1860 was fixed in the early 18th century. This decreasing average tax level of an already small taxation base resulted in an increasingly lighter taxation burden for agrarian elites (Wang 1973; Pomeranz 2010). In sum, as the state did not try to extract increasing resources from elite groups, there were no European-style state/elite cleavages to generate elite grievances and resistance.

Finally, as will later be introduced in detail, the Opium War (1839-1842) did not much increase the fiscal burden to the state and even less so to the elites, so it did not result in a similar kind of state/elite cleavage to what was seen on the eve of the Republican Revolution of 1911, when the Qing Empire had heavier fiscal pressures due to two military fiascos (Skocpol 1979).

Table 2.1. Size of the Qing state, 1780-1850

Year	Population	Civil officials		Soldiers		Revenue/GNP
	million	thousand	%	thousand	%	
1780	300	20	0.007	1000	0.33	5%
1850	430	20	0.004	950	0.22	3%

Sources: Wang 1973; Pomeranz 2010.

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[7] These local initiatives of Confucian elites did not lead to localism or public space independent from the state (e.g., Bol 2003), but instead offered an inexpensive foundation for the state (Mann 1986, chapter 5; Zhao 2015:338-342).

The harmonious relationship between the state and elites is confirmed by data on protest events. Building upon the analysis of the nature of "mass incidents," Yang (1975:190) found that both anti-rent and anti-tax revolts played insignificant roles in the first half of the 19th-century. As shown in Table 2.2, only 7 anti-rent and anti-taxation contentions took place between 1800-1845, much smaller than other forms of mass action incidents; even during the rebellious period, anti-tax or anti-rent unrest was still a very small portion of all mass action incidents. Overall, resistance against state extraction was infrequent in the Qing dynasty, compared with countries in early modern Europe, such as France (Barkey 1991; Tilly 1993; Markoff 1997). It is true that Confucian gentry might use certain institutional channels, such as the capital petition (*Jingkong* in Chinese), to lodge complaints against local officials (Hung 2011), but they were unlikely to organize or participate in large-scale anti-state uprisings.

Table 2.2. Number of mass action incidents by form, 1796-1865

Years	Resistance against taxation and rent	Battles between government forces and organized groups	Banditry and piracy	*Total*
1796-1805	0	42	42	107
1806-1815	1	1	51	131
1816-1825	0	2	46	117
1826-1835	0	4	97	206
1836-1845	6	20	85	258
1846-1855	17	502	266	959
1856-1865	6	1792	302	2483

Source: Yang 1975:190.

Admittedly, the Republican Revolution of 1911 occurred partially because the split between the state and elites was intensified over revenue distribution and regional political autonomy in the late 19th-century (Skocpol 1979:76-80). This state/elite cleavage was, however, the

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consequences of these mid-19th-century rebellions and the way these rebellions were suppressed

(Skocpol 1979:75-76).[8] The cleavage intensified even more when the state tried to increase

taxation in reaction to the state crisis after the two wars between China and Japan and western

powers at the end of the 19th-century. Yet a similar level of state/elite cleavage was not present

before the mid-century rebellions examined here. In other words, this state/elite cleavage was a

consequence rather than the cause of these mid-century rebellions.[9]

Then, if these mid-century elite-led insurrections were not produced by pre-existing

state/elite cleavage, how should they be explained at all? I argue that their uprisings could only

be accounted for by *newly emerging cleavages* between the state and elites as the unintended

consequences of reactions to the Taiping Rebellion since 1853. In Chapter 4, I will describe how

the process of the initially counter-insurgent elite mobilization gradually turned to inter-elite

cleavages that were finally displaced by elite/state splits. Only the dynamic model, rather than

the structural model, can answer the puzzle of why the state's allies became the state's enemies.

State Capacity

The analysis above mentions that the Qing state had not improved its capacity between the

middle 18th- and middle 19th-centuries, so another possible structural condition for the

mid-century rebellions could reasonably be attributed to weak state capacity. According to a few

[8] "Indeed, for the purpose of explaining the downfall of the Old Regime, the most important legacy of the rebellions was the manner in which they were put down… As the imperial armies proved inadequate, the task of dealing with the rebellions fell instead to local gentry-led self-defense associations, and then to regional armies led by native gentry cliques…Even after the rebellions were vanquished, the regional gentry cliques that had triumphed over them retained most of the administrative and military control of their own home areas" (Skocpol 1979:75-76).

[9] In Chinese historiography, there have been debates over the timing of the state/elite cleavage in the late 19th-century: while early scholarship argues that it was the results of the suppression of the mid-century rebellions (Luo 1937; Luo 1945/1984; Spector 1964)—a claim adopted by Skocpol—revisionist scholars argue that the Republican Revolution was caused by a newly emerging crisis rather than long-term structural changes because the court recentralized its military, administrative, and fiscal power after the mid-century crisis (Liu 1974). In other words, the evidence offered by revisionist historiography might even challenge Skocpol's structural explanation of the Republican Revolution.

state-centered models, the limited infrastructural power of the state[10] might give birth to

revolutionary movements (Mann 1986, 2012; See also: Goodwin and Skocpol 1989;

Wickham-Crowley 1992; Migdal *et al*., 1994; Goodwin 2001:26, 37-38, 49). Goodwin and

Skocpol (1989:497) argue that an ideal condition for revolutionaries is "an exclusionary and

repressive authoritarian regime that lacks strong control of its entire territory or borders (or else

suddenly loses such control)". Put in another way, an "organizationally incoherent and militarily

weak" state is quite vulnerable to great uprisings (Goodwin 2001:26).[11] In particular, under his

general theory of revolution, Mann provides a specific explanation to the Chinese Communist

Revolution by noting two kinds of state vulnerability—"factionalism and narrowness or a lack of

state infrastructural power" (Mann 2012:420). Specifically,

> "a state trying to cope with insurgents might be weakened in two different
> ways: it might be factionalized, unable to present a united front to the
> insurgents, or it might lack basic infrastructural powers to impose its will
> across the country" (Mann 2012:170).

Furthermore, these two conditions are connected: a state lacking infrastructural power is more

likely to be trapped into factionalism in coping with insurgencies.

No historical sociologist has provided a systemic argument on how the Qing's state capacity

led to the great mid-century rebellions. Nevertheless, building upon these state-centered theories,

three explanations can be logically developed to account for the mid-19th-century Chinese

rebellions. First, it is fair to argue that the Qing state was short of infrastructural power to cope

with rebellions (see Table 2.3 for a comparison of state capacity among four major Eurasian

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[10] By differentiating despotic power, Mann uses infrastructural power to refer to "the institutional capacity of a central state, despotic or not, to penetrate its territories and logistically implement decisions" (Mann 1993:59).
[11] For another example, Goodwin (2001) argues that those violent, exclusionary yet weak colonial regimes are most vulnerable to revolutionary movements in the third world. Likewise, Foran says that "a repressive, exclusionary, personalist state" is more likely to produce a successful revolution (Foran 2005:18).

states in 1850). Second, it is said that the Qing's state capacity was further weakened by the

White Lotus Rebellion (1796-1804) and military failure in the Opium War (1839-1842): due to

the two wars, the imperial finance was exhausted, the administrative morale was broken, and the

regular forces were weakened (Michael 1950; Kuhn 1970; Jen 1973; Skocpol 1979:73-75;

Goldstone 1991). Third, given the geographic span of the Qing Empire, it is also reasonable to

argue that the Qing state was factionalized to tackle the extensive rebellions. However, careful

examination of the three accounts would show they have logical problems that could only be

remedied by a dynamic view of rebellions and the state.

Table 2.3. Comparison of state size among Eurasian countries, 1850

Country	Population	Civil officials		Soldiers		Revenue/GNP
	million	thousand	%	thousand	%	
China	430	20	0.004	950	0.22	3%
Ottoman	21.4	10	0.05	150	0.72	4-6%
France	35.8	300	0.84	390	1.09	9%
Britain	16.5	67	0.41	197	1.20	20%

Sources: Qing Empire: Wang 1973; Ma 2002; Pomeranz 2010. Ottoman Empire: Findley 1980,
2014; Pamuk 2004; Karaman & Pamuk 2010, 2013. Britain and France: Mann 1993; Bonney
1999.

First, the causal logic that attributes these mid-century rebellions to the Qing state's

infrastructural power has not been specified. It is true that the state capacity of the Qing was

much weaker than the ideal-typical modern state. However, until the emergence of European

states in the late 18th century, a lack of infrastructural power was commonplace for all

pre-modern and early modern empires/states. Most empires, such as the Qing Empire and

Ottoman Empire, fell into the same category before the middle 19th-century (see Table 2.3).

Nonetheless, infrastructural power alone cannot answer where and when rebellions emerged. It is

unable to offer specific explanations to early modern rebellions and revolutions in non-European

societies.

On the other hand, among all pre-modern polities, the Chinese Empire is, ironically,

considered by Mann to possess the greatest infrastructural power, together with the Roman

Empire (Mann 1986: Chapter 5; also see: Tilly 1990; Finer 1997). The Roman Empire and the

Chinese Empire developed complex ruling strategies[12] to the highest level: in particular, the

Roman Empire excelled in employing a "compulsory cooperation" strategy, while the Chinese

empire developed the best strategy of "a common ruling-class structure" (Mann 1986:270).

Given that the Qing Empire's infrastructural power was either conceived as low (compared with

the modern state) or high (compared with other Pre-modern empires), it is unclear which one led

to the rebellions.

In this case, we might need to specify the nature of the Qing's infrastructural power and

examine its strengths and weakness from a processual view. A well-known meritocratic

bureaucracy, the Qing's formal state was surprisingly small in scale. As shown in Tables 2.2 and

2.3, although governing an empire with a territory even larger than that of contemporary China

and a tremendous population (430 million in 1850), the state was only run by about 20,000

strictly selected, centrally controlled, and nationally circulated officials (Chang 1955; Chu 1962).

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[12] Mann presents four principal strategies for developing genuine imperial domination: "rule through clients", "direct army rule", "compulsory cooperation", and "the development of a common ruling-class structure". The first two "were the most readily but the least effective" while the last two "offered far greater resources to imperial rulers but required more complex infrastructures" (Mann 1986:143).

The taxation was also mild. To govern such a vast and populous empire with pre-modern (if one can use that term) technologies would only be possible with the cooperation of local elites, who shared a ruling culture with the state. In other words, "the state's limited infrastructure was compensated for by the self-organizing lineage communities led by the scholar-gentry who shared the mentality and values of government officials" (Zhao 2015:341). These elites' local initiatives enabled the Qing ruler to effectively and inexpensively govern the society. In conclusion, the capacity of the Chinese Empire was less demonstrated by its "hard," formal infrastructural power—as is often believed (Wittfogel 1957)—than its "soft", informal infrastructural power (Weber 1951; Mann 1986: chapter 5; Zhao 2015: chapter 12).

These local elites were even authorized, as they were also willing, to organize communal militias if there was a need. Some communal militias were further recruited by the state as mercenaries in order to remedy a shortage of regular forces in the counter-rebellious wars. This phenomenon had already emerged in the late-18th-century White Lotus Rebellion (Kuhn 1970; Dai 2009), but it developed to a full-fledged level in the mid-19th-century rebellions. Since the regular forces were unable to cope with the rising Taiping rebels, local elites were encouraged by the state to organize communal forces for both self-defense and to assist the state. However, as will be elaborated in Chapter 4, it is also those elite-led militia groups that provided a strong mobilizational basis for pervasive uprisings. The strength of this "soft", informal infrastructural power eventually turned into its fatal weakness.

In other words, the rise of the mid-century rebellions was not simply because China's infrastructural power was strong or weak *per se*, but requires a more contextualized and

processual explanation. As insightfully recognized by historian Rankin (1986: 14):

> "the minimalist form of government was an effective and inexpensive way to govern a large agrarian country during periods of economic stability or slow expansion. It was poorly suited for a governmental effort to develop the country's resources and was ill equipped either to deal with major crises or to maintain state control in periods of sustained or rapid socioeconomic change."

So the explanatory key is not about whether the infrastructural power of the state was strong or weak to generate rebellions, but about the *transitional process* by which its strengths became a weakness in maintaining political order. Given there was no intrinsic enmity between the state and local elites, no pre-existing insurgent identity, and no vertical oppositional structure at the onset, only a dynamic, processual account can disentangle the mysterious course that turns this kind of pre-existing state-society relation into an extensive rebellious formation.[13]

Second, the "weakened" state thesis is even more dubious than the "weak" state thesis: it fails to offer solid evidence, rather it is merely an *ex post* reasoning for this period, as there is little evidence that the Qing's fiscal capacity and military strength was weaker than previous periods. As shown in Table 2.1 and other well-established studies on the Qing's finance and military history (Wang 1973; Luo 1984), both the Qing's standing army and revenues were kept at the same levels between 1780 and 1850. Regarding the two major crises, the Qing's reaction to the White Lotus Rebellion (1796-1804) became an opportunity for reforms leading to sustainable political development (Wang 2014). A few recent revisionist historians contend that the Qing ruler reinvigorated the empire in a politically and ecologically sustainable development pathway in the early 19th-century (Rowe 2010; Pomeranz 2010; Wang 2014). In terms of the Opium War

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[13] Chapter 4 will give a full consideration of this transition: why did some initially counter-insurgent elite-led militias become rebellious?

(1839-1842), the military failure and war reparations only had a minor military and fiscal impact on the Qing dynasty, unlike its military failures prior to the end of the dynasty.[14] Theoretically, war does not necessarily result in weakening state power: it is puzzling to argue that wars made states in Europe but unmade states in non-European societies (Centeno 2002; Lachmann 2009; Zhao 2015).

Third, although Mann's factionalized state argument (2012) touches upon the uneven distribution of power among subnational units of the state, this argument clearly requires a dynamic rather than a structural view. For the state is often factionalized *during* rather than *before* a revolution. In the Chinese case, the Qing imperial state was once a hierarchical, centralized, and unitary state, directly ruling at least the 18 inner provinces (China Proper) by bureaucratic machines. Its factionalization only appeared during the mid-19th-century, when some rebel groups built their own quasi-states, militias gradually owned independent political power over certain areas, and societal military forces frequently and contingently switched sides (Kuhn 1970; Perry 1980). Only during this period did the initially hierarchical and unitary state structure fragment into hundreds of political and military units that both kept and disrupted social orders.[15] In this regard, only a dynamic model can capture how the coherent state became progressively fragmented and factionalized.

In sum, a structural view cannot offer a satisfactory causal connection between the

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[14] More discussions on the impact of the Opium War and its comparison with later external wars of the Qing Empire can be found in the next subsection on geopolitical pressure.

[15] Olsen (2000) differentiated rebels and states as roving or stationary bandits, but once the roving rebels became stationary and the stationary state began roving (e.g., relocation for repression), the distinction between the two was no longer clear. For example, both the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and other smaller rebel regimes, such as the Panthay Muslim Kingdom in Yunnan, served as quasi-states. In contrast, when Qing troops were relocated to other areas, they often plundered no less than the rebels.

pre-existing nature and capacity of the state and mid-century rebellions. That the Qing state's

strengths of "soft" infrastructural power became its sources in provoking elite insurrections

needs an explanation. The key is how the centralized state became factionalized and fragmentary.

To address this point, also requires a dynamic and relational view of the state: the state should be

conceived as an assembly of multiple interrelated and disparate actors rather than as a unitary

actor, a continuingly changing manmade construction rather than a fixed, reified entity.

Long-term Structural Changes

Geopolitical Crisis

It is broadly accepted that one critical structural change for social-revolutionary situations is

geopolitical crisis: "state organizations susceptible to administrative and military collapse when

subjected to intensified pressures from more developed countries abroad" (Skocpol 1979:154;

see also: Collins 1997; Foran 2005). Geopolitical failure not only directly harms the capacity and

legitimacy of the state, but often also intensifies state/elite contradictions: when the state

encounters geographical failure and accompanying fiscal crisis, it might dramatically increase

extraction and have severe conflict with landed upper classes (Skocpol 1979: 75-76, 152).

In terms of modern China, it is true that the geopolitical crisis offers a condition for the

Republican Revolution of 1911 and the Communist Revolution in the 1930s and 1940s. However,

the international and fiscal pressure of the imperial state was mild before the mid-19th-century

rebellions. True, there was a humiliating Opium War with Britain, but the war was relatively

small and limited to a few coastal cities. "This [the Opium War] should not be seen as the

inevitable culmination of a steady military decline" (Pomeranz 2010:189); it also was not

responsible for the outburst of the rebellions. There is little evidence to support the argument that the Qing's fiscal and military strength was heavily weakened before 1850—overall the Qing's revenues and standing army had been kept at the same level (Wang 1973; Luo 1984). Military expenses and war indemnities were relatively small and did not exhaust the imperial finances (Polachek 1992; He 2013). By comparison, the geopolitical and fiscal pressure on the imperial state before the Republican Revolution was much more pressing: the Qing government made tremendous indemnities to Japan and Western powers after two disastrous wars (with Japan in 1894, and with western powers in 1900), 30 times more than the indemnities of the first Opium War, and about 5-10 times that of the Qing's annual revenue in the 1890s.

In terms of its cultural effects, when looking back decades later, the First Opium War was indeed transformative in modern Chinese history, as it started a series of wars between China and Western powers (and Japan) and signaled future political crises in the long run. However, in contrast to teleological interpretations, its cultural meaning as a transformative event was unclear in the 1840s, but was gradually given by nationalists and communists in the wake of pressing western imperial pressures and the "national crisis" since the end of the 19th-century. In fact, the Qing Empire had many wars with foreign countries in inner Asia and Southeast Asia before the Opium War—some with success and some with failure but all financially consuming (Purdue 2005)—so the Qing rulers probably did not take this very first war with Europeans that differently. Except for very few far-sighted elites, the entire gentry group did not take this war seriously either. As surprisingly found by historian Polachek (1992), for instance, the entire bureaucratic and fiscal structure of the Qing Empire had not been reformed in the 1840s to

respond to the military failure, partly because most Confucian elites did not take this war as a significant event, as it was later interpreted. A teleological interpretation of the historical causation was misleading.

Finally, the Opium War was not followed by an immediate increase of uprisings in the 1840s (See Figure 1.1). The number of "mass action incidents" kept at the same level until 1848 when more uprisings appeared in some regions (mostly in South China). However, even this regional disorder was not directly related to geopolitical pressure—there was no sign of a new war between the Qing Empire and the western powers (esp. Britain) in the late 1840s. How this regional disorder was generated, and how it in turn contributed to the rebellious transformation of a religious society (the Taiping) will be elaborated in a processual account in Chapter 3. In any case, it is hard to build a direct causal connection between this mild military failure and the unprecedented insurrections in the 1850s and 1860s.

Geoeconomic Vulnerability

Another structural change that has been given explanatory power in the Chinese rebellion case is geo-economic vulnerability in the capitalist world economy (Wallerstein 1979, 1989; Wolf 1982; Walton 1984; Arrighi 1994; Foran 2005; for Chinese historiography in this tradition: Wakeman 1975; Frank 1998; Pomeranz 2001; Wang 2003; Lin 2006). According to the world-system theory, the core areas ruthlessly "incorporated" those peripheral and external areas into the world-economy, triggering social dislocation and disorder of these areas (Wallerstein 1989:166; Arrighi 1994). Accordingly, 'national revolts' should be conceived "with a global dimension rather than simply as discrete national events with common conditions," and are often

"in response to the socioeconomic inequalities and dislocations produced by the incorporation of local and largely precapitalist societies into the global economy' (Walton 1984:169). Therefore, even a non-world system theorist takes both "dependent development" and "world-systemic opening" as two of the five "necessary conditions" for successful revolution (Foran 2005:18).

In terms of the mid-19th-century Chinese rebellions, the causal logic can be summarized as follows.[16] In trade between China and Europe (esp. with Britain through the East India Company), silver flowed into the Qing Empire during 1700-1820s. However, it began to flow out during the late 1820s and 1850s, mainly due to the increasing opium trade (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2) as well as the dramatic slump in the global silver supply in the wake of the Latin American Independence Wars between 1804 and the 1820s (Vilar 1984; Frank 1998; Lin 2006). In China, the silver outflow during the period from the 1820s-1850s caused the increase of silver value and thus the decrease of commodity prices, further causing serious economic recession and social problems in China. What's worse, the price deflation caused distributional effects among several social groups. These "social dislocations" caused social grievances among the lower classes especially among yeomen, tenants, and artisan workers, and further caused unprecedented rebellions in the 1850s.[17]

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[16] According to Wallerstein (1989:166), "as India was incorporated, China became part of the external arena". After the Opium War and the Treaty of 1842, China "start[ed] on the path of being herself incorporated" (Wallerstein 1989:168).
[17] For example, Eric Wolf says: "The outflow of silver from China soon affected the country at large. The government set tax quotas in silver; the peasants paid in copper cash. As silver grew scarce and rose in price, ever larger amounts of copper were required to meet taxes. Opium thus did more than undermine the health of Chinese addicts; it began to subvert the social order in the countryside" (Wolf 1982:258; see also: Wakeman 1975:128).
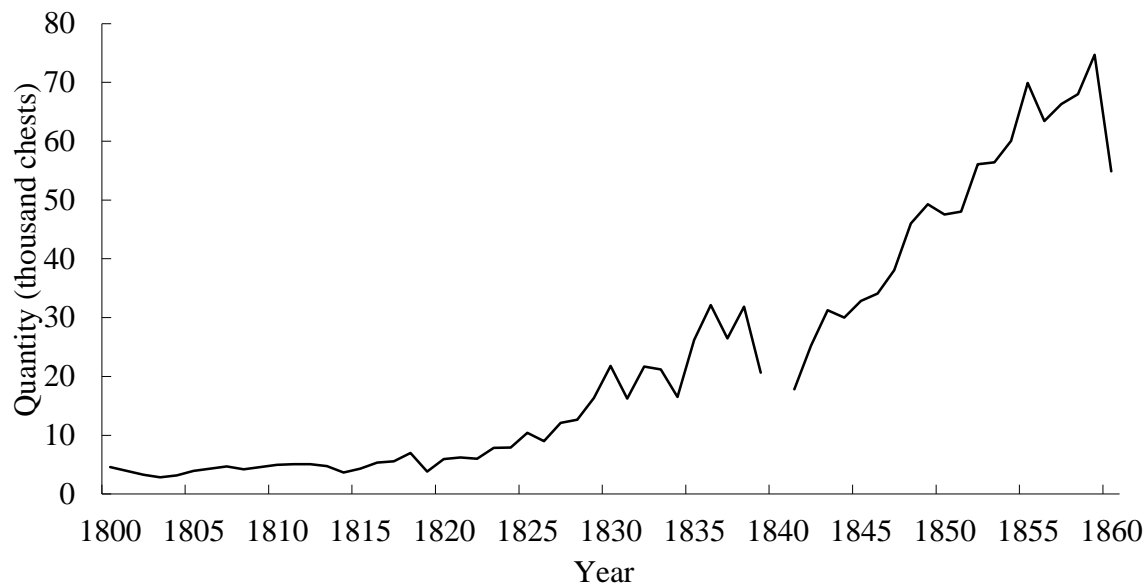
Figure 2.1. The quantity of opium imports, 1800-1860.
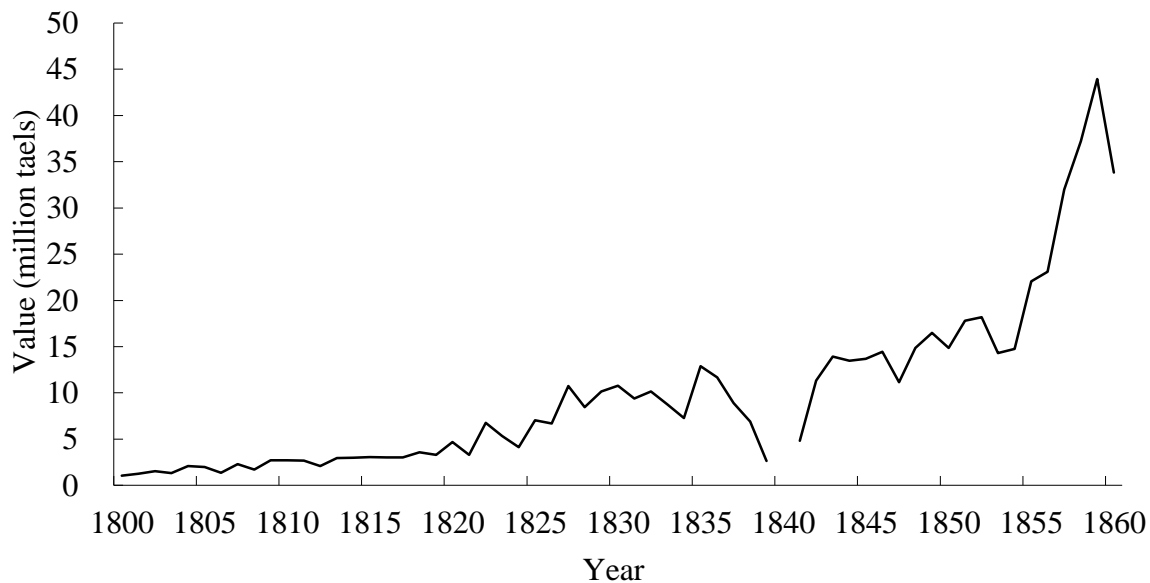
Figure 2.2. The value of opium imports, 1800-1860.
Source: Lian 2003.
Note: There was no data for 1840 since the Opium War caused a huge decrease in opium trade for this year; 1 *tael* of silver = 1.4 silver dollars.

This geo-economic argument offers a long causal chain that can be summarized as follows:

Opium trade → silver outflow → silver inflation with coin deflation → price deflation (measured

by silver) → economic recession and distributional effects → social dislocation → social grievances → mass rebellions. However, a few steps within this chain are not obvious. Since it is of little value to completely reject this causal chain, I only show some critical evidence that casts doubt on the significance of the geo-economic pressure on Qing society.[18] Furthermore, even if some effects did exist, how they facilitated the rebellions needs further clarification.

Above all, the Chinese domestic economy was only open to the Britain-dominated capitalist economy in a limited sense until the 1860s when the Qing's internal economy was further opened to outside countries. Unlike India, the Qing Empire was not a colony and maintained its own financial and monetary system. Furthermore, the Qing's trade with European countries was also constrained. Under the Qing dynasty, while China had kept trade with European merchants since 1685 when the Qing canceled the Ban on Maritime Trade, the Qing prescribed Canton as the only treaty port in 1757, until the Nanjing Treaty in 1842. Even after the Nanjing Treaty, trade was limited to only five treaty ports.[19] Before extensively importing opium from the East India Company, the Qing mainly imported wool and metal from Britain and cotton from India, which comprised 70%-80% of all Qing imports and served as raw material for the Qing's domestic industry. Among Qing exports, tea constituted 80% to 90%, with silk playing a secondary role (Yan 1955:14).[20] Considering the small amount and limited types of trade goods,

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[18] Interestingly, though Skocpol says that the transnational contexts included both the structures of the world capitalist economy and the international states system, she pays more attention to the latter than the former. In her analysis of the Chinese revolution, she criticizes those revolutionary studies based on world-system theory: "comparative analysts of peasants in revolution typically make the mistake (as I see it) of interpreting the very real economic distress of twentieth-century Chinese peasants as due to the effects of suddenly intruding Western capitalism" (Skocpol 1979:327).

[19] To give another example on how the Qing's economy was independent from external influence before 1860: even after the First Opium War, the opium trade was still banned by the Qing Empire and thus illegal. It was legitimized only after the second Opium War in 1859, nearly one decade after the rise of the Taiping Rebellion.

[20] Britain-China trade constituted about 70% of Europe-China trade in terms of both export and import, since Britain decreased the tax rate of tea from 119% to 12.5% in 1784.

the role of international trade in the Qing economy before 1860 should not be overestimated.[21]

Second, while the opium-driven silver outflow did occur, the impact was smaller than is usually presented if we broaden the historical horizon. Significantly, silver flowed into China during its trade with Europeans, as shown below. It is broadly accepted that silver began to flow out of China roughly from 1826 (Yu 1940; Yan 1955:36; Peng 1983; Lian 2003): together with part of the Qing's indemnities to Britain after the Opium War, roughly 155 million *taels* of silver drained out of China between 1826-1852.[22] However, before 1825, the Qing had a trade surplus accompanied by a silver inflow for most years. In actual amounts, it is estimated that there were more than 300 million *tael* silver flowing into China between 1680 and the 1820s (Frank 1998), two times more than the silver outflow between 1826 and 1852. In other words, China still stored a large amount of silver found in the American Continent, which sustained China's expanding economy between 1680 and 1850 (Frank 1998; Pomeranz 2001).[23] Moreover, several studies showed that from 1853, silver began to flow back to China (Yan 1987:363-364), since it increasingly exported the raw silk that could not be used for domestic production because of the Taiping's 1853 takeover of the Lower Yangzi Delta, the industrial center of the Qing economy. Taken together, these facts show that the effects of the opium-driven silver outflow and monetary

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[21] According to the estimate of economic historian Bairoch (1982), China's gross volume of national industrial production was 21 times that of Britain in 1750, 8 times in 1800, 3 times in 1830, and the same in 1860. In 1830, its amount was only slightly smaller than the total amount of "all developed countries" in Europe and North America.

[22] Roughly 76 million *taels* outflow before the Opium War (1839), and a 70 million *taels* outflow from China during 1842-1852. Hence, during 1826-1852, roughly 145 million *taels* outflow due to the trade balance. In addition, after the Opium War, the Qing compensated Britain 28.3 million silver dollars—21 million in Nanjing Treaty in 1842, 6 million for redeeming Guangzhou in May 1841, and 1.3 million of robbery by the British navy during July 1840 and July 1842 (Peng 1983:17). Among these indemnities, 12.8 million silver dollars, i.e., 9.2 million *taels*, flowed outside of China (Yu 1940:24). So the total amount of silver outflow during this period is estimated as 155 million *taels* of silver.

[23] Notably, in an influential work, Lin (2006:84-85)'s calculation is a much higher estimation of silver outflow than most other studies. Lin says that the Qing lost 380 million *taels* of silver during 1808-1850. However, she double calculated the China-England and China-India trade. Her analysis is even in opposition with her early work (1992) which said that the total amount of silver outflow was about 150 million *taels* during this period.

crisis should not be overestimated.

Third, even if some impact from the opium trade and the global reduction of the silver supply existed in some areas that were more closely involved in the outside economy, such as South China, we still need to specify the causal process by which this impact facilitated the rise of rebellions in these areas. In other words, a regional, processual explanation is the key to link *the global* and *the local*, i.e., the capitalist world economy and the emergence of regional rebellions. The connection is not as direct as the world-system theory assumes, but is presented in an indirect and unexpected way. This is exactly what I will show in Chapter 3, together with the unexpected effects of geo-politics on South China.

Demographic Pressure

A final often mentioned source of long-term structural change is population increase and demographic pressure. In particular, the thoroughly theorized Demographic/Structural model (Goldstone 1991) is applied to explain periodic rebellions and revolutions in early modern Eurasia, including the mid-19th-century rebellions in Qing China (Goldstone 1991:394-399). According to this model, these rebellions were the result of a combination of state fiscal distress, intra-elite conflicts, heightened mass mobilization, and a heterodox ideology movement, all relating to population pressure and accompanying price inflation (Goldstone 1991:19, 142, 459-460; see also: Luo 1939; Susan and Kuhn 1978). It is true that China's population increased from 160 million to 430 million between 1680 and 1850, but how the increasing population contributed to the final outbreak of rebellion is not obvious if we scrutinize the causal chain of this explanation.

Firstly, between 1680 and 1850, the population continually increased, but the rate of increase slightly slowed (see Table 2.4). According to the latest population history, the annual growth rate was .68% from 1678 to 1776 (partly due to a recovery increase in the early Qing dynasty), 0.47% from 1776 to 1820, and 0.42% from 1820 to 1851. This slight slowing of the rate of increase signifies that society had certain non-rebellion (but not necessarily less violent) mechanisms to control population increase, such as an extensive female infanticide practice that also resulted in gender imbalance and an endogenous decrease of the birth rate (Lee and Wang 1999). In other words, as is true in many other places, population increase does not mechanically lead to rebellions or civil wars.

Table 2.4. Population amount and growth rate under Qing

Year	1678	1776	1820	1851	1880	1910
Amount (million)	162	311	383	432	364	436
Annual growth rate		.68%	.47%	.42%	-.62%	.60%

Source: Cao 2001: 703-704, 706-707.

Secondly, in Goldstone's model, a key variable is price inflation, linking demographic pressure and social-structural changes. However, this link was absent in the Chinese case: although prices increased in the Qing Empire between 1700-1820, there was no inflation but instead a price deflation between 1820 and 1850,[24] just before the mid-century rebellions, mainly due to the silver drainage in the Opium Trade. Both rice price data in several provinces and the retail price data in North China show a commodity price decrease of about 1/3 during this period (Yan 1955:37; Wang 2003:258) (see Figure 2.3). In other words, at least in this case,

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[24] Goldstone did notice this point: "in the 1830s the price rise slowed as the purchase of opium apparently soaked up increasing amounts of Chinese spending" (Goldstone 1991:394-395).

population increase did not lead to price inflation, so the further causal flow from price inflation

to sociopolitical crisis does not hold true.

Figure 2.3. Price trend index during 1825-1850.
Sources: Rice price: Wang (2003: 261); Retail index: calculated from Yan (1955: 37-38).

Finally, the correlation between population/population density and mass uprisings is unclear:

the Taiping rebellion originated in South China, a region with median population size and density

(lower than the average level of China proper) (Table 2.5). Plus, regional uprisings in the 1840s

took place in median and less populous regions, rather than the three most populous ones—the

Lower Yangzi, North China, and Southeast Coast (Table 2.6). As noticed by Gray (1990:54):"that

rebellion occurred where population pressure was most severe… would be difficult to prove…

the major risings occurred in areas of relatively sparse population."

Table 2.5. Regional distribution of population, population density and uprisings in 1840s

Macro Regions	Population density (persons per sq. km)	Population (millions)	Uprisings in 1840s
Lower Yangzi	348	67	No
North China	150	112	No
Southeast Coast	136	26	No
Middle Yangzi	120	84	Yes
Upper Yangzi	111	47	No
South China	68	29	Yes
Northwest China	38	29	Yes
Southwest China	23	11	Yes
Manchuria	2	3	No
Total	79	408	

Sources: Population and population density: Skinner 1977: 213; Naquin and Rawski 1987: 213; Regional uprisings: Yang 1975: 209.
Note: Population data is for 1843, except for data on Manchuria (1850); Tibet, Xinjiang, Mongolia, and Taiwan are not included; Ranked by population density.

Table 2.6. Regional uprisings before the outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion

Rebellions	Time	Provinces and Regions
Zhong Renjie Uprising	1841-1842	Hubei, Middle Yangzi
Muslim Uprising	1845	Gansu, Northwest
Muslim Uprising	1846	Yunnan, Southwest
Muslim Uprising	1847	Xinjiang, Northwest
Lei Zaihao Uprising	1847	Hunan, Middle Yangzi
Li Yuanfa Rebellion	1850	Hunan & Guangxi, Middle Yangzi & South China
Chen Yagui Rebellion	1850	Guangxi, South China
Pirates	1847-1850	Guangdong and Guangxi, South China

Source: Adapted and modified from Yang 1975: 209.

In conclusion, all of the evidence casts doubt on the Demographical/Structural Model. At most, we can argue that population increase produced a greater potential for large-scale uprisings, but it was neither sufficient nor a necessary condition. Furthermore, the causal chain in the case of the mid-century Chinese rebellions does not hold since one key link—price inflation—was absent while other possible causal links have not been specified. Instead, population

increase-driven internal migration to ethnically heterogeneous areas (such as Yunnan Province in Southwest China) might play a more critical role in provoking conflicts and rebellions in these areas. However, including such a factor certainly requires a dynamic, relational view on how the inter-group interaction resulted in emerging ethnic conflicts, to be shown in Chapter 5.

Discussion

To summarize the empirical evaluation above, the Qing Empire was on its "normal" track on the eve of the mid-century rebellions, and did not appear destined to enter into the unprecedented outburst of a national upheaval in the 1850s. It had enjoyed nearly two centuries of steady economic development, gradual commercialization and urbanization, a stable and light taxation system, high political legitimacy, and military achievements on the frontiers since the late 17th century (e.g., Naquin and Rawski 1987; Pomeranz 2001; Rowe 2010). There had been few signs of imperial decline: at least before the 1830s, the Qing Empire "remained reasonably successful against known threats. *Circa* 1835 they might even have thought things were improving: certainly 1805-1835 had been better than 1785-1805" (Pomeranz 2010:190). Even in the 1840s, "there is little evidence that the rebellions were directly related to any particular cause of hardship" (Gray 1990:53). As structural conditions were not "ripe" for the outburst of a national upheaval, this examination leaves us an even more puzzling challenge: *without the crisis of the imperial state or intensified state/elite conflicts or a favorable agrarian structure, why did widespread and prolonged revolutions and rebellions still emerge in the 1850s?[25]*

Just like the general structural model criticized in Chapter 1, structural explanations of the

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[25] I will return to some structural conditions in the following empirical chapters, in order to evaluate whether these structural conditions or a relational dynamic played the key role in making certain rebellions.

Chinese rebellions suffer from a few common limitations. Some structural factors are exaggerated in a teleological logic—everything converges as preparation for a great revolution because of its final outbreak (Tilly 1993: 17; Sewell 2005: 83-85). In particular, most explanations take the master movement, the Taiping Rebellion, as the only explained object and look backward to determine causes without careful comparison or counterfactual thinking.

Second, even those tenable structural conditions were mainly national causes and thus cannot directly explain the emergence, transformation, and development of one specific rebellion in a particular region. The connection between the national structural conditions, regional rebellious situations, and specific rebel groups has not been specified in those macro-structural accounts. For example, it is true that South China witnessed emerging rebels, bandits, and pirates in the late 1840s, and thus had larger structural "potential" to generate greater rebellions than other areas. However, these emerging rebellions were still merely of regional influence. In no wise could we argue that this region would at that point give birth to a formidable rebellion in a deterministic manner. It is even harder to argue that these structural conditions would benefit the Taiping rather than the early risers (i.e., the Triad rebel and pirate groups). Here we reach the limitations of the structural analysis, and need to turn to the ongoing regional dynamism.

Third, structural factors often unfold in interactive social processes rather than remaining unchanged, so the analytic task is how structural conditions are altered and in turn generate rebellions. What I will present in the empirical analysis is exactly how the structural potential was channeled into the actual emergence of rebellions. Following the dynamic, relational model proposed in Chapter 1, I will specifically focus on how the relationship structure among central

and local state actors, emerging rebel groups, elite-led groups, and other organizational forces

continually changed and generated new rebellions during this period.

Chapter 3 Contentious Turn of a Christian Society

The Puzzle of the Taiping Rebellion

This chapter seeks to explain the rise of the Taiping Rebellion, the largest and the first major rebellion in this period. Starting as "China's first indigenous Christian movement" (Bays 2011: 53), it eventually became the bloodiest rebellion in human history (Platt 2012: xviii, 338). The civil war between Taiping rebels and the government involved millions of combatants, caused 20-30 million casualties,[1] and devastated Chinese society. Why did the Taiping transform itself from a religious society to a rebel organization? Why was it able to emerge as the first national rebellion?

The Taiping's early history of rebellious transformation and emergence was the key part of the story. Its founder, Hong Xiuquan, after receiving Christian ideas from evangelical tracts, soon claimed to be the Chinese Son of God, the younger brother of Jesus. Hong and his friends founded the "Association of God Worshippers" (AGW, hereafter)[2] and in 1845 began preaching to convert thousands of people in South China. From the middle of 1850, the religious movement suddenly turned into a rebellion: more than 10,000 adherents from several areas assembled at a village in Guangxi Province, overtly declaring an uprising and the founding of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in early 1851. That autumn, they consolidated into a powerful, disciplined rebel army in their first occupied city, and later marched north into the

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[1] The death toll was at least thirty times more than the concurrent American Civil War (Meyer-Fong 2012: 1), and was more than the total number of deaths in domestic conflicts worldwide from 1945 to 1999 (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 75).
[2] Historians have also debated the religious nature of the Taiping movement as an import of Western Christianity (Boardman 1952; Jen 1973; Wagner 1982; Zhou 2013), a Christian movement with Chinese characteristics (Spence 1996; Reilly 2004; Bays 2011), or a hybrid of both Christian and Chinese cultural elements, including Confucianism and popular religion (Shih 1967; Weller 1994; ter Haar 1996).

Yangzi Regions, the economic heart of China (Michael 1966; Jen 1973; Spence 1996; Platt 2012). Generations of scholars have asked: Why did a new Christian group become a rebellion and emerge so successfully in the powerful Qing Empire? This question is even more puzzling, given that it is the only sizable Christian-based rebellion in China until the present time.[3]

As introduced in Chapter 2, one major explanation contends that the macro-level conditions of Qing society were ready for a great revolution (Jones and Kuhn 1978; Goldstone 1991; Lin 2006). However, careful examination shows few actual signs were present. It also cannot answer why only the Taiping, among other rebel groups, was favored by some tenable structural conditions. Another explanation also stresses some "*intrinsic*" nature, albeit in the micro-level: the religious Taiping owned unique organizational and ideological strengths (Michael 1966; Jen 1973; Reilly 2004). Yet this was not the case during the movement's early days; instead, as a new, heterodox group, it suffered severe liabilities and was vulnerable to other societal forces. Its internal strengths cannot be taken for granted, but need to be problematized and explained. Plus, neither of the two explanations answers why an initially religious society became rebellious (Osterhammel 2009: 550). Some of these pitfalls, I argue, lie in deficient attention to the meso-level interactions among contentious forces and how competing state actors tackled them as a totality.

The early Taiping movement was embedded in an emerging rebellious situation in South China, a scenario that is often overlooked or underrated in macro- and micro-level accounts,

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[3] In contrast, anti-Christian movements were frequent in the late Qing: Christian missionaries often became associated targets of proto-nationalist movements (Cohen 1963; Kane and Park 2009). For example, in the well-known Boxer Uprising (1899-1901), about 30,000 Chinese Christians and 250 foreign missionaries were killed (Bays 2011:85-86; also see: Esherick 1987).

both of which highlight preexisting structural or organizational characteristics. Rather than being the only and obvious candidate for a national rebellion, the AGW was not initially seen as a threat by Qing rulers. Since 1846, Guangxi province had witnessed burgeoning militarized, contentious forces, including bandits, pirates, and rebels, often organized by secret societies, especially the Triad Society. For example, in 1850, it was two Triad rebel groups, not the AGW, that were the nightmare of the imperial court and officials. In other words, while the Taiping was the initiator movement for many spin-off rebellions in 1850s, it was a latecomer following many early risers in this region. Nevertheless, none of these groups led the way to nationwide force. A satisfying explanation must answer why the Taiping ascended to prominence while the Triads did not. More crucially: Was the Taiping's success related to the failure of other rebel groups? If so, how?

Based upon my dynamic, relational model, while paying a special attention to the spatial context of these rebellions, I develop a meso-level, ecological explanation to account for how a new, heterodox movement was facilitated by inter-rebel and intra-state competitions (e.g., Hawley 1950; Stinchcombe 1965; Abbott 2005).[4] The Taiping emerged abruptly because of its unique reaction to the uncertain, hostile environment, and the way competing state actors distributed limited resources to handle multiple simultaneous threats. In a word, the Taiping Rebellion emerged as an ***insurgency in interstice***. By "interstice" I mean both *spatial* and *institutional* interstices: Spatially, initially dispersed Taipings were so oppressed by other competing societal forces that they eventually assembled in an interstitial location: a narrow,

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[4] I use the term "ecology" instead of "field," though I do not see much difference between the two terms (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Martin 2003; Abbott 2005).

marginal, and mountainous area; institutionally, they arose and expanded at the interstice of state power—the feeble part of state control—in its incipient period.

In other words, the key to the rise of Taiping was neither the structural conditions of the time nor the Taiping's ideological and organizational strengths as a Christian society, but the result of the interactions among multiple militarized forces under inadequate Qing military force in south China since the late 1840s. The Taiping's transformation into a rebellion—militarization, concentration, and politicization—was driven by the willy-nilly reactions of a new, heterodox religion to emergent hostile and violent circumstances rather than predetermined by any of the macro-structural conditions. After all, large-scale revolutions do not necessarily have large-scale structural causes; sometimes they start from a small "origin."

My argument proceeds as follows. After briefly summarizing prior accounts and their limitations in the next section, I present my explanation and core argument. I then discuss how certain structural changes in South China generated regional contentious forces that altered the regional relational patterns among societal forces and state actors. Next I discuss how this rising regional rebellious situation facilitated the Taiping's militarized mobilization, rebellious turn and uncontrollable expansion in two levels. Finally I provide a comparison of the Taiping to other contemporary rebel groups and answer why my dynamic, ecological model gives a better explanation to their divergent paths than existing accounts.

Existing Explanations

The puzzle of the Taiping's emergence is a classic question in contentious politics. Many unconventional revolutions, rebellions, and movements abruptly rise to prominence. Looking

retrospectively, we might contend that macro-structural conditions are ripe for great upheavals

(e.g., Skocpol 1979; Goldstone 1991), and/or that the micro-internal strengths of a movement

secure its breakthrough (e.g., Gamson 1975; McAdam 1982). However, macro conditions, even

if adequately identified, give opportunities not only to the eventual winner but also to other

contemporary movements, and thus cannot account for their divergent outcomes. On the other

hand, new, heterodox movements are often vulnerable in their incipient stage, and only

gradually gain an edge; the key is instead how these ultimate winners overcome severe

constraints and take off. Below I will briefly review the two existing explanations and their

limitations in offering a satisfactory answer to the puzzle of the Taiping.

Macro-Structural Explanations

Since a general discussion of structural explanations has been offered in Chapter 2, here I

only briefly review those specific accounts related to the outbreak of the Taiping and its

limitations. The most important factors included population pressure and resource competition

(Luo 1939; Jones and Kuhn 1978; Goldstone 1991), economic recession and rising inequality,

partly caused by serious silver drainage from the opium trade that had occurred since the 1820s

(Wakeman 1966; Wolf 1969; Lin 2006), militarily and fiscally weakened state (Jones and Kuhn

1978; Skocpol 1979). As extensively reviewed in Chapter 2, these macro-structural conditions

were not ripe for the outburst of a national upheaval in 1850: The Qing Empire had still been on

its "normal" track before 1850, and was not destined to enter into an unprecedented crisis (e.g.,

Naquin and Rawski 1987; Pomeranz 2001, 2010; Rowe 2010). In fact, a few structural factors

are exaggerated in a teleological manner—everything converged as preparation for the Taiping

Rebellion because of its final outbreak.

In particular, even those tenable structural conditions, at most, set the stage for this rebellious era, but do not explain variations among different rebel groups that were, after all, under the same structure. They cannot account for the rise of the Taiping Rebellion and the non-rise of the others, especially before Taiping's takeoff: "many different rebel groups offered their leadership in South China at the time, but only the Taipings rose to prominence and attracted a wide following" (Wagner 1982: 4). Given that the Taiping had been merely a regional force until 1852, we are curious how it was directly facilitated by macro-level phenomena. It is thus worthy to examine the overlooked, intermediary linkages and inter-group dynamics that connect macro-level factors and individual movements.

Micro-Internalist Explanations

Micro-internal explanations highlight certain *intrinsic characteristics* of the Taiping group that paved the way to its successful uprising (Michael 1966; Wagner 1982; Weller 1994; Spence 1996; Reilly 2004). They argue that under the Charismatic leadership of Hong Xiuquan, the Taiping built a centralized, hierarchical military organization with militant and loyal adherents. Ideologically, Taiping's religious teachings played a crucial role in creating a universal vision across local particularities, framing a unique insurgent identity, while maintaining morale and discipline.[5] It also built a broad coalition with other rebel and pirate groups. This approach can tackle the "variation" between the Taiping and other rebel groups, which has not been addressed

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[5] Despite the debate on the Taiping's religious nature, even revisionist scholars acknowledge that Taiping ideology was at least a tool of the rebels, serving as an instrumental unifying force in the development of the rebellion (Shih 1967: xiii; Weller 1994; ter Haar 1996).

by the macro-structural account.

This micro-internalist explanation offers compelling answers to the Taiping's expansion, but can only be applied to the period after it emerged as a major force in 1852. Since the Taiping was weak and vulnerable before the middle of 1851, its internal strengths should not be taken as a given fact to account for its early emergence. They are *explained* variables, even if they can be taken as *explanatory* variables to account for the Taiping's later success. Plus, as the AGW was a religious society, its rebellious transformation was not a "natural" result, but requires an explanation. After all, we should keep in mind that in the 19th century, "parallels between the Taiping and religious revivalist movements in other parts of the world are unmistakable. What was unique were the early militarization and military success of the movement and its far-from-other worldly goal of overthrowing the existing political order" (Osterhammel 2009:550). An elaboration of this critique follows.

Above all, the Taiping was organizationally weak in its early stage. Before the middle of 1850, God-worshippers dispersed to several areas and were under attack from local militias and other militarized forces. Even after its assembly, it was still a middle-size insurgent group with low combat capacity, as its adherents had accepted little military training. Only through institution-building between September 1851 and April 1852 at Yongan, their first occupied city, did the Taiping consolidate its rebel army and establish strict discipline. Their advantage over the Qing's scattered regular forces was later made evident, after they absorbed more recruits in the Yangzi regions in late 1852 (Cui 2002). So, instead of taking its organizational strengths as a given fact, we should carefully examine how it developed.

AGW's ideological strengths and rebellious turn were also puzzling. Notably, Protestants had not been popular in China before the Taiping Movement: since Protestantism first arrived in China in 1807, there had been no more than one hundred converts until 1840 (Bays 2011: 46).[6] Though the AGW attracted many believers in its nascent stage, their influence could not match the alternative, popular religions rooted in the traditional Chinese culture. After all, "their creed was entirely foreign to Chinese ideology" (Boardman 1952: 125). Furthermore, since 1847 God-worshippers' conflicts with popular religions had triggered fierce reactions from the gentry, who accused God Worship of being heterodox, illicit, and even rebellious. Overall, rather than examining AGW's ideological strength, an opposite question needs to be answered: Why and how could God-worship survive and thrive in such an ideologically hostile environment?

Finally, the Taiping also met difficulties in building stable alliances with other rebel groups, partly due to their ideological contradictions. Taipings and Triads had different images of the rebellion's goals: the Triads sought to restore the Han-Chinese ruled Ming Dynasty, while the AGW planned to create a new Christian Kingdom in China. Even though a dozen Triad groups tried to cooperate with the Taiping when they were attacked by Qing troops in 1850, most of them soon found that the Taiping's doctrine was too strange and thus left (Jen 1973: 58-60; Spence 1996: 129). So it is puzzling how the Taiping managed to maintain a few crucial allies.

In short, the Taiping suffered from organizational weakness, ideological vulnerability, and difficulty in maintaining stable alliances in its incipient period (1847-1851). Taken together, the puzzle is actually the opposite of what the micro-internalist approach seeks to answer: How

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[6] By comparison, Catholicism was introduced to China in the late 1500s. About 200,000-250,000 Chinese were Catholics before 1840, mainly in rural areas in North China (Reilly 2004: 54; Bays 2011: 60).

could the AGW successfully arise and develop in spite of these limitations? Also, it still leaves one wondering why a religious movement suddenly turned into a rebel group. More generally, contentious organizations are usually not built prior to their outbreak, but are continuously developed during rebellious processes. Accordingly, its internal capacity should not be taken as an "independent variable" to explain movement development without considering temporality. In early days, it is instead a "dependent variable" which needs to be explained.

To summarize my critique, structural conditions were not "ripe" for a large rebellion and, more importantly, cannot explain the variations among rebel groups; micro-internalist accounts fail to temporalize the trajectory of the Taiping's development, leaving its capacity-building unexplained. The combination of the two often offers a structurally deterministic explanation with a narrative of the winner's inevitable victory. The pitfall lies in the intermediary conditions between structural contexts and individual movements. Though a few scholars have realized that local organizational and ideological communities affected the Taiping, they only mentioned specific elements such as pirates (Laai 1950), Hakka settlement patterns (Kuhn 1977), secret societies (Curwen 1972), or ideological communities (Weller 1994; ter Haar 1996). However, "the real action in social movements takes place at some level of intermediate between the macro and micro" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988: 729). So do rebellions.

A Dynamic, Ecological Explanation to Taiping's Rise

Building upon the dynamic, relational model but also incorporating the spatial context of rebellions into the analysis, in this chapter, I use the concept of ecology to characterize the totality of organizational and spatial context of the focal group (Stinchcombe 1965; Laumann

and Knoke 1987; Olzak 1992; Abbott 2005; also see: Mann 1986; Brubaker 2004).[7] Echoing

Stinchcombe's call (1965: 169) for an ecological approach to studying "revolutionary situation,"

I use "rebellious situation" and "rebellion ecology" interchangeably in this chapter. In line with

two ecological theory traditions in contentious politics, I consider rebellion ecology containing

both inter-movement competition (Minkoff 1997; Sandell 2001) and the spatial arrangements

that constitute a form of mobilizing structure (Gould 1995; Zhao 1998).[8]

In my analysis, I further specify and highlight two relational dimensions, i.e., two

oppositionally linked sides in the ecology of rebellions (Abbott 2005)—inter-rebel relationships

and state reactions to them. First, contention is not always between a single challenger and

polity member (Gamson 1975; Tilly 1978); in many circumstances, the state faces multiple

potential and existing challengers which themselves often compete with each other, as they

share overlapped niches (Olzak 1992: 27). Moreover, in the "actually existing" rebellious

situation, typical rebellions often appear with other contentious activities such as banditry,

robbery, piracy, heterodox sects, etc., all of which could potentially become rebellious

(Hobsbawn 1969; Barkey 1994). Except for very few pure rebel groups with clear

self-consciousness, many groups simultaneously engage in a variety of predatory and

contentious activities. These activities drive extensive grassroots mobilization and heightened

inter-group competition. Second, the state's reaction to rebellions is constrained by ecological

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[7] In this tradition, ecology can be defined as "the relation of organisms or groups of organisms to their environment" (Hawley 1950: 3), or more specifically, a set of social relations which are best understood "in terms of interactions between multiple elements that are neither fully constrained nor fully independent" (Abbott 2005: 248). Pioneering scholars (Park and Burgess 1921; Hughes 1936; Quinn 1940; Hawley 1950; Long 1958) stressed the significance of examining human actions in institutional and interactional ecologies as well as physical ecology.

[8] Overall, my theory highlights the organizational dimension of the ecology. However, the role of the spatial dimension should not be excluded, as rebel groups and state actors interact with each other in both physical and abstract space, especially in relatively smaller regional and local areas.

forces—intra-state competition over the allocation of scarce attentions and resources—since multiple challengers simultaneously confront the state, which itself comprises multiple competition subgroups/actors (Migdal 2001: 22; Abbott 2005: 247; Wilson 2011).[9]

Keeping the structure and boundaries of rebellion ecology in mind, I contend it generates certain mechanisms that affect the rise, development, and demise of any single group. In a micro-internalist account, individual movements' internal, intrinsic characteristics are often highlighted, but when the number and activities of movements increase to an intense level, any single movement needs to be examined together with others in a relational, ecological angle. Their internal features are conditioned by inter-rebel competition forces. Likewise, the state's reaction to rebellions is also patterned by intra-state competitions.

On the societal side, contentious groups[10] experience *organizational* competition with each other for manpower, turf, resources, and dominant status in their overlapping niche (Zald and Ash 1966; Zald and McCarthy 1987). The competition is also about *ideology* or *identity*. As noted by Swidler (1986: 280), in an unsettled period, new ideological movements "are in active competition with other cultural frameworks – at the least in competition with common sense and usually with alternative traditions and ideologies as well". The final matter is about their *coalition/coordination*, which is a key theme in other meso-level theories (e.g., Gerhards and Rucht 1992; Staggenborg 1998). An ecological theory further links coordination with

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[9] To be noted, the "realist" boundary of rebellions is often incongruent with the "subjective" boundary of rebellions, delineated by the state. As plural and competing state actors evaluate multiple contentious groups, identification work becomes fluid and flexible. Whether a group is classified as rebellious is a relative consideration in comparison with other groups within the universe of all potential threats perceived by often incoherent and even conflicting authorities (Abbott 2001; Lamont and Molná 2002: 180-181).

[10] The "group" means "organization", not the reified categorical collectivities such as ethnic or racial "groups" (Brubaker 2004: chapter 1).

competition.[11] Overall inter-rebel competition largely limits their stable alliance, but increasing pressure from a common enemy (the state)—an even more lethal "competitor"—might mitigate the inter-group competition, while facilitating (temporary) coalition.

On the state side, when facing multiple contentious forces, the state responds to them as a totality and allocates its *resources* to one group interdependent with others (Laumann and Knoke 1987: 14). Furthermore, on the *subjective* level, since classification of rebellious activities is a precondition for effective action (Norton 2014), prioritization of identification of major threats becomes even more critical for the state, especially when limited attention is distributed among various contentious groups simultaneously. Finally, since the state is composed of multiple, incoherent actors (Migdal 2001; Wilson 2011), their *coordination* is sometimes constrained by intra-state competition over the deployment of inadequate attention and resources in a heightened rebellious situation.

Based upon the above discussions, Table 3.1 summarizes the analytic framework for the subsequent case study.

Table 3.1. Analytic framework on the ecology of rebellions

	Organizational/ Objective	Ideological/ Subjective	Coalitional/ Coordinating
Rebel side	Inter-group competition	Ideological competition among contentious groups	How the rebellious coalition is affected by inter-rebel competition
State side	State resource distribution in tackling multiple enemies	Prioritization of rebellion identification	How state coordination is constrained by intra-state competition

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[11] In "the ecological conception of society", coordination is intrinsically linked with competition (Park and Burgess 1921: 559), so "co-ordination is largely ecological rather than a matter of conscious rational contriving" (Long 1958: 255).

Overview of the Argument

So, why do these ecological, competitive forces facilitate some rebel groups while restraining others? Specifically, why did only the Taiping, rather than other rebel groups, successfully expand? Simply put, ecological forces from both societal and state sides drove the Taiping to become rebellious and abruptly expand. Borrowing the concept of "interstitial emergence" from Michael Mann (1986: 15-16),[12] I argue that initially dispersive Taipings were driven by a hostile environment to crystallize into a rebel group at the interstice of state power. More precisely, intensified organizational and ideological conflicts drove AGW members to concentrate in a small area, form a hierarchical organization with insurgent identity forged in these conflicts, and rise up and expand at the feeble point of state control. This argument is elaborated within the framework above.

On the societal side, while the overall environment is disadvantageous to new, heterodox movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1233; Clemens 1997: 92), these disadvantages sometimes create opposite effects that lead to an interstitial emergence of the weak. The AGW's vulnerable position in heightened conflicts forced its originally dispersive congregations to assemble together with a newly forged insurgent identity, hence enjoying a unified strength not available to other rebel groups. *Organizationally*, in reaction to the increasingly violent and hostile environment, AGW members militarized and later aggregated into a hierarchical organization, while absorbing some non-believers who sought protection after failed armed

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[12] "Interstitial emergence" is understood as the (often unexpected) rise of new social forces in the crevices of the intersecting principal power networks (Mann 1986: 15-16). To be noted, in an early ecology work, this term is used to characterize the rise of gangs out of the urban underworld (Thrasher 1927/1963).

feuds. *Ideologically*, intensified conflicts with gentry-sponsored popular religions forged AGW

members' resistant identity against their societal competitors, then to local officials, and finally

to the entire regime. *Coalitionally,* the increasing repressive pressure drove a few pursued

Triads to make an otherwise impossible alliance with the Taiping and accept the leadership of a

Christian organization.

On the state side, facing burgeoning rebellions, competing state actors with insufficient

resources were unable to coordinate their attention/action, leaving more opportunities to the

Taiping, which emerged in a favorable "temporal location" (Brockett 1991: 254) at a feeble area

of the rule with a framework that was unrecognizable to the state. *Cognitively*, the state's

prioritization of attention limited its timely identification of a new, unrecognizable enemy, the

AGW, while Triad groups were usually quickly detected and classified as rebellious. *Physically*,

since the state's coercive power had been heavily impaired by earlier rebellions and was still

diverted by many active groups, it failed to redeploy enough coercive forces in controlling the

newly emergent Taiping. Finally, the intra-state competition restricted the state's coordination in

identifying the new major threat and redeploying physical forces: some state actors not only

maintained strength under their own jurisdictions but also expelled rebels to their embattled

neighbors, giving the Taiping opportunities for uncontrollable expansion.

In sum, building upon the general dynamic, relational theory, I propose a meso-level,

ecological explanation to link the macro-structural social changes and micro-internal

characteristics of the focal group, the Taiping. Rather than taking the Taiping's *organizational*,

ideological, and *coalitional* advantages as given facts, I argue that these advantages themselves

need to be problematized and explained. The Taiping's rebellious transformation and interstitial

emergence was greatly affected by certain ecological forces that deserve careful examination.

Before the empirical analysis, a description of the primary sources used in this chapter is in

order. First, in terms of government documents (memorials and edicts), I mainly refer to

Historical Materials from the Archives of the Qing Government's Suppression of the Taiping

Heavenly Kingdom (26 volumes) (*HMAQG*, hereafter), edited by the First Historical Archive

(*TFHA* in citation, hereafter).[13] Second, I also use local gazetteers in order to build a dataset of

contentious activities in Guangxi province between 1846 and 1850.[14] Finally, I refer to a few

records by contemporaries to gain Taiping leaders' inside perspective of the Triads and the state.

These sources include, for example, a top Taiping leader, Li Xiucheng's confession after his

arrest in 1864 (translated by Curwen 1977), and an oral history of Hong Xiuquan's cousin on

the early Taiping movement, recorded by a Swedish missionary (Hamberg 1854).

Rising Regional Rebellions

As discussed in Chapter 2, empire-wide structural conditions were not ready for generating

a great rebellion. Even regional social changes in South China did not directly trigger the

Taiping Rebellion, but created a rebellious situation in South China. It caused a variety of

contentious activities that altered regional power structures and inter-group relationships, which

further facilitated the rebellious transformation of the Taiping and its early expansion.

Nevertheless, until the expansion of the Taiping rebel army, this rebellious situation remained a

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[13] The First Historical Archive also published a few archives on other rebellions, including the Triads, in 1849 and 1850 (e.g., *TFHA* 1978, 1994a, 1994b, 1995a, 1995b, 1996).
[14] Local gazetteers contained more information on small incidents than court archives. For example, in 1850, more than fifty rebellions were recorded in local gazetteers in Guangxi province, but only about ten were reported with detailed information in court documents.

normal case that had periodically haunted the empire but was often quickly suppressed. As shown in the "trilogy" modeling of revolutionary development in Chapter 1, *endemic rebellions* rose and fell in different localities, but whether these rebellions led to a *great revolution* or returned back to a relatively *ordered condition* is uncertain. Therefore, how Guangxi's rebellious situation led to the Taiping's interstitial emergence still needs an explanation. This section depicts the emerging rebellions and its consequences in changing regional political structure, while leaving its role in provoking the Taiping Rebellion to the next two sections.

The region of South China (comprising Guangdong and Guangxi provinces) was located at the intersection of the Qing Empire and the outer edge of Western influence.[15] The Opium War and its aftermath had larger and direct influence on this region, causing a series of side effects: specifically, thousands of sailors were disbanded and some became pirates; furthermore, the British navy initiated fierce attacks on sea pirates who had preyed in the South China Sea for generations, and forced the rest to move to rivers (Laai 1950; Wakeman 1966: 98-100, 126-127; Lin 2006).[16] Between the two provinces, Guangxi was the further disadvantaged because of a disproportionate deployment of regular forces: although roughly the same territorial size as Guangdong, Guangxi's 23,000 standing soldiers were only about 1/3 of those deployed in Guangdong (Luo 1984).[17] Thus Guangxi was more liable to the rising disorder.

Since the late 1840s, Guangxi had become a highly mobilized, militarized, and turbulent

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[15] Canton (the regional capital city) was China's only trade port before 1841.
[16] Interestingly, while the South China Sea, just like the highlands of Southeast Asia, used to offer "fugitive political communities" allowing certain groups to escape from the state (MacKay 2013), British military action closed the escape route and forced sea pirates back to rivers.
[17] These were the Chinese-based Green Standing Army (Michael 1950; Luo 1984). The Qing Empire had another regular force – the Manchu-Based Eight Banners, often concentrated in strategic garrisons (Elliott 2001). In South China, thousands of Banners were deployed at Guangdong, while there were no Banners in Guangxi (Platt 2012:118).

society. Outlaw activities of banditry, piracy, robbery, and heterodox sects soared. Above all, the

number of contentious groups and activities increased exponentially in Guangxi province from

1846 to 1850[18] (see Figure 3.1). This increase was especially dramatic in 1850, the year the

AGW assembled its believers. Those groups varied in size from hundreds to several thousand;

some lasted a few years, others only a few months; some groups were "specialists," engaging in

a single activity such as piracy, but many others were "generalists."
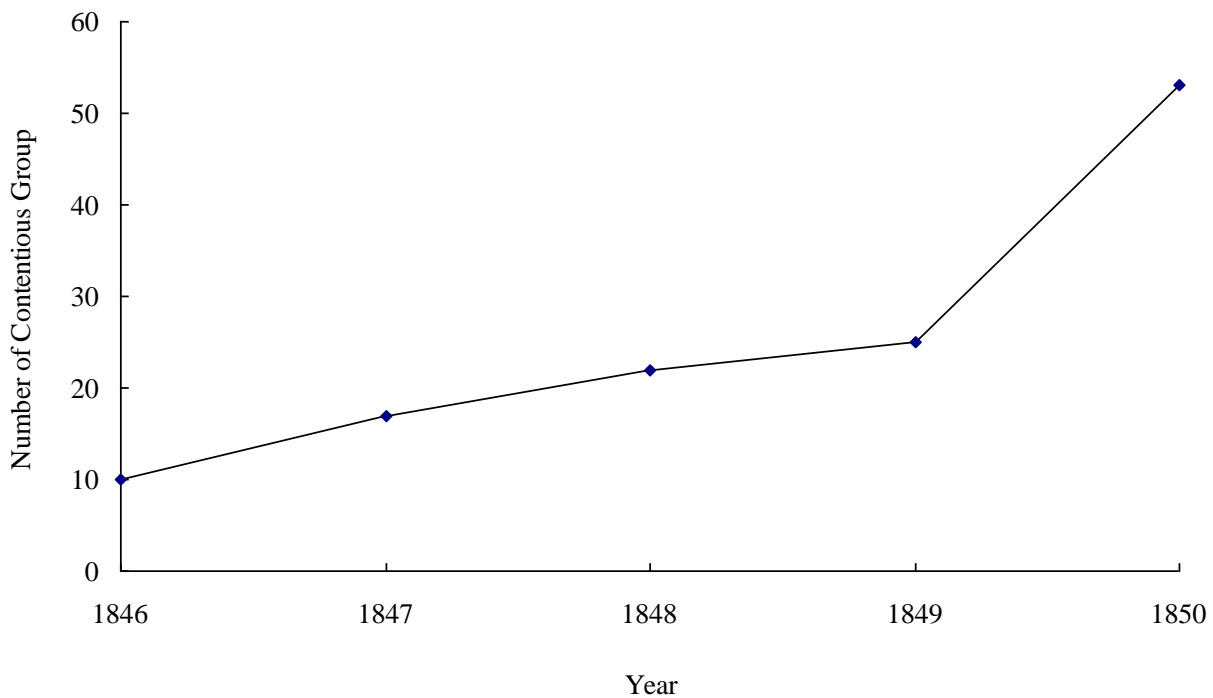
Figure 3.1. Number of contentious groups by year in Guangxi Province, 1846-1850.
Sources: Court archives and local gazetteers[19].
Note: These contentious groups included groups of rebels, bandits, and pirates; If a group lasted
several years, it was counted once in each year.

Those local rebellions and militant groups altered regional power structures and

inter-group and intra-state relations. First, they created a regional oppositional structure

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[18] There had been very few collective actions in Guangxi before that point – usually 2-5 incidents in each decade between 1796-1845 (Yang 1975:182).
[19] Both court documents and 42 pieces of gazetteers are used in building the dataset of contentious groups. A list of the gazetteers used is available upon request. To be noted, there were no gazetteers from this period for some districts.

between the state and extensive insurgencies. Second, the rapid proliferation of contentious

groups resulted in intensified inter-group competition. Third, they greatly weakened regional

state's military strengths and resulted in intra-state competition over resources and attentions.

Fourth, they triggered extensive societal militarization and violent conflicts. All of these

changes gradually facilitated the rebellious turn of the AGW and its abrupt expansion and

development.

First, these rebel, pirate, and bandit groups as well as other militant groups altogether

created a regional oppositional structure between the state and themselves. Some groups

claimed specific turf, but also roved across prefectural or district borders. Notably, a few pirate

groups recruited thousands of members, roved across districts through rivers, and built broad

connections with land-based groups (Laai 1950; Spence 1996: 81-83). Some well-organized

groups migrated from Guangdong, indicating that the effects of the unbalanced deployment

between the two provinces were salient. As soon as the disbanded sailors and sea pirates

engulfed the rivers, Guangdong's army, with a branch of the navy, hounded those rivers

saturated with pirates and drove them to move farther along the rivers to its neighbor, Guangxi,

whose river force was so weak that increasing swarms of pirates basically controlled the river

system (Laai 1950: 85; Antony 2003).

These contentious forces were further linked together by secret societies, especially, the

clandestine Triad Society (Cheseneaux 1972; Wakeman 1972; Murray 1994). The Triad was not

a centralized, hierarchical organization, but was comprised of numerous relatively independent,

loosely linked groups. Inactive in the 1820s and 1830s, the Triads resurged in Guangxi in the

late 1840s (Ownby 1996: 127): many bandit, pirate, and rebel groups proclaimed themselves

Triad members (Laai 1950; Curwen 1972). These groups exchanged information and resources,

and occasionally performed joint actions.

In this milieu, large-scale rebel groups appeared, amassed thousands of followers, fought

regular troops, and proclaimed the founding of new "kingdoms" (Lu 1975). In 1850, Guangxi

witnessed two Triad rebellions, led by Li Yuanfa and Chen Yagui, respectively.[20] Originating in

Hunan Province in November 1849, Li Yuanfa built a band of 5,000-10,000 members, who

roved across provincial borders into Guangxi, and there fought against regular forces until he

was captured on June 3, 1850 (*TFHA* 1978). Later on, the just mentioned Chen Yagui turned his

bandit band into a rebel group in late August, 1850. It seized and plundered two county seats,

both only 100 miles distant from the provincial capital, thus shocking provincial officials. After

a few battles, Chen was driven back to his den, Xunzhou prefecture, and was killed on

November 20, 1850 (*HMAQG* vol. 1: 15, 18-19; Xie 1950: 5-10). Though pacified, the two

rebellions triggered further uprisings and extensive militarization.

Second, due to rapid proliferation and engagement in similar activities, these bandits,

pirates, and rebels competed for exclusive control of turf and resources. Their alliances were

thus ephemeral, often ending with splits. For example, the bandit group led by Chen Yagui

made a temporary coalition with a few looting groups for a massive robbery, but they soon ran

into a disagreement over how to divide the spoils. One leader cooperated with militias to attack

Chen Yagui, who in turn killed his old ally (Xie 1950: 5-10). As Qing officials realized, these

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[20] These two rebellions will be compared to the Taiping in the last section.

bands were suspicious of each other rather than consistently colluding (*TFHA* 1995a: 30).

Third, the increasing contentious activities strained the state's military ability and caused intra-state competition over insufficient resources and attentions. Especially after the rise of the Li Yuanfa and Chen Yugui rebellions, authorities of Guangxi were awkward in handling these burgeoning groups. For example, in a memorial written after Chen Yagui plundered two cities, the Governor of Guangxi candidly depicted an ecology of rebellion, and requested a relief army and external budgets: "bandits and rebels burgeoned, and their numbers multiplied, while the armed forces were weak, so warnings appeared everywhere. We were trapped into dilemmas when planning defense and repression" (*HMAQG* vol.1: 15).

Residing at Beijing, 2,000 miles from Guangxi, the court gradually noticed the "real" situation in the year of 1850. In early June, the emperor received the first comprehensive report about the disorder in Guangxi. He was told that a dozen bands were rampant in several districts, and "Chen Yagui's band is especially notorious" (*HMAQG* vol.1: 2). In an edict sent to the newly appointed Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu on November 19, 1850, the emperor ordered him to investigate the explosive circumstances:

> "whether these bands had yet colluded with each other? Or whether there was a general chief to coordinate them? Why did they plunder everywhere simultaneously? And when and where did they originate? Whether civilian and military officials were stirred to mutiny?" (*HMAQG* vol.1: 79).

Nevertheless, as both Li Yuanfa's and Chen Yagui's bands had been quickly detected and suppressed, the emperor and imperial officials still thought they could quickly put down these rebellions, just as they had done in previous cases. At that time they had no knowledge of the AGW's preparations for revolt, despite sporadic battles that had already taken place. The

problems of the insufficient and weakened military strength would be further demonstrated in the control of the Taiping uprising, to be shown in the next sections.

Fourth, the burgeoning contentious groups and the shortage of state policing forces altogether resulted in extensive societal militarization and violent inter-group conflicts. As the state was unable to contain predatory or rebellions groups, the local gentry organized villagers into communal corps in the name of self-defense (*TFHA* 1994a, 1995a: 24-25, 28; Wakeman 1966; Kuhn 1970). These newly militarized villagers, however, took up arms against local rivals, escalating militarization and confrontation (Wakeman 1966; Marks 1984). In particular, the long-existing tensions between guest settlers (or *Hakka*) and natives were now intensified into large-scale feuds, further strengthening ethnic boundaries (Leong 1997: 20, 72). In addition, some militias were themselves involved in smuggling, banditry, and robbery, or had close relationships with such contentious groups (*TFHA* 1994b; Kuhn 1978: 226). The militias' belligerent actions often triggered other groups' militarization. For instance, long before the state reaction, local militias viewed the God Worshippers as illicit, and fiercely attacked them, triggering their armed resistance. Finally, with such fighting experience, those militias later provided skillful combatants for rebel groups, including the Taiping.

In particular, the center of this regional rebellious situation was Southern and Southeastern Guangxi, which was close to the South China Sea, and whose river systems hosted several pirate groups from Guangdong. Xunzhou Prefecture witnessed the most bellicose activities among all the 12 prefectures in Guangxi (Figure 3.2). In Xunzhou, a number of large bands were active and powerful, and armed feuds between the Hakka and Natives were most

heightened. This prefecture was also where the Taiping rallied adherents in its headquarters.

Interestingly, the Taiping leaders were also aware of the rising rebellious situation. In a

poem written in mid-1850, Hong Xiuquan "alludes to the frequent bands of robbers rising

suddenly and gathering like vapours round the mountains in the different districts," and

therefore he commanded the God worshippers to just let these groups "fight and tear up each

other, until finally, when they were fatigued and weakened, he would rise in the field and easily

become the sole master" (Hamberg 1854: 50).
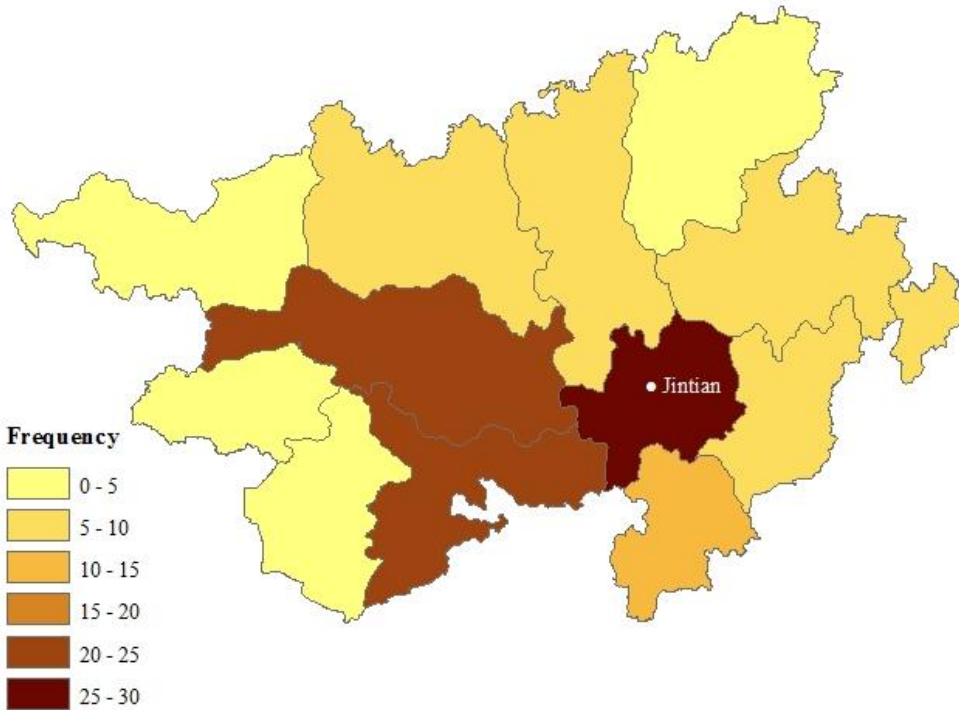
Figure 3.2. Map of frequency of rebellions by prefectures in Guangxi Province, 1846-1850.
Source: see Figure 3.1.
Background database: CHGIS V.4 (1820).
Note: If a rebellion appeared in multiple prefectures, it is counted in each prefecture
individually; Total number by prefectures: 132 times; The Jintian village (at Xunzhou
Prefecture) was the Taiping's headquarters for assembly and overt uprising.

In sum, Guangxi appeared as an emerging rebellious situation; as summarized by a

contemporary:

"from 1847 on, bandits and rebels emerged one after another … There were both mobile bandits and native bandits; some were militias and residents… Some began as militias, but finally became bandits; some were militias in name, but were bandits in reality" (Su 1881: vol.1).

However, we should keep in mind that uprisings of this sort were a regional and periodic phenomenon in imperial China. Once the state suppressed the Li Yuanfa and Chen Yagui Rebellions, nothing was obvious at the end of 1850. We thus still need to explain why the Taiping grew into a national force out of this regional rebellious situation.

Intergroup Competitions and the Taiping Rebellion

This section discusses the three relational, and particularly inter-group competitive logics from the societal side in the ecology of rebellion. The micro-internalist explanation argues that the Taiping's abrupt emergence and unusual success was due to its *organizational*, *ideological*, and *coalitional* strengths. While these strengths might play a significant role later, it is exactly how they came into existence that needs examination. I argue that the Taiping's transformation and rise were unintended by-products of a series of reactions to its uncertain, hostile, and repressive environment in Guangxi. Specifically, its vulnerable position in conflicts drove its militarization and concentration; its frustrated experience in the ideological competition forged its insurgent identity; its perilous status under the state's repression facilitated the temporary alliance between Taipings and Triads despite their incompatibility. In sum, the Taiping's insurgent "*cannons*" and "*canons*" (Weller 1994: 87), as well as its "*coalitions*" were all forged in these intertwined processes.

Organizational Militarization and Centralization in a Hostile Environment

The first question is why religious congregations became militant and then concentrated to

build a hierarchical organization. I argue that it was less a proactive strategy of the Taiping

leaders than the heterodox AGW's reaction to an increasingly perilous and violent environment.

God worshippers were driven to organize military units for self-defense and centralize

otherwise scattered congregations. In addition, the AGW offered a unifying force during armed

feuds and absorbed some disadvantaged villagers who sought protection. In this way, the

religious society took up arms and involved itself in local frays, finally becoming a rebel army.

Before 1847, the AGW was a purely religious group with no military goal or preparation,

and was not viewed as rebellious by the government. After that time, regional contentious

activities and intensified militarization affected the AGW. As a foreign, heterodox religion,

some congregations of the AGW had frequent collisions with supporters of popular religion and

gentry-led militias (Kuhn 1978: 273; Mao 1991: 187). For example, God worshippers had

initiated anti-temple movements since 1847, and encountered fierce retaliation from the gentry.

In 1847, Hong Xiuquan and Feng Yunshan destroyed several local temples, specifically the

temple of the King of Gan in the Xiangzhou district, in which generations had worshipped.

Local gentry, such as Wang Zuoxin, led a militia attack on the God worshippers and arrested

Feng Yunshan. Their harassment further drove the initial militarization of the AGW. In late

1849 and early 1850, even more armed conflicts took place among AGW's five congregations

and the gentry-led militias (Mao 1991: 195-199). About this time, the five congregations began

to buy weapons and train their adherents for further armed conflicts.

In his *Deposition*, Li Xiucheng provided a vivid "ecological account" of the militarization

and confrontation between God worshippers and local militias:

"For several years after the members began worshipping God, no apparent move was made. In the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth years of Tao-kuang (1847-1848), however, bandits in Kwangsi were ravaging the country everywhere, disturbing cities and towns, and the various inhabitants organized themselves into local corps. The local-corps members and the God-worshippers were distinguished from one another. The God-worshippers would form themselves into one group, and the local-corps men would form themselves into another group. Each party pursued its own course and endeavored to surpass the other, and the pressure finally led to the uprising" (Michael 1971: 1393; See also: Curwen 1977: 81).

The AGW centralized its organization by convoking believers together in late 1850. Even before the headquarters sent out the message for assembly, "the worshippers of God had felt the necessity of uniting together for common defense against their enemies" (Hamberg 1854: 52). Considering that the believers were usually on the weak side in rivalry, it is not surprising that they chose centralized organization. From an ecological perspective, it was actually the extensive militarization that made the dispersive AGW congregations increasingly vulnerable to attacks in every location where they existed, and drove the spatial concentration. It was thus initially more a protective than proactive method for overt revolt. According to Li Xiucheng,

"At the outset of the uprising, there would be both local-corps men and God-worshippers in one and the same village, and there were also attacks by one village on another. Therefore, the members gathered themselves together" (Michael 1971: 1393).

In addition, the AGW also offered a unifying organizational framework for feuding and absorbed some failure in the deadly feuds. Overall, people "willingly submitted to any form of worship in order to escape from their enemies, and received the necessary supplies, which they were now destitute of" (Hamberg 1854: 49). Furthermore, conditioned by distinct residential patterns, feuds facilitated the spread of the AGW as a new organizational frame in some places more than others. In Guangdong, Hong's hometown, the settlement and kinship were basically

congruent with ethnicity, which enabled strong organizational bases for large-scale feuding but also limited the necessity of a new structure in ethnic conflict; by contrast, in Guangxi, the kinship and settlement patterns were so fragmented that ethnicity became a much thinner social base for conflicts, and hence the AGW offered a new organizational framework, which fit the demands of Hakka people in their battles against natives (Kuhn 1977: 365).[21]

Even some non-believers joined the assembly and became rebels, more because of the intensification of violent conflicts than the religious attraction. For example, thousands of peasants and several pirate and bandit groups were involved in the most ferocious armed feud that took place in Gui County at Xunzhou Prefecture during September and October 1850, in which 3,000 guest settlers were eventually defeated by natives. Deprived of their homelands, they therefore joined the AGW and became a very important force in the Taiping (Hamberg 1854: 48-49; Spence 1996). It was AGW's single largest recruitment; before this incident there had only been hundreds of adherents in the AGW headquarters. This was not a singular case; the Taiping's organizational strength was continually built up in this way.

Insurgent Identities Forged by Ideological Competition

Just like its organizational militarization and concentration, AGW's rebellious transformation and ideological strengths also need explanation. Above all, we should not take the transition from a peaceful Christian society to a rebel group as natural or unavoidable. Neither should the AGW's ideological strengths be overestimated, given that it was embedded

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[21] While many God Worshippers and early Taiping rebels came from Hakka, we still need to differentiate the three categorical collectivities: rebellious organization, religious association, and ethnic communities. Notably, many rivals of the Taiping movement, including Wang Zuoxin, also came from Hakka.

in a strong, non-Christian society. In Guangxi, the old, relatively stable ideological order, constituted by both official ideology and popular religion, was challenged by other unorthodox ideologies such as the Triad discourses or God Worship (Weller 1994). An ideological chaos created various possibilities of resistance. AGW engaged in competition over legitimate worship with popular religions sponsored by the local gentry and even officials, and developed a resistant identity from certain frustrating experiences in the heightened conflicts. Later, Taipings claimed their insurgent agenda was superior to sectarian Triad movements.[22]

In his hometown in Guangdong, Hong Xiuquan had a bitter experience in a first clash with the local society. In 1836, Hong acquired a Protestant tract—"*Good Words for Exhorting the Age*"—in Canton, but not until summer 1843 did Hong begin to read, ponder, come to believe the teachings and convert two relatives—Feng Yunshan and Hong Rengan (Hamberg 1854: 8-9, 19). They soon took idolatry as their major target. In 1844, they removed the tablets of Confucius and hundreds of other prominent Confucian scholars, placed in the private school where they taught. Since Confucius was taken as the greatest sage in the elite culture and was deeply honored by Qing rulers, Hong's unorthodox behavior soon backfired: parents withdrew pupils from the school; other scholars and villagers fiercely criticized them; Hong Rengan was beaten and punished by his fathers and brothers; finally, they lost their jobs and had to travel outside the area (Spence 1996: 68-70). This very first clash set the tone for subsequent interactions between God Worshippers and popular beliefs. Fortunately for them, their unwilling journey reaped unexpected gains: in the next three years they (particularly Feng

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[22] This argument lies in an ecological theory that there was accompanying intense ideological competition among adjacent movement ideologies (Zald and McCarthy 1987: 164; Barnett and Woywode 2004: 2).

Yunshan) converted a number of God Worshippers in the area around the Thistle Mountains in Guangxi Province.

AGW's resistant identity was further shaped through its collisions with established popular religions endorsed by the gentry in this new base area. In 1847, Hong Xiuquan grew more aggressive against idolatry after studying with a Baptist missionary in Canton for three months. This time God Worshippers were no longer satisfied with clearing Confucian tablets or writing defiant poems on walls. Now they targeted myriad local deities and cults of China's folk religions and their representations in clay statues, which were worshipped by residents across lineages and villages (Hamberg 1854: 21, 24, 36-38; Reilly 2004: 68). Conflicts soon broke out when "God meets the Gods" (Weller 1994: 60). AGW's destruction of statues and temples in 1847 triggered strong retaliation from the gentry, such as the aforementioned arrest of Feng Yunshan, which in turn ignited God Worshippers' hatred of Confucian gentry and militias, rather than mere clay figures (Wagner 1982: 62). However, since local officials did not yet consider the AGW an illicit organization, the group did not view Qing rulers and officials as demons at this point.

As more battles took place between God Worshippers and local militias, they gradually came to identify their enemies as demons and their own members as a divine army. In 1849, two core God believers were again indicted by Wang Zuoxin, and persecuted to death in jail. More were charged by other gentry (Spence 1996: 110-115). These cases, especially after fruitless efforts to rescue their fellows, gave God Worshippers reason to classify officials and gentry as part of the same demonic category, on par with, and even more repulsive than, local

deities (Hamberg 1854: 43, 55-56; ter Haar 1996: 73-79). In late 1849 or early 1850, Hong began to identify specific "demon officials" for extermination (Wang 1986: 175). During these conflicts, God Worshippers eventually developed a double thrust: "they were against the idols and for the spiritual power of their one God, on the one hand, and against the Manchus and for the establishment of their God's worldly power, on the other" (Wagner 1982: 63). The religious group now consciously began its rebellious turn.

The external ideological competition also allowed Taiping leaders to impose a single dominant interpretation over other alternative interpretations, eventually asserting rebellion as the solution to both external challenges and internal chaos (Weller 1994: 93-110). During Hong's leave in 1848, there was a complicated mixture of competitive interpretations of religious teachings and the orientation of the movement within the AGW. Specifically, as many God Worshippers claimed the power of spirit possession, the internal struggle over ideological dominance might possibly have torn the movement apart (Hamberg 1854: 45; Wang 1993: 200-201). Upon Hong's return, and facing intensified external conflict, Taiping's leaders soon centralized the authority of spiritual possession, silenced other interpretations, politicized their identity, and thus unified and transformed the direction of the movement.

The Taiping's unique insurgent identity was further shaped by its ideological differentiation from other sectarian movements, especially the Triads. Although the Taiping shared with the Triads a hatred of the Manchus and an intention to overthrow Manchu rule, they had different and even conflicting visions of the new political order. The Taipings claimed that their ideology offered a better, even transcendent framework for rebellions, and was thus

superior to the framework of the Triads. Hong Xiuquan expressed his attitudes clearly:

> "Though I never entered the Triad Society, I have often heard it said that their project is to subvert the Tsing [Qing] and restore the Ming dynasty. Such an expression was very proper in the time of Khang-hi [Emperor Kangxi], when this society was first formed, but now after the lapse of two hundred years, we may still speak of subverting the Tsing [Qing], but we cannot properly speak of restoring the Ming. At all events, when our native mountains and rivers are recovered, a new dynasty must be established… There are several evil practices connected with the Triad Society, which I detest… Their real object has now turned very mean and unworthy" (Hamberg 1854: 55-56).

Even during their later coalitions, Triads were required to renounce their old worship, convert to God-worship, and accept the Taiping's stricter discipline (Curwen 1972). Taken together, the relational view of ideological competition and differentiation helps explain why a unique rebellious identity was forged in an originally religious association.

Coalition Building as a Reaction to Increasing Repression

Finally, we wonder how the Taiping could form coalitions (albeit temporary) with Triads. The AGW was initially not attractive to other groups as its creeds were so foreign and heterodox. Although the two groups shared a hatred of Manchu rule, their ideological disagreements constrained their cooperation. Even so, on the eve of the outbreak, the AGW did build a coalition with a few Triad groups. I argue that this was mainly because Triad groups were driven to the point of having no other option by the Qing army and other militias. In other words, common enemies and increasing repressive pressures, rather than voluntary integration based upon a shared ideological framework, facilitated their temporary alliance.

With little cooperation before 1850, the Taiping's alliance with the Triads was ironically brought about by the Qing's strengthened military actions against Triad rebels in mid-1850

(Laffey 1976). The emperor expressed his serious concerns about Guangxi's disorder in a few edicts issued in late June of that year. In September and October of 1850, the Qing court appointed new provincial officials and Commissioners to direct counter-insurgence battles, redeployed several relief troops from neighboring provinces to reinforce Guangxi's military strength, and transferred special funds from the imperial treasury and neighboring provinces to Guangxi. For example, on October 12 and 30, 1850, the court sent orders to dispatch three relief battalions, each with 2000 soldiers, from Hunan, Guizhou, and Yunnan provinces, to Guangxi (*HMAQG* vol. 1: 28, 43, 65).

Accordingly, the Triad groups were fiercely attacked by the Qing's augmented troops beginning in August 1850. For survival, they sought cooperation with other groups, such as the Taiping which, having not yet been identified by the government as rebellious, could thus serve as a temporary shield. In November 1850, eight Triad bands converged "on the Jintian region because of the massive campaign now being coordinated against them by the Qing government" (Spence 1996: 129; see also: Laai 1950: 199-204). Even the powerful chieftain Chen Yagui sought unification with the Taiping because his band had been besieged by Qing troops since September. Chen was captured on November 20 on his way to the Taiping's headquarters, but the remnant of his band, led by his brother, joined forces with the Taiping.

The alliance was short-lived. It was recorded that about a dozen Triad pirates, bandits, and rebels tried to ally with the Taiping but soon left in early 1851, because they were frightened by the Taiping's strange and rigid doctrines (Hamberg 1854: 54-56; Jen 1973: 67-70). However, some important exceptions, such as two pirate bands led by Luo Dagang and a female rebel Su

Sanniang, stayed with the Taiping and made crucial contributions (Laai 1950; Jen 1962: 235-246). Luo persuaded his former allies to make attacks to divert the Qing's attention from the Taiping, when the Taiping was besieged by imperial forces at their first occupied city (Laai 1950: 211-212; Cui 2002: 378). Later on, with battle experience on rivers, Luo and Su helped organize a powerful navy when the Taiping arrived at the Yangzi River.

State's Reactions and the Taiping's Development

In the above analysis, we have already found the role of the state in the making of the Taiping puzzling. Why did the state not recognize the AGW as a serious enemy when local gentries and militias began to attack it? Why did the state fail to detect the AGW's insurrection while quickly identifying other rebels? The answer lies in the nature of the state's reaction to multiple threats as a totality. When facing emerging contentious forces, the state prioritized its attention and resources on the familiar Triad rebels, while failing to identify the new threat and reposition its diverted forces to pacify it. Intra-state competition further inhibited its unified action, thus allowing the Taiping to expand at this weak part of its rule. Below I discuss each of the three (*cognitive*, *physical*, and *coordinating*) aspects of state reactions in turn.

Prioritization of Attention and Identification

When simultaneously facing multiple enemies, the state prioritized its attention to familiar Triad rebels while tolerating the new Taiping for several reasons. First, the state was pre-occupied with the existing rebels and thus had little attention left to identify and contain a new one. As a consequence, the state only collected incomplete, inaccurate, and delayed information. Second, the contrasting effect between the notorious existing rebels and the new,

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"innocent" groups made the state hesitant to identify the latter. Third, the state also tried to

avoid inciting the radicalization of possible rebel groups due to hasty identification. Taken

together, as a new religious society, the AGW was not categorized as a threat by local

authorities when it was impeached, and its rebellious activities were not known to the

provincial and central authority until very late. In contrast, the state often quickly detected and

identified Triad rebels, who already had an established history of insurrection.[23]

Before 1847 the AGW were perceived by local government only as a benevolent religious

society rather than a potential rebel group. This was the case even after local gentry and militias

began to attack it. For example, in the course of the 1847 conflict between the AGW and Wang

Zuoxin, Zuoxin accused the Taiping of being "religion in the face, while rebel in nature" to

Wang Lie, the magistrate of Guiping County, and later on, to the Prefect of Xunzhou. However,

the authorities confirmed AGW's legitimate religious status while overruling this accusation

and denouncing Wang Zuoxin for his attacks on God Worshippers.[24] Later, when Wang Zuoxin

arrested Feng Yunshan and escorted him to the prefectural government, Hong Xiuquan appealed

to the Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi, the highest official in this region. Feng

Yunshan referred to the Emperor's recent edict legitimizing the practice of Christianity, and

protested his innocence in seeking release from prison (Wagner 1982: 61; Spence 1996:

101-102). Finally Feng was set free. In cases such as this, officials' unwillingness to take sides

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[23] Overall, Qing's "Board of Punishments expected local officials to discriminate between the different forms of sectarianism, between those with a history of rebellion and those with no such history" (Reilly 2004:44). For another example, between 1724 and the 1840s, although Catholicism was taken as heterodox and thus proscribed, persecution was not strictly executed. The court was more tolerant towards Catholicism and viewed it as less dangerous than other indigenous heterodox sects such as the Triads (Bays 2011: 30-32).

[24] After the outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion, all of these officials were punished by the court for their lack of oversight in this case (*HMAQG*, vol.1:423-425, 484).

in the clashes certainly "favored the leadership of the God Worshippers in their preparations for local uprisings" (Michael 1966: 34).

The state's late and incorrect classification was even clearer during AGW's rebellious turn in late 1849 and early 1850. At that point Qing officials did not even classify it as a potential rebel group, but simply as a group that engaged in certain bold, heterodox activities such as temple destruction. In the new wave of intensified collisions between God Worshippers and local militias, "the officials were slow in attributing to the God Worshippers a more serious role than that of trouble-makers and rivals of other local defense units", thereby leaving them opportunities for assembly and preparation for overt revolts (Michael 1966: 38). Even in May/July 1850, Xu Guangjin, the governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, still suggested in one memorial that the emperor differentiated between benevolent and rebellious sects, and rebels and regular believers (*HMAQG* vol.1: 4-5). Up to late 1850,

> "the Mandarin soldiers, upon their excursion in search of the robbers, never interfered with the members of the congregations, or suspected the brethren to have any other religious motives for their assembling together" (Hamberg 1854: 49).

AGW's assembly in the second half of 1850 further shows how the state allocated its attention. The AGW began to assemble its believers from different areas of Guangxi to Jintian village in July 1850. Although there were sporadic conflicts between local militias and the assembling God Worshippers, they were not labeled major enemies by provincial officials until December, when the AGW had almost finished its assembly.[25] On December 8, 1850, Zheng Zucheng, Governor of Guangxi, memorialized the emperor concerning the large-scale assembly

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[25] The aforementioned transfers of the Qing's regular force in October had nothing to do with the Taiping's assembly.

around the Jintian village – the first time the event appeared in a memorial to the court

(*HMAQG* vol.1: 97). However, they still did not know this was a different force from the Triad

rebels. Moreover, although the Emperor received this information on December 23,[26] he did

not reply until January 19, 1851, nearly a month later, since he was preoccupied with the Triad

rebels. Other provincial officials also memorialized the emperor in December and January, but

the emperor did not pay attention to those messages either (*TFHA* 1995b: 58). Only after the

new Imperial Commissioner Li Xingyuan[27] memorialized this band together with a list of Triad

Rebels on January 6 (*HMAQG* vol.1: 116; Cui 2002: 109), did the emperor begin to realize the

new threat, but still thought it of less importance than the Triad rebels (*HMAQG* vol.1:

128-129). In other words, although Taiping leaders began to plan their rebellion in late 1849

and had concentrated its adherents since mid-1850, the state did not clearly classify it as

rebellious until early 1851.

In contrast, the Qing officials viewed the Triads as their most dangerous enemies, as they

had dealt with them for almost a century. Founded in 1761, the Triad organized its first

large-scale rebellion, the Lin Shuangwen Rebellion, in Taiwan in 1787-1788, with a few other

insurrections in the early 19th century (Ownby 1996: 25). The Empire was quite familiar with

this old enemy, so it often overacted – many Triad uprisings as well as other sectarian rebellions

were triggered by overstretched state intervention (Hung 2011; Wang 2014)—in sharp contrast

to its underreaction to the Taiping. As will be discussed in detail, the Li Yuanfa band and Chen

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[26] Usually the communication between the emperor (in Beijing) and provincial officials in South China took half-a-month to a month, depending on the importance and urgency of the information (Fairbank and Teng 1939).
[27] Li was successor to the recently deceased Commissioner Lin Zexu.

Yagui band were quickly detected and identified as primary threats by the emperor and provincial officials in the first and second half of 1850, respectively. As a result, "government officials and forces were far too busy with these extensive and more familiar manifestations of social disorder to give any attention to the apparently innocuous activities of the early Taipings, who were able to organize more or less undisturbed" (Curwen 1972: 65).

In sum, the Qing government did not perceive the AGW as a threat when it began to assemble for an uprising, and was mostly distracted by other rebellions in Guangxi during that period. The emperor did not even realize its existence until January 1851. No one considered that the Taiping would become the largest rebellion of all and trigger national turbulence, until it swept the Yangzi regions in 1852.

Disposition and Diversion of Coercive Power

Facing multiple, dispersed rebel groups, the state was often trapped into the predicament of how to deploy coercive forces. A relocation of the military from a certain area would possibly weaken the capacity for defense of that area, thus triggering new insurgents; but a belated, insufficient military redeployment could not control the emerging rebellions. Under certain circumstances, a latecomer rebel group could benefit by its spatial and temporal location in the rebellious wave because the strength of the state was distracted by simultaneous rebellions and/or exhausted by early rebel groups.

As the court collected more information on the Taiping Rebellion in early 1851, it began to view the Taiping as probably the most dangerous enemy and commanded provincial officials to exterminate it. It appeared that the Qing had the chance to suppress the Taiping before it moved

outside Guangxi province and built a formidable insurgent army. However, two ecology-related factors of military disposition – one temporal and the other spatial – constrained the Qing's ability to pacify the Taiping.

First, the Qing's coercive power had been greatly weakened before the Taiping's uprising. The Qing's standing army in Guangxi was exhausted from the suppression of earlier rebellions in 1849 and 1850. To suppress the Triad band of Chen Yagui in late 1850, the emperor had to transfer three relief troops from neighboring provinces to supplement Guangxi's insufficient military deployment. In early January 1851, Commissioner Li Xingyuan sent a memorial to the emperor about the lack of military capacity in Guangxi: "Now only the 2000 relief soldiers from Hunan Province are able to combat, relief armies from Yunnan and Guizhou provinces seconded, while soldiers of Guangxi province are barely useable" (Cui 2002: 110). Pro-state militias had also been exhausted: according to a militia organizer, several militia leaders were killed and many militia groups were nearly destroyed in the battles against Triads (Cui 2002: 52). In other words, even before the Taiping uprising on January 11, 1851, Guangxi's forces had been so weakened that they were evaluated as useless.[28]

Second, in its need to cope with other rebels, the Qing's regular force was diverted even when it did try to focus on the Taiping. As realized by provincial officials at the end of 1850, ten out of twelve prefectures in Guangxi were haunted by dozens of rebel groups each with more than one thousand members, leaving military redeployment extremely difficult (*TFHA*

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[28] At this time, most AGW congregations chose to accumulate manpower and weapons, and watch the conflicts between the state and other rebel groups. For example, the Taiping leader Xiao Chaogui commented on this strategy on June 2, 1850: "we should have waited until the demonic government and demonic Triads exterminated each other and then rose up under the instructions of God and Jesus" (Wang 1986: 45-46). This strategy eventually paid off.

1995b: 52). On April 10, 1851, the emperor appointed *Saixangga*, the Chief Grand Minister, as Imperial Commissioner to replace Li Xingyuan in commanding the battles. Authorized with more resources and manpower, *Saixangga* was once confident in his mission. As soon as he arrived at Guangxi, however, he realized that it would be much more difficult to restore order than he had thought in Beijing (*HMAQG* vol. 2: 66, 106-108; Mao 1991: 248, 258). In early July, 1851, just three days after his arrival, *Saixangga* memorialized the emperor that "as regarding the general situation of Guangxi province, except that the capital prefecture of Guilin was still under control, all other prefectures were burned by numerous bandits and rebels" (*HMAQG* vol.2: 66). He listed more than twenty active, sizable rebel groups in Guangxi and neighboring areas (*HMAQG* vol.2: 67-69; Cui 2002: 190-192), diverting regular forces in a dispersed space. Accordingly, only 10,000 soldiers were left to fight Taipings, less than 1/3 of all the troops in Guangxi province (Mao 1991: 256).

After a few fierce battles with these weakened and dispersed regular forces, Taiping rebels successfully seized their first city, Yongan, in September, 1851. Taipings occupied the city for six months, consolidated their army into a disciplined organization, increased new recruits to a total of 40,000, and proclaimed their political agenda (Jen 1973: 78-80). Meanwhile, despite mobilizing more forces in Guangxi, the Qing was still unable to concentrate its force to take back the city, since a number of Triad rebels were diverting about 60% Qing's troops (Cui 2002: 347). In April 1852, after defeating several assaults by the encircling Qing forces, Taipings successfully broke through and marched northward into the Yangzi regions.

Intra-State Competition and Coordinating Failure

Coordinated state action is essential for effective pacification, yet intra-state competition constrained its coordination in both identifying major enemies and effectively deploying coercive power. The Qing's local authorities were in competition with each other over resources and security, and were also disconnected from the court's unified arrangement. In this case, to maintain order under their jurisdiction, local governments expelled rebels to adjacent and more vulnerable areas, exaggerated the threats to their own areas, and maintained physical strength even if the neighboring areas had bigger problems. Accordingly, this intrastate security competition limited its coordinating pacification abilities, and favored the Taiping's continuous expansion at the weak points of imperial power. In this part, I will use court archives to analyze the inter-provincial competition between Guangdong and Guangxi, the most critical locales in facilitating the rise of the Taiping Rebellion.

In South China, although the two provinces were under the command of the same Governor-General (Xu Guangjin since 1848), as Xu resided in Guangdong province, he was mainly responsible for that province's security, leaving the governor of Guangxi on his own. During 1849-1850, Guangdong authorities initiated attacks on land bandits and pirates in the western side close to Guangxi, driving them in a swarm into Guangxi (Laai 1950: 85). Even Xu admitted this point but he blamed the ineptness of Guangxi officials:

> "Many bandits and rebels were hotly pursued in Guangdong and found nowhere to hide, so they freely fled to Guangxi … Then they sent a message back to call upon more fellows… Officials should investigate where culprits committed crimes rather than inquire where they originally came from" (*TFHA* 1995a: 30).

In contrast, Governor Zheng of Guangxi memorialized the emperor to stress the importance of

the coordination and effective redeployment between the two provinces since many bands were roving across provincial borders (*TFHA* 1995a: 26-27). At that point, one Censorate had already accused Xu and Zheng of shuffling responsibility to each other (*TFHA* 1996: 35). Overall, given that military deployment was woefully poor in Guangxi compared to the situation in Guangdong, their uncoordinated action put great pressure on Guangxi, especially its border areas close to Guangdong.

After the uprising of Chen Yagui, Zheng immediately requested the emperor to dispatch Xu to command the battles in the border areas of Guangxi (*TFHA* 1995a: 27). Half a month later, the emperor ordered Xu to immediately head to Guangxi (*HMAQG* vol.1: 20-21). However, in his reply memorial, Xu refused to leave for Guangxi or send extra soldiers, arguing the urgency of defending Guangdong (*HMAQG* vol. 1: 30-31). The court had to accept Xu's excuse: in a follow-up edict to Governor Zheng, it said that "although Xu Guangjin is in charge of and responsible for the two provinces, as Guangdong is itself in disorder, Xu is unable to give aid to Guangxi" (*HMAQG* vol.1: 52). Overall, Guangdong authorities' beggar-thy-neighbor policy made coordination abortive, quickly worsening Guangxi's situation.

This intra-state competition over security became ever more salient after the uprising of the Taiping in early 1851. Xu still disagreed that it was a primary threat to the whole region. In a memorial, he even claimed that as the total Taiping membership (including women, elders, and children) was less than 20,000, they were merely impotent mobs despite their small tricks (Cui 2002: 142-143). Instead, he insisted that there were other bandits and rebels within Guangdong and emphasized the importance of Guangdong's security. Xu not only turned down

several requests for military assistance in combating Taiping rebels from officials of Guangxi, including a request from Commissioner Li Xingyuan in early 1851, but even continually refused the coordination directed by the court. Beginning in February, the court issued several edicts ordering Xu to head to Guangxi to fight the Taipings, especially after a few rebel bands were suppressed in Guangdong in May 1851 (*HMAQG* vol.1: 230,274-275, 339, 354, 368; vol. 2: 10). Admitting that both provinces were his responsibility, Xu nevertheless refused most of these orders, except to dispatch a small number of Guangdong militias (*HMAQG* vol. 1: 174-176, 384-386, 458-459).

As will be discussed in the next section, from the middle of 1851, Xu began to use the smaller size of the AGW congregation (led by Ling Shiba) at Guangdong as a new excuse to refuse aiding Guangxi. Xu never went to Guangxi or gave substantive support to Guangxi authorities, during the Taiping's six-month occupation of the city of Yongan. He finally put down this smaller AGW band in July 1852, *after* Guangxi's Taipings had broken out of the siege in April, departed from Guangxi in May, and arrived at the Middle Yangzi Region in June. In short, uncoordinated state identification and action inhibited the state from suppressing the Taiping before it grew into an uncontrollable force.

Comparisons

Strengths and weakness of the micro-internalist and meso-ecological explanations can be further revealed in two comparisons: a comparison between the Taiping and major Triad rebellions, and a comparison of successful and failed AGW congregations. Why were other rebellious groups not facilitated by this insurgent ecology? Why did some AGW branches

succeed while the AGW branch led by Ling Shiba failed? In this section, by comparing the

AGW's two congregations with divergent paths and comparing the Taiping with a few Triad

groups, I will demonstrate the value of the dynamic, ecological theory in explaining not only

the Taiping's rise but also the success and failure of other groups.

Triad Rebel Groups

The Micro-Internalist account argues that the Taiping was successful due to its intrinsic

organizational and ideological strengths, while the Triad was doomed to fail because of its

internal inability to organize large rebellions: loose and network-type organization, weak

discipline, and incoherent ideological framework (e.g., Jen 1973: 69-70; Cui 2002: 47-50).

Between 1847 and 1851, despite a number of Triad-based rebels, pirates, and bandits, only the

Chen Yagui and Li Yuanfa Rebellions developed to a median scale, and even those two were

quickly shut down by the Qing. So the internalist explanation seems convincing.

This view of the Taiping's success has been proven problematic; its explanation for the

Triads' failure is also untenable. Above all, it is incorrect to claim the Triads had no intrinsic

capacity to organize large-scale rebellions given the fact that they did organize a few both

before and after the Taiping Rebellion. Historically, the Lin Shuangwen Rebellion (1787-1788)

was the first large-scale uprising among a series of rebellions in the late 18th century: 200,000

people were mobilized for two-year of battle (Ownby 1996: 82-95; Hung 2011: 127). In

addition, just after the Taiping marched northward, several Triad groups organized large

rebellions and founded a few "Kingdoms" in South China (Lu 1975). For example, "Red

Turban" rebels besieged Canton in 1854 and then proceeded to take over dozens of cities until

1863 (Wakeman 1972; Laffey 1976). If the Triads had not possessed the capacity to organize

rebellions, how does one explain their achievements in these cases, especially in the wake of

the Taiping uprising?

What limited the further development of Triad groups, especially the Chen Yagui and Li

Yuanfa bands? By comparing them with the Taiping, I argue that their divergent outcomes

partly lay in their particular locations in the rebellion ecology. On one hand, before 1850 most

Triad groups had occupied specific turf in hills or rivers, enjoyed their enterprises of smuggling,

robbery, and plunder, and had only occasional combat with regular forces. Despite

contradictions with orthodox state ideology, they were compatible with popular ideas and local

society. This stands in stark contrast to AGW's intense relationship. Without urgent military

pressure, Triads had little motivation to build larger, more hierarchical organizations, unlike

AGW congregations that were driven to concentration. In addition, passive competition with

each other over resources and manpower further limited the formation of a stable coalition

among them. As a result, when the bands of Li Yuanfa and Chen Yagui turned into a "real"

rebellion in 1850, they did not succeed at bloc recruitment, despite that there were more than

one dozen sizable Triad groups, which outnumbered Guangxi's regular forces (Xie 1950). In

contrast, on the eve of the Taiping uprising, about a dozen Triad groups accepted the leadership

of the Taiping, largely because these Triads were then under heavier siege from Qing forces.

On the other hand, the Qing concentrated its attention and physical forces on these Triad

rebels. Both the Chen Yagui and Li Yuanfa bands were quickly detected and classified as major

enemies. For example, the first uprising of Li Yuanfa's band in October 1849 was reported to

the court very soon, and was viewed as a primary target. Likewise, Governor Zheng

memorialized the court eight days after the first overt uprising of Chen Yagui's band, and the

emperor replied in another six days, commanding ruthless repression (*HMAQG* vol. 1: 15-16,

20). They also acted rapidly. At the time of the Li Yuanfa rebellion, the Qing was still able to

concentrate its military forces on this band in the first half of 1850. Within only one week of the

uprising, several battalions were dispatched to Xinning County. In October 1850 alone, the

court re-deployed three relief battalions from neighboring provinces to repress the Chen Yagui

band. By comparison, the Taiping was not identified as rebellious until very late and thus freely

built its organizational structure. Plus, by the time the Taiping rose in early 1851, the Qing's

military strength was diverted and exhausted by Triads, as just introduced.

Finally, the very success of the Triad Rebellions in the wake of the Taiping uprising was

also related to the changing rebellion ecology in South China. First, the rise of the Taiping

triggered further militarization and the explosion of rebellions in this region. For example, the

Taiping's intrusion into several areas of Guangdong caused new uprisings. Second, after the

Taiping built a rival regime in the Lower Yangzi region in early 1853, the central court devoted

most of its attention and resources to warfare against the Taiping, thus giving lighter pressure to

South China (Laffey 1976). In short, the Taiping's rise gave the Triads chances to strengthen

themselves, while the Taiping's departure left the Triads a huge space for expansion. The

ecological theory explains not only the Taiping's success, but the silence and salience of the

Triad Rebellions as well.

Another AGW Congregation

A short discussion of another AGW congregation led by Ling Shiba at Guangdong can further show that the internal, organizational and ideological strengths of the AGW alone were not sufficient to secure its victory, if positioned in a disadvantaged spatial/temporal location in the rebellious situation. Instead, ecological mechanisms played crucial roles in the divergent outcomes of different AGW congregations.

It should be noted that Ling Shiba led AGW's first overt revolt. Between 1848 and 1849, Ling was converted by Hong Xiuquan and Feng Yunshan in Guangxi, and later returned to his hometown in Guangdong to spread God Worship, recruiting more than two thousand believers within half a year. After a few quarrels with gentry-led militias backed by the magistrate, Ling began open revolt in August 1850, four months earlier than Hong Xiuquan's branch. Ling's 3000-member band crusaded towards Guangxi in order to join the AGW headquarters between February and early May 1851. He also allied with a few Triads who were under heavy attack from the state, but their efforts to unite with AGW headquarters failed. Ling withdrew to Guangdong and engaged in roving battles against the Qing until July 1852 (Jen 1962: 246-263; "Archives on the Rise and Fall of Ling Shiba Rebellion from Xinyi County of Guangdong").

From an ecological perspective, there are parallels between the two branches led respectively by Hong and Ling, in terms of their early history of recruitment, competitive militarization, ideological confrontations with popular religions, concentration of adherents, and temporary alliance with Triads. Ling's band claimed more than 10,000 members at its heyday in 1851, not much less powerful than Hong's band (*HMAQG* vol. 1: 242). Hence, Ling's failure

needs an explanation. I argue that it is mainly because Ling's band was in a vulnerable temporal

and spatial location within the rebellion ecology, and thus encountered more difficulties in

further expansion.

Temporally, Ling's branch was disadvantaged for the timing of two critical events: its

overt revolt and its attempt to unite with the Taipings' headquarters. First, it was too early for

Ling's uprising, thus it was impossible for him to hide the insurgent purpose and enjoy the

benefit of being a new and unfamiliar rebel group to the state (as other AGW congregations did).

The Taiping headquarters did command Ling to be patient to wait for a more propitious time for

the uprising, but Ling arose in the wake of heightened conflicts with militias (Wang 1986:

58-59; Spence 1996: 136). Second, in the critical moment (April 1851) during Ling's attempt to

join the Taiping's headquarters, the aforementioned Triad pirates, especially Big-Head Goat,

had just surrendered to the state and turned their arms against the Taiping. They helped the state

cut off the river connection between the two provinces, preventing the linkup of the two AGW

bands (Laai 1950: 205-207). Ling's group was thus repulsed back to Guangdong.

Spatially, Qing's military deployment in Guangdong was far better than that in Guangxi,

and it predominantly focused on Ling's band. First, with stronger power and fewer enemies,

local authorities classified Ling's band as a new rebellion in short order. Therefore, although

both collided with militias, Hong Xiuquan's band was overlooked while Ling's band was

quickly targeted. Second, though the emperor continually ordered Guangdong authorities to

transfer soldiers to Guangxi between February and July 1851, his attempt at coordination was

altogether abortive (e.g., *HMAQG* vol. 1: 366). He finally gave up his proposal. In an edict on

August 14, 1851, therefore, the emperor commanded Xu to focus on Ling's band rather than transfer regular forces to Guangxi (*HMAQG* vol.2: 128-129). Thus, Guangdong authorities were able to concentrate their major forces in pacifying Ling's uprising.

Xu and other Guangdong officials also used Ling's uprising as an excuse to reject several requests from Guangxi officials for relief troops. With a much stronger coercive capacity, Xu finally exterminated Ling's band. However, Guangxi's Taiping rebels, led by Hong, had already marched into the Middle Yangzi region and become a formidable, unruly force.

The Aftermath of the Taiping's Rise

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to sketch the aftermath of the Taiping's takeoff, in order to give a background for the subsequent chapters. After Taiping sustained the most difficult incipient stage (late 1850 to September 1851), it then made great progress in the next one and a half year. In September 1851, it took over *Yongzhou*, its first city, occupied it for six months, expanded and consolidated into a hierarchical rebel army with clearer political agenda, and defeated several sieges by regular forces. In April 1852, it broke out of the encirclement and marched northwards, soon breaking through the provincial borders into the Middle Yangzi Region in early June. From September to November, 1852, Taipings initiated fierce albeit unsuccessful attacks on *Changsha*, the provincial capital of Hunan, and then gave up the seesaw battles and marched along Yangzi River downstream. In January 1853, they took over *Wuchang*, their first occupied provincial capital, and greatly expanded their army (to about half a million) and built a strong navy. From February 9, 1853, Taipings passed over four provinces in one month along the Yangzi River, and took over Nanjing in the late March. They

established it as the Heavenly Capital and built the rebel regime in the most prosperous and populous region of the Qing Empire.

Indeed, Taiping's "scale shift" (McAdam *et al*. 2001; Tilly & Tarrow 2007) from a regional force to a national rebellion between 1851 and early 1853 was the first empire-wide turning point. Qing's weak formal military strength, especially naval forces on the river, was certainly a structural weakness that allowed the Taiping's breakthrough. Yet Taiping's takeover of Nanjing was only possible for a number of conjunctural conditions.[29]

Taiping rebels's regime building had far-reaching effects on the political order of the Qing Empire, because it not only directly dislocated the old ruling structures and created a national oppositional structure that lasted one decade, but also indirectly caused the decentralization, fragmentation, and societal diffusion of Qing's political and military power that gradually led to the appearance of new rebellions.

The direct structural effect of the Taiping regime was a creation of national binary cleavage structure until the fall of the Taiping Kingdom in 1864 (Kuhn 1978:281). Politically, Qing Empire and the Taiping Kingdom became two confrontational regimes. Militarily, Taiping built a tremendous army and engaged in a massive civil war with the Empire. Economically, as it occupied the most prosperous part of the Qing Empire, it deeply weakened Qing's economic recourses and especially financial capacity. Culturally, Taiping not only created an oppositional culture, but it opened a new image that had never been imagined by Chinese: a Christian state

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[29] First, Taiping's hierarchical organization, transcendental ideology, and religious disciplines now played critical roles in sustaining its continuous mobile battles. Second, though most left, few pirate leaders accepted Christianity and commanded Taiping's river expedition. Third, Taiping accidentally decided to march toward Nanjing rather than the North, where the nascent Taiping force would have been mercilessly crushed by much stronger regular forces including Manchu and Mongolian cavalry and damaged by the cold winter, as clearly shown in its two failed northern expeditions afterwards.

on the earth. Therefore the confrontation was not merely between two rulers, but between the

"Son of Heaven" (the emperor) and the "Chinese Son of the God" (Rieley 2004).[30] The Taiping

had also other social influence on land distribution and gender equality. In this regard, Taiping

was a genuine social revolution. Nevertheless, the political and militaristic consequences were

more critical for subsequent rebellious situations.

Taiping also had several indirect impacts, which played an even larger role in facilitating

succeeding rebellions. The most critical impacts included military decentralization and

fragmentation of the state's power and military power in coping with the rising Taiping rebels,

extensive and spiralling societal militarization in the name of communal defense, and military

redeployment and fiscal transfer from poorer provinces to the major battlefields (Jenks 1994:9).

These indirect influences further resulted in the formation of new rebellions in many areas

albeit as unintended consequence, as will be shown in Chapters 4 and 5.

Despite its importance, I argue that the Taiping effect is better understood by the dynamic

model rather than the endogenous model which takes Taiping's rise as a critical juncture, upon

which subsequent rebellions were path dependent (Mahoney 2000; Paulson 2004). True, the

Taiping Rebellion created political opportunities for many later rebellions, but we should also

remember the limitations of the path dependence explanation (Haydu 1998:352). Most

subsequent rebellions were not the direct result of the Taiping's influence, but gradually and

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[30] The cultural shock of the Christian-inspired Taiping on Confucian elites was far larger than any previous rebellion that could be incorporated into the Confucian system (when the rebels toppled down the old dynasty while building a new one). In a well-known proclamation in 1854, Zeng Guofan decried the Taiping and warned a fundamental cultural crisis: "The Taiping bandits have stolen a few scraps from the foreign barbarians and worship the Christian religion… Scholars may not read the Confucian classics, for they have their so-called teachings of Jesus and the New Testment… This is not just a crisis for our Ch'ing dynasty, but the most extraordinary crisis of all time for the Confucian teachings…" (translated by Bays 2011:55-56).

often surprisingly transformed. Furthermore, while the Taiping rebellion was the first national turning point, but for many specific rebellions, they were generated by regional turning points rather than directly followed the rise of the Taiping. In one word, a path dependent explanation would miss many important patterns that will be shown in subsequent chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter offers a new explanation of a historical puzzle on the rise of the Taiping Rebellion, which has attracted enduring scholarly attention because of its historical significance and extraordinary features. Given facts such as the strong anti-Christian sentiments and nonexistence of other Christian-inspired rebellions in Chinese history, the Taiping movement was indeed unusual, unexpected, and puzzling. Its organizational and ideological characteristics might have played a critical role, but certainly not in its incipient period. The key question is exactly how its strengths came into being, considering the Taiping's liability as a heterodox religion with dispersed congregations. Building upon the dynamic mode, this chapter proposes a meso-ecological explanation and focuses on interactions, especially competition among multiple militarized, contentious groups and state actors in the late-1840s regional rebellious situation. Taiping's perilous position in the heightened conflicts drove its rebellious transformation and organizational concentration, hence owning a unified strength that other groups did not. Meanwhile, because of inadequate resources and intra-state competition, the Qing state was preoccupied by familiar rebel groups, and did not distribute enough attention and resources to tackle this new unrecognized rebel group. Taking the two sides together, the initially vulnerable Taiping gained an edge that facilitated its interstitial emergence.

In other words, preexisting structures did not produce the Taiping automatically—without the militarization of the society, the AGW could have remained a religious association; or simply pacified if the regional regular forces had not been exhausted by early rebellions. The Taiping was also not endogenously generated by Triads rebels, pirates, or bandits: the ideological contradiction between the two made the diffusion and coalition so difficult. Finally, there were a number of conjunctural causes and accidents in Taiping's abrupt rebellious transformation and emergence. Yet unfavorable accidents also existed. The dynamic model highlights relational patterns: once the society became turbulent, militarized, and mobile, the conflict between AGW and militias became more violent, and the feuds between different ethnic groups were intensified, the rebellious transformation of the Taiping became more possible and urgent for its adherents; and once the already insufficient and weak regular forces were dispersed, diverted, and exhausted, the pacification of the Taiping in its early stage became dim and remote. It was such inter-rebel relationships, intra-state relationships, and state-rebel relationships, altered by emerging contentious forces, that facilitated the Taiping's rebellious transformation and uncontrolled takeoff. In this non-teleological account, the Jintian Uprising in 1851 was just like the outbreak of the Li Yuanfa and Chen Yagui rebellions, a merely minor turning point that could largely be explained by the altered regional structure and did not necessarily lead to the final emergence of the Taiping as a national force.

Theoretically, this work contributes to both contentious politics and ecology theory. Giving attention to relational mechanisms, it engages with literature on both social movements and revolutions under the synthetic paradigm of contentious politics (McAdam *et al*. 2001). It also

extends an interactional/institutional ecology perspective to the study of rebellions and

revolutions. In addition, my ecological theory has three other significant features. First, it

stresses a meso-level analysis to link otherwise disconnected macro-structural conditions and

micro-organizational factors (Fligstein and McAdam 2012). Second, my theory applies a

relational perspective with specific emphasis on the competition among multiple insurgent

forces (McAdam *et al*. 2001). Finally, it also works out a middle way, between structural

determinism and eventful contingency, to tackle temporalities: collective actions unfold

progressively, patterned by continually shifting (rather than static) contexts and relationship

structures (Markoff 1997; Walder 2006).

Given these merits, the significance of ecological forces in the making of consequential,

unconventional movements is not limited to the Taiping case. For example, in the Chinese

Communist Revolution's early period (1917-1921), rather than a triumphal march into China as

is often described, "Marxism was not merely one among the competing socialisms… but the

weakest one" at the outset of the May Fourth Movement in 1919, and "this inter-socialism

competition was very real." Accordingly, Marxists "devoted more energy to suppressing

anarchism and, to a lesser extent, guild socialism, than to refuting their non-socialist critics" in

1920-1921 (Dirlik 1989: 10-11). Only throughout these heightened ideological and

organizational competitions did Marxism become the unchallenged leader of the Left. Cases in

other historical contexts show similar patterns. In several modern revolutions—the Puritan

Revolution, French Revolution, and American Revolution—revolutionary ideologies were

articulated, crystallized, and radicalized in heightened competition with other political and

religious discourses, including popular religions (Sewell 1985; Lincoln 1985).

On a more abstract level, the dynamic, ecological perspective should be given a central place when studying a focal movement in its broad political environment. For example, when explaining why certain latecomer movements are less likely to succeed, McAdam (1996: 33) argues "those movements which arise fairly late in a reform protest cycle are disadvantaged by the necessity of having to confront a state that is already preoccupied with the substantive demands and political pressure generated by the early risers". This statement shows a relational insight on the state's distribution of attention and resources over different temporal locations, albeit in a context (or under an assumption) that the democratic state is *responsive* rather than *repressive*. Keeping the scope condition in mind, future research can further explore the value of the dynamic, ecological theory in different contexts.

Great social, political, and religious movements are the most consequential events in human history. Yet before they rise to prominence, they are one of many similar movements in particular locales; it is not inevitable that a specific one becomes the eventual "dominator." With their novel, heterogeneous, and radical claims/actions, many would-be revolutionary movements are suppressed, tamed, or co-opted. Yet in rare circumstances, they abruptly emerge out of their fellow movements, often as the unintended consequences of unique reactions to environmental constraints, such as heightened inter-movement conflicts. Gould (2005: 288-289) once reminded us to examine "big" revolutions together with "small" contentions. This chapter hopes to work out such a possible approach.

Chapter 4 Insurrections of Elite-Led Militias

The Puzzle of Elite Insurrections

This chapter will explain a common yet puzzling phenomenon of the mid-19th century: Why did some elite-led, initially defensive communal militia groups (often against the Taiping rebels) turn into rebellions? Drawing upon cases across regions, I argue that these elite revolts were not the result of preexisting contradictions between the state and elites (as was often the case in early modern Europe), but were the unintended results of the counter-insurgent mobilization of elites and the state in reaction to the rising crisis. Specifically, the counter-mobilization drove intra-state competition and inter-community competition in many areas that further led to the oppositional alignment of initially disparate communal militias and state/elite alignment on rival sides. Throughout heightened bloc conflicts, the inter-elite and intra-state cleavages were transposed by state/elite opposition; initially similar groups thus diverged into rebels and repressors interdependent of each other. Whether militia groups turned into rebels or repressors was a situational result, contingent upon the power and positioning of their major competitor and state patron. Sometimes even the same elite reoriented his identity from loyalist to insurgent in the changing political cleavages.

Elites play critical roles in many large-scale rebellions or consequential movements.[1] They often serve as institutional actors (Markoff 1997; Lachmann 1997) and counter-mobilization agencies, assisting in the suppression of rebellions from below (Tilly 1964; McAdam 1982; Isaac

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[1] My definition of elite is close to Lachmann's: "a group of rulers with the capacity to appropriate resources from nonelites and who inhabit a distinct organizational apparatus" (Lachmann 2000:9; Also see: Lachmann 1989:147, 2010: 48-49). However, rather than the national, political elites upon whom Lachmann focuses, this chapter mainly tackles local, societal elites (Gould 1996; Hillmann 2008). For classical discussions on elites, see: Mosca 1896; Pareto 1901/1991; Michels 1915; Mills 1956.

2002). However, elites themselves can potentially become rebellious and even take a leadership

role in that process. So, *why do elites rebel*? This question has been addressed from two

perspectives: a *structural* view and a *static relational* view. From a structural point of view, elites

might be defiant and resistant to an expanding and exclusive state, as seen in elite revolts in early

modern Europe when the state forcefully expanded by extracting greater resources from local

elites (e.g., Tilly 1986, 1993; Barkey 1991; Kiser and Linton 2002). However, this model is less

applicable to a context in which there is no structural contradiction between elites and the state. It

is also unable to explain internal variations within elite groups—some elites become insurgents

while others remain the state's allies. The second model, a *static, relational view* contends that

some elites are coopted by the state while others are not, so they behave differently during a

rebellion (e.g., Gould 1996; Hillman 2008; Slater 2009). A more sophisticated theory, it is

nevertheless less helpful to explain the varying behaviors of elites who have a similar background

and position before the rebellion era. In other words, under certain circumstances, the positioning

of major actors continually shifts over the course of the rebellion, their divergent pathways are

interdependent, and the same elite might even change his political orientation. To explain these

cases, we need to supplement the *relational* theory with a thorough "*processual*" view (Emirbayer

1997): Elite insurrection is the processual result of varying and shifting relational contexts that are

constituted by elites and their opponents and allies, different state actors, and existing rebels.

Elite mobilization constituted a substantive element during the mid-19th century in Qing

China.[2] Since the Qing's regular forces were inadequate to cope with the emerging

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[2] I take a plural definition of local elites in the Chinese empire by understanding them as "any individuals or families that

Christian-inspired Taiping Rebellion and other subsequent rebellions, local militias were

extensively organized in the name of communal defense. Furthermore, more offensive, mobile,

and organized regional armies were built and became major counter-insurgent forces (Michael

1950; Spector 1964; Kuhn 1970; Smith 1974; Liu 1978; Wang 1980). It was the elites, especially

the Confucian gentry, who played a critical role in organizing these militias and regional armies to

help the state suppress the Taiping as well as other rebellions (Wright 1962; Kuhn 1970; Liu 1980;

Rowe 2009:195-196; Platt 2012; see also: Skocpol 1979:75).[3]

However, elites were not merely mobilized to defend the empire; instead, some elites played a

critical role in leading a number of rebellions. Many militia groups, initially established as

counter-insurgence forces, joined rebel alliances or became rebels themselves (Kuhn 1970; Perry

1980; Marks 1984; Zheng 2009). They were even given a label by Qing officials: "militia

rebellions." In these militia rebellions, local elites, including Confucian gentry with

state-conferred degrees and even official titles, took the leadership, while peasants or commoners

provided actual combatants (Marks 1984:60-61, 71; Perry 1985:110; Bernhardt 1992). Despite

being noted in disparate historical studies, this phenomenon has not been well examined and only

peculiar explanations given. As a leading historian on the Taiping civil war recently points out:

"much has been made of the Confucian scholars who salvaged the dynasty in the 1860s, but little is

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exercised dominance within a local arena" (Esherick and Rankin 1990:10). As a result, they included Confucian gentry with academic degrees, wealthy landlords, influential merchants, and lineage leaders, as well as local strongmen, all of whom sometimes but did not necessarily overlap. Like Lachmann's general definition of elites, this definition "focuses on the dynamic and processual aspects of elite power and on the dialectical relationship of elites to subordinate actors in local society" (Esherick and Rankin 1990:10). For debates on the definition of elites in Chinese historiography, see: Chang 1955; Ho 1962; Chu 1962; Meskill 1979; Schoppa 1982; Rankin 1986; Rowe 1989; Esherick and Rankin 1990.

[3] For example, in Philip Kuhn's classical *Rebellion and its Enemies in Late Imperial China*, gentry-led militias were taken as the major enemy of the Taiping rebels. This process has also been correctly summarized by Skocpol (1979:75) "as the Imperial Armies proved inadequate, the task of dealing with the rebellions fell instead to local gentry-led self-defense associations, and then to regional armies led by native gentry cliques with access to village resources and recruits over wide areas."

known of those who chose the other side" (Platt 2009:3).

A broad survey in historiography would find that elite insurrections appeared in multiple regions: the Lower Yangzi Delta (Zheng 2009), North China (Perry 1985; Cui 2011), Middle China (Rowe 2007), South China (Kuhn 1970; Marks 1984), Southwest China (McCord 1990; Jenks 1994; Rack 2005), Taiwan (Meskill 1979), Muslim rebellions in Northwest China (Lipman 1997), and other places throughout the entire Empire (Fu 1945/1982; Hsiao 1960; Liu 1978). For example, even in areas close to the Taiping base, "the Taiping Rebellion was not simply a conflict between rebels on one side, and local elites plus the Qing government on the other. Eastern Zhejiang's Taiping Rebellion was chiefly a civil war between two types of local elites" (Zheng 2009:39). Likewise, in North China, "members of the local elite—linked by education and personal friendships to state agents and institutions—played a central role in the development of anti-state protest" during this period (Perry 1985:110). In Middle China, most of the fighting was conducted by local militia units, which were ambivalent about the Taiping and imperial forces and hence often fighting for their own reasons (Rowe 2007). In Guizhou Province in the Southwest, "military conflicts of this period were hardly limited to the war between elite forces of order and armies of rebellion"; more altercations extended to the conflicts between militia leaders or between militia leaders and officials (McCord 1990:171). In other words, "the anti-Qing movement in Guizhou was not exclusively Miao [aboriginals] and that local leaders and local militias conducted much of the fighting" (Rack 2005). As noted by Hsiao, "there is ample ground for the view that some of the terrible clashes, especially the more extensive and sustained ones, were instigated, organized, or directed by the gentry of the rural communities involved" (Hsiao

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1960: 424). In sum, a comprehensive survey of historical studies in different regions would find that the role elites played in mobilizing insurrections was no less than their role in the counter-insurgent mobilization.

So, *why did these Chinese elites rebel*? Below we will find that these elite revolts were not the result of a structural contradiction between the state and elites as two categorical actors; neither did they represent long-existing cleavages between some elites and state actors in local politics. This exploration will draw our attention to a more puzzling question: *given that most militias were initially elite-led counter-rebellion forces, why did some of them turn into rebellions?* Simply put, *why did defenders defect to become challengers?* Building upon the dynamic, relational model, I argue that in the case of mid-19th-century Chinese elite rebellions, it was the varying and changing relationship among different organizational, militarized forces in each local context that caused initially counter-mobilization elite-led groups with similar backgrounds to progressively diverge as rebels or repressors. Elites become rebels (or repressors) as the situational result of the local power situation emerging and shifting during this period, diverging contingent upon the power and positioning of their competitors and major state patrons. In short, these elites were *relational rebels and repressors*.

The rest of this Chapter proceeds as follows. The next section will review the existing structural and static, relational explanations. Then I will propose the dynamic, relational explanation to this case. The empirical analysis will disentangle the mysterious course of how the counter-insurgent mobilization led to intensified inter-elite and intra-state competition that finally resulted in elite insurrections. A discussion and extension is offered in the end.

Existing Explanations

Structural Explanation: pre-existing cleavages between elites and the state

The first possible explanation to elite insurrections is the structural contradiction between an expanding state and local elites. Thus, local insurrections were led by elites to resist the centralizing, penetrating, and demanding state as the reactive product of the long-term process of state building. This form of resistance, such as anti-tax revolts, was commonplace in early modern state building (Tocqueville 1955; Barkey 1991; Tilly 1986, 1993; Kiser and Linton 2002). Furthermore, landlords and peasants, the two categorical class actors, made a key *alliance structure* in the anti-state resistance: for instance, strong peasant-nobility alliances against the absolutist state were crucial in early modern French rebellions.[4]

While this model empirically fits the early modern European experience, wherein the state was continually expanding, it was less applicable in other contexts such as the Ottoman (Barkey 1991) or the Qing Empires.[5] First, Chinese elites, especially Confucian gentry, had no intrinsic enmity against the imperial state but until this point were actually the state's allies, assisting in providing public goods, disciplining other social members, and maintaining social order (Hsiao 1960; Chu 1962; Pomeranz 2010). Second, the Qing state was not an expansive state, but had been relatively stable since the early 18th century with light extraction in terms of administrative size and taxation levels (Wang 1973; Pomeranz 2010), so the European-style, elite/state structural cleavage that typically generated elite revolts barely existed. Third, this is confirmed by the small

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[4] For example, Barkey (1991:699) says that "the crucial determinant of large-scale, sustained peasant rebellions is the ability of peasants to find allies among other societal groups."
[5] I reviewed this school and its limitations in Chapter 2, so I will only summarize the most essential points here.

number of anti-tax revolts during the Qing dynasty, as presented in Chapter 2 (see Table 2.1, Table 2.3; Yang 1975:190). Even during the mid-19th century rebellious period, anti-tax unrest was still a very small portion of all "mass incidents," and no major rebellion originated from it (Wong 1997). In sum, elite resistance against state expansion was not intense in Qing China. A structural analysis of the state-elite relationship thus makes the phenomenon of elite insurrections more puzzling: *if these elites were so closely embedded in the ruling structure, why did they become insurgents and rebel against the state at all?*

Theoretically, this explanation makes some abstract categories, such as "class", largely undifferentiated social types, rather than concrete groups in the analytic focus. They do not pay enough attention to the internal variations among elites and intra-elite conflicts, but make 'elite' a unified category—often as class actors (Lachmann 2000). Accordingly, they make little concrete analysis of cleavage and alliance formation among real groups, but, at best, assume an abstract analogy of alliance between two theoretical, categorical actors (Barkey 1991). In other words, a structural, class-based, and static view of the members at the onset "would reveal virtually identical political orientations and overlook the potential for divergence" (Traugott 1980:47). However, insurgent identities and actions are not necessarily determined by certain long-term structural strains; sometimes they are shaped by situational factors in a short-term interactive process (Markoff 1997:1138; see also: Traugott 1980; Walder 2009a).

Static, Relational Explanation: pre-existing elite positioning

Another more sophisticated explanation—a static relational perspective—pays attention to

the intra-elite variations and conflicts prior to the rebellion period (Goldstone 1991; Gould 1996[6];

Slater 2009). In light of this model, during the mid-19th century, it was not the cleavage between

the state and local elites as a totality (categorical actors), but preexisting cleavages between the

state and some elites that led to extensive elite insurrections. In short, elites were potentially

divided and took different positions, so those elites who had been better co-opted by the state

became the state's allies, while elites who had been marginalized became more inclined to rebel

(Goldstone 1991; Li 2006; Zheng 2009; Lo 2012). The divergence of local elites was thus

understood as pre-given due to their social background and varying relationships with the state.

Militia groups led by lower elites might have a larger potential to become insurgents than groups

led by upper elites who had certainly been better connected with state actors. For example, an elite

revolt in Zhejiang province was understood as a conflict between upper, wealthy elites and lower

elites (Zheng 2009).[7] Goldstone (1991) also treats elite competition in the form of elite turnover or

displacement in the pre-rebellion periods, although he offers no account of how the elite

competition finally led to elite revolts, which are not necessarily the only consequence.

However, this static relational explanation suffers limitations in order to provide a

satisfactory answer to my puzzle. First, some upper elites also became rebellious during this period:

even militias led by former officials and the most honorable senior degree holders (*Jinshi*) became

insurgents, such was the case in Shandong Province (Chen 1983:207-208; *Sources of Modern*

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[6] For example, in a late-18th century elite insurrection in the American frontier, Roger Gould finds that "co-optation benefits some elites at the expense of those who occupy disadvantaged positions in local patronage networks, inclining the latter to resist" (Gould 1996:400).
[7] This chapter considers upper elites as gentry who earned senior or middle imperial degrees and/or held formal official positions. For debates on the classification of upper and lower elites in imperial China, see: Chang 1955: 71-141; Chu 1962; Ho 1962; Esherick and Rankin 1990:1-24.

Shandong History 1957: 207-214). Second, in most cases, the distinction between lower and upper elites was not a good fault line, because each side—whether the state's alliance bloc or the opposition bloc—contained both upper and lower elites. Third, some lower elite-led insurrections were not initially organized to rebel against the state but to assist the state or for self-defense.

Furthermore, no matter how different they finally became, nearly all major groups were originally authorized as legitimate militias by local authorities (Li 2006; Zheng 2009). For example, in the aforementioned elite revolt in Zhejiang province, the lower elite faction was initially a pro-state militia approved by district officials and provincial authorities. The leader, He Wenqing had once been a loyalist, and only gradually became rebellious (Zheng 2009). So the static, relational explanation can hardly explain the two things simultaneously, and offers no answer to his defection from militia to rebel. Fourth, even more surprisingly, a few lower elite-led insurrections had virtually been given a stronger endorsement from state authorities than had upper elite-led insurrections in the same locality before they became rebellious. In other words, even the same result—elite insurrections—might come from contrasting causes: some were poorly connected with the state and thus were over-*oppressed* to rebel, while others were better connected to the state and thus were over-*appeased* to rebel. Fifth, it is even harder for this static, relational explanation to answer why the same elite-led group continually changed its political positions, a commonplace phenomenon during the period.

Theoretically, even this sophisticated view of state-elite relationships still takes it as a division of preexisting categories, rather than the contingent result of processual interactions among multiple actors. They thus pay little attention to the interactive nature and ongoing changes

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of elite positioning. As scholars found in other cases, since rebels and counter-rebels sometimes shared very similar backgrounds, it is futile to use social background or pre-existing ties to predict the factional divisions or political orientation they would take during a revolution (Traugott 1980; Walder 2009a). We must turn to the shifting political context and disentangle the changing relationships among elites and state actors.

In sum, elite insurrections during this period were neither driven by pre-existing structural contradictions between the state and elites as two categorical actors, nor were they produced by the cleavage between the state and internally divided elites. Instead, they had in effect started from counter-insurgent mobilizations, whose immediate reactive consequence was intensified elite conflicts that were later displaced by cleavages between the state and elite. An alternative model should thus address crucial questions associated with the "transformation," "divergence," and "reorientation" of these elite-led groups: *Why did many elite-led communal defensive groups convert to insurgency? Why did initially similar groups led by elites with identical political backgrounds diverge to become rebels or repressors? Why did even some pro-state militia blocs that for sometime had served as the state's allies reorient their identities to turn into rebels?*

A Dynamic, Relational Explanation to Elite Insurrections

Drawing upon the dynamic, relational approach, I argue that we need to disassemble state actors and societal elites, and examine their interactions over time in making rebellions. As found in other contexts, prior background cannot determine the possible divergence of similar groups; their political orientation changed gradually rather than being pre-given; and the reorientation is usually the product of continuous interactions among multiple actors (Traugott 1985; Markoff

1997[8]; McAdam *et al*. 2001: Chapter 7; Walder 2006, 2009a). Specifically, elite revolt is the result of dynamic interactions among state officials, new state actors, varying kinds of elites, outright rebels, and other organizational actors in relational contexts that rapidly shift from the onset of the contention (Goldstone 2004; Fligstein and McAdam 2012).

The dynamic, relational approach is crucial to understanding elite counter-mobilization, inter-elite conflict and, eventually, elite insurrections. The key is to examine the varying and shifting insurrectionary and institutional political contexts, and the changing relationships among key organizational actors within these contexts. Individual elites might have a relationship with state actors before the rebellion, but that rapidly shifts. Furthermore, while elite competition is normal, in the course of extensive mobilization, their old competition could quickly intensify, possibly provoking new contradictions. Likewise, state actors, often incoherent in normal periods (Skocpol 1985:92-94; Migdal 2001:22; Wilson 2011), become even more fragmentary and factionalized during chaotic periods (Mann 2012). To tackle provincial threats, the central state had to decentralize its political and military power, delegating authority to old and new local state actors who were dispatched to handle the crisis, thereby disconnecting the central/local state command chain.[9] This complicates the situation because local state actors have their own agendas, interests, and motivations, as well as their own preferred interpretive framework of the rebellious situation (Wilson 2011). Furthermore, the originally weak yet relatively unified state structure is further fragmented into multiple independent and often conflicting parts. These old and new state

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[8] Markoff (1997) and Lachmann (1997) pay more attention to the interaction between elite action and mass mobilization than to the elite insurrection itself.

[9] On a general level, in pre-modern agrarian empires, "provincial threats were responded to by mobilizing provincial armies, which put power in the hands of local commanders not the central state" (Mann 1986:145). Accordingly, "pacification decentralized the military" (Mann 1986:144).

actors engage in a variety of competitions over resources, manpower, authority, and security with each other. Finally, the boundary between state actors and elites would be blurred and contested during a revolutionary situation (Loveman 2005:1663).[10] Theorizing elites and state actors in this way, my model can explain the variations among elites who have held structurally isomorphic positions, and the changing identities and actions of an individual elite-led group over a longer period.[11]

Returning to the case of elites insurrections in mid-19th century China, why did some elite-led communal defensive militias become rebels, while others remained the state's allies? I argue that elite-led militia groups became rebels or repressors, as the situational result of emerging and continually changing local cleavages that were the unintended consequences of the counter-insurgent mobilization. Which side each group took was contingent upon the power and positioning of their societal rivals and state patrons. In short, they were *relational rebels and repressors*. In what follows, I elaborate my explanatory logic of the generic processes.

Elite insurrections were the unintended consequences of counter-insurgent mobilizations of both the imperial state and elites.[12] In reaction to the emerging Taiping Rebellions as well as other major uprisings, the imperial court redeployed its regular forces to the main battlefields, authorized more military power to regional, civilian officials, and dispatched new state actors such as imperial commissioners to organize new troops to remedy the shortage of soldiers. On the

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[10] Even in normal time, "the edges of the state are uncertain; social elements seem to penetrate it on all sides, and the resulting boundary between state and society is difficult to determine" (Mitchell 1991:88). The boundary is even more blurred during a chaotic period.

[11] As stated in Chapter 1, we need to give equal attention to the military, class, state, international context, and ideology. Furthermore, I focus on the continually shifting military power relations among concrete organizational forces—central or regional, state-owned or societal, domestic or foreign—in the revolutionary process.

[12] These elite mobilizations can be taken as an early-modern (and militarized) form of counter-mobilization (Zald & Useem 1987; Meyer & Staggenborg 1996; Isaac 2002, 2010; Luders 2003; Irons 2006).

societal side, with the encouragement of the court, local elites organized communal militias on a

massive scale, ostensibly for self-defense.

However, the *counter-insurgent* mobilization soon resulted in its *counter-effects*, i.e.,

intensified intra-state and inter-elite competitions as the unintended consequence. On the one hand,

the state's reactions caused fragmentation and ambiguity of the political structure, thus

intensifying intra-state competition over resources and power in each region. On the other hand,

the simultaneous militarization of multiple elite-led groups led to competitive mobilization[13] and

heightened communal cleavages.[14] Armed conflicts between competing groups appeared.

The intensified inter-elite and intra-state competition further drove two

processes—*horizontal alignment* of initially disparate communal militia groups, and the state's

vertical alignment with these blocs on their rival sides—that altogether contributed to the elite-led

insurrections (see Figure 4.1). First, those communal groups were driven by their intensified

competition to make horizontal alignments across communities, resulting in stronger organizations

or coalitions and the simultaneous concatenation of multiple disparate cleavages.[15] Second,

incoherent and competing state actors made vertical alignments with rival elite-led blocs, thus

polarizing the inter-elite cleavages. Furthermore, since state actors and elites on rival sides could

now be in direct opposition with each other, horizontal inter-elite cleavages were then potentially

[13] Precisely speaking, it was more like "competitive counter-mobilization" than "competitive mobilization" which implies insurgent identity (Tarrow 1989:19; della Porta 2013). Neither side intended to become contentious at this point, but mobilized combatants in the name of defense. However, the difference between the two terms is more or less terminological, as a clear orientation was absent in most mobilizing groups before their final divergence.

[14] In this chapter, "cleavage" is understood as meso-level, concrete, inter-organization or inter-community contradictions in relational terms (Barth 1959; Brubaker 1996, 2004; Kalyvas 2003), rather than macro-structural, abstract contradictions between categorical actors such as class cleavages (Lipset & Rokkan 1967).

[15] This oppositional alignment process of communal groups has been found in other contexts (Barth 1959:130-134; Padgett & Ansell 1993:1294-1295). In a general sense, this process is undergirded by a Simmelian relational mechanism of inter-group conflicts (Simmel 1955; Coser 1956; Martin 2008), what Simmel calls "antagonistic co-operation": "Conflict leads to the formation of associations and coalitions between previously unrelated parties" (Coser 1956:140).

transposed by vertical cleavages between state actors and elites. The initially similar elite-led

militia groups eventually diverged as rebels or repressors in spite of their original orientation. The

continually shifting relationship structure in each locality could further alter the identities and

orientations of these blocs, thereby generating new insurgent actions.
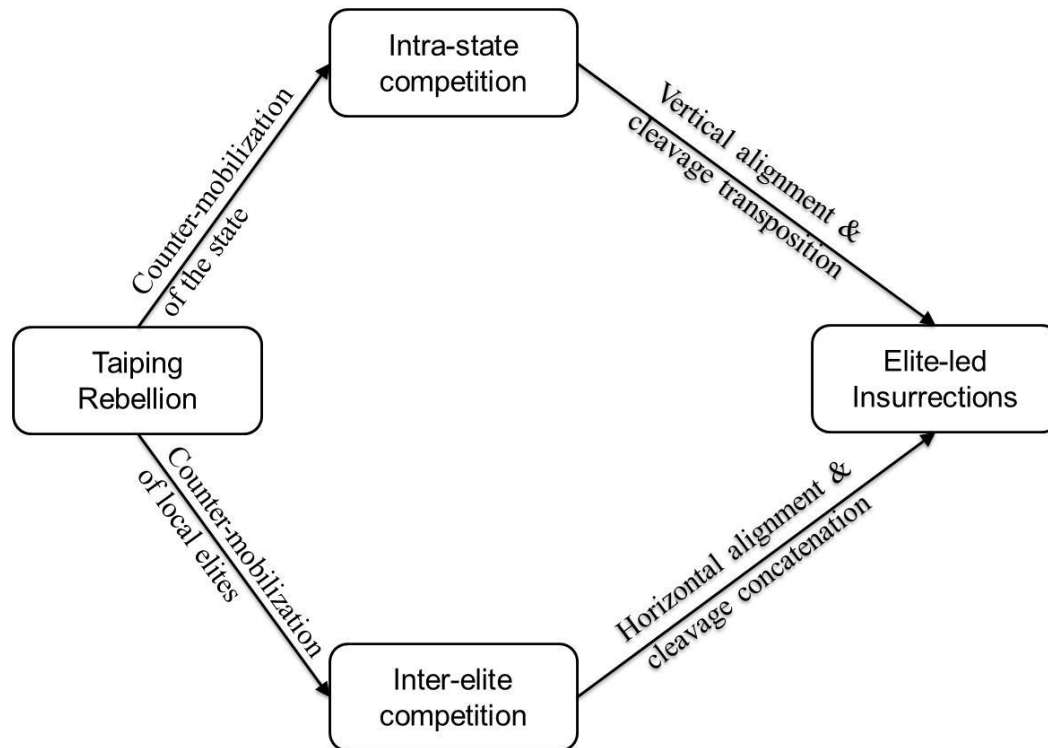
Figure 4.1. Causal processes: From counter-insurgent mobilization to elite insurrection.

In sum, elites did not become rebels as the result of structural contradiction or pre-existing

cleavage with the state, but as the unplanned and unwanted result of a sequence of unintended

consequences starting from counter-insurgent mobilization: counter-mobilization (against outside

rebels); competitive mobilization (against local opponents); horizontal alignment (of initially

disparate communal militias); and vertical alignment (with state actors). Eventually, emerging

inter-elite conflicts were displaced by elite/state conflicts that finally resulted in elite insurrections.

In other words, local elites were initially not *dissenters* from the state, but *protectors* of local community, and probably *collaborators* with the state; yet they soon became local power *competitors* in their horizontal oppositional alignment. Eventually, they diverged as *rebels* and *repressors*, contingent upon the power and stance of their major societal rivals and state patrons.

A Note on Methods and Materials

This chapter analyzes common patterns by examining several episodes in which elite-led militias turned into outright rebel groups. While multiple examples are cited from secondary sources, I mainly draw upon four cases from three regions to serve the heuristic function of illustrating the underlying mechanisms and generic processes: the Nien (1853-1855) and Miao Peilin Rebellions (1857-1861) in the North Huai Valley, the uprising of the Golden Coin Society in Zhejiang province (1858-1863), and the rebellion of the Long Spear Association in Shandong Province (1859-1861).[16] These cases also varied in size and influence: the Nien Rebellion was large-scale, while the other three were regional.

In particular, paired comparison strategies between the baseline case (the Nien Rebellion) and other cases were also employed to serve specific theoretical purposes. First, I compare the Nien and the Golden Coin Rebellions to illustrate the generic process of elite insurrection despite local state actors' sharply contrasting interpretations and reactions to similar circumstances (Steinmetz 2007; Wilson 2011). Second, I use sequential comparison to examine the Nien and Miao Peilin Rebellions as subsequent cases occurring in the same area (Haydu 1998; Norton 2014): since Miao Peilin was initially a counter-Nien militia leader but later became a rebel, this case can

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[16] Since militarization level was not synchronous across areas, these rebellious episodes did not take place simultaneously.

further reveal the recurrent nature of rebellion formation from initially pro-state militia blocs over a longer period.

Archival sources are used when analyzing the four major cases. In addition to those general materials noted in Chapter 1, I rely upon a few special sources in this chapter: 1) *Grand Strategies on the Suppression of the Nien Rebellion*, 320 volumes (Zhu et al. 1872) (*Fanglue-Nien* 1872, hereafter), which contains imperial memorials and edicts on not only the Nien Rebellion but also the Miao Peilin Rebellion; 2) *Historical Material on the Nien Army* (Fan 1953), which was compiled by Chinese historians to include several sources on the Nien and Miao Peilin Rebellions (e.g., Zhang 1871/1953), as well as rebellions in neighboring provinces, including Shandong Province (Zhang 1885/1953); 3) *Sources of Modern Shandong History*, which contains sources on the Long Spike Society (Liu 1957); 4) two compiled sources on the *Gold Coin Society* (Nie 1958; Ma 2002), which includes several key primary sources (e.g., Huang 1862/2002; Sun 1871/2002; Zhang 1902/2002).

Counter-Insurgent Mobilization of the State and Elites

The rise of the Taiping rebel army (1851-1853) altered the relationship structure of the Qing Empire in many respects, leading to counter-insurgent mobilization of both the state and elites. In March 1853, the Taiping rebels went on a long march from South China into the Lower Yangzi Delta, and built a rebel regime in the city of Nanjing. This act created rival regimes—the Qing Empire and the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom—and marked the beginning of a civil war between the "Chinese Son of God" and the Son of Heaven, the Qing Emperor. The battlefields soon expanded to North and Middle China. All in all, the two rival regimes and their wars set the stage for the

story presented in this chapter.

In this section, I will show how the state and elites mobilized in reaction to the Taiping rebels. To sustain the following analysis, it is helpful to first sketch the pre-existing state/elite relationship of the Qing Empire especially in terms of the organization of military power. As introduced in Chapter 2, since the Qing Empire owned a small formal state machine, it relied upon local elites to inexpensively and effectively govern the society (Mann 1986; Zhao 2015). In particular, as an alien regime, the Qing designed its military system according to the principles of a system of checks and balances. It maintained two relatively independent regular forces (the Manchu-based Eight Banners and the Han-based Green Army), yet it limited the size of the Green Army and deployed it in a dispersed way, and used the two armies to monitor each other (Luo 1984; Smith 1974; Elliot 2001).[17] In terms of counter-insurgency arrangement, military posts of green soldiers together with local government were responsible for policing disorder;[18] the banner system was used to police social unrest only under extreme circumstances (Luo 1984; Dai 2009).

Although this military system played a crucial role in monitoring, preventing, and identifying outlaw groups and activities, it was inadequate to cope with large-scale rebellions. Accordingly, unlike the ideal-typical modern state that monopolizes the legitimate use of collective violence (Weber 1978), the Qing rulers encouraged societal militarization to remedy the lack of the regular

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[17] Although the Eight Banners had fewer soldiers (200,000) than the Green Army (650,000), they were deployed in Beijing and a few strategic garrisons in a concentrated way for national defense and monitoring the insurrection of the Green Army. Usually the garrisons were headed by Manchu or Mongolian commanders. In contrast, the Green Army, mainly consisting of Han Chinese, was more diffusive in deployment (Luo 1984; Elliot 2001; Ding 2003). In the first half of the 19th century, the 650,000 Standard Green soldiers divided successively into 11 military districts, 18 inner provinces, 66 brigades, 1169 battalions, and tens of thousands of military posts (Luo 1984:115-116). The number of soldiers in military posts made up roughly 1/3 of the total number. Each post had only a dozen or so soldiers (Luo 1984: 263-269).
[18] "When circumstances demanded, the troops stationed in many strategic points of the empire could be called into action" (Hsiao 1960: 6).

force if there was a need. Local elites were authorized to organize communal defensive groups and even to assist the state when sizable rebellions appeared.[19] For example, some local militias were recruited by the state as mercenaries to remedy the shortage of regular forces in the counter-rebellious wars during the late-18th-century White Lotus Rebellion (Kuhn 1970; Dai 2009; Wang 2014). This time, the abrupt rise of the Taiping Rebellion again altered the intra-state military relations and triggered unprecedented elite-led militarization.

State's Counter-Mobilization

The imperial state reacted to the emerging Taiping rebels—who marched northward and occupied the Lower Yangzi Delta—in three ways. First, the court redeployed Standing Green soldiers from garrisons in other regions to the eastern battlefields (Michael 1950; Smith 1974; Luo 1984; Yu 2002). For example, to cope with the emerging Taiping, 9,600 Green soldiers were transferred from the southwestern province of Guizhou to Guangxi Province (Luo 1984/2011:300-301). Some imperial marshals/generals were directly dispatched to suppress major rebellions and only took orders from the court. Second, the court dispatched hundreds of imperial commissioners, including several senior officials (such as the renowned Zeng Guofan) in three respective waves—1853, 1857 and 1860—with authorization to organize, drill, and coordinate militia units (Zhang and Niu 2002). In the first wave, no fewer than 289 imperial commissioners were sent to 14 provinces between mid-1852 and mid-1854 (Cui 2014:174).[20] Finally, provincial and local officials were granted more military power, including the recruitment and coordination

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[19] This design, as pointed out in Chapter 2, could largely be regarded as one of the Qing state's "soft" infrastructural power. So it is a pressing task to account for why this strength became its source in provoking insurrections.

[20] For example, regarding those areas related to my major cases, 23 commissioners were dispatched to Anhui Province, 22 to Henan Province, 31 to Shandong Province, 35 to Zhejiang Province (Cui 2014:174).

of hiring militias under their jurisdictions.[21]

Specifically, these imperial commissioners engaged in two kinds of activities and gradually accumulated enormous power. First, the majority organized and coordinated defensive, local militias in their hometowns. Since they were often former officials and granted by the court, their political status was parallel to that of existing local administrations. Second, a few high-ranking commissioners built more disciplined, concentrated mercenary armies at the provincial and prefectural levels, assisted by a few junior commissioners.[22] Some of these mercenary armies later became a disciplined, hierarchical regional army that constituted a third line of the imperial regular force, in addition to the two existing regular forces—the Eight Banners and Green Standing Army (Spector 1964; Smith 1974; Wang 1980).[23] Overall, to build their power bases, imperial commissioners had strong initiatives for innovating new methods to recruit combatants, drill soldiers, build organizations, and extract resources (Kuhn 1970; Zhang & Niu 2002).

Elite's Counter-Mobilization

Noticing the threat from the sweeping Taiping rebels, local elites initiated communal militarization in the early 1850s, especially after the founding of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in 1853 and its subsequent northward and westward expeditions (Jen 1973; Kuhn 1970). Furthermore, the imperial court issued several edicts in 1853 ordering local officials and gentry to drill local

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[21] Later, the Qing state also hired about 3,000 foreign mercenaries, the Ever-Victories Army, in the battle against the Taipings (Smith 1978; Platt 2012).

[22] There were other uncommon types: some commissioners organized militias outside of their hometowns.

[23] As noted by a number of historians, there was a distinction among elite-led communal militias (*tuan-lien*), local state-hired militias (*yung*), and provincial mercenary armies (*yung-ying*) (Smith 1974:148-154; Wang 1980; Dai 2009). In brief, local militias were small-scale, non-professional, defensive organizations; varying from hundreds to thousands. Local state-hired militias were more professionally recruited, paid, and drilled by district or prefectural officials. Provincial mercenary armies were professional, large-scale forces, later becoming a third regular force. Major provincial armies included the Hunan Army (Xiang Army) led by Zeng Guofan and the Anhui Army (Huai Army) led by Li Hongzhang. The Hunan Army had 134,000 soldiers at its peak, and was the major force in combating the Taipings.

militias (or "*tuanlian*") and build defense fortifications, as a way to supplement the insufficient deployment of regular forces. The imperial edicts encouraged the militarization which had already begun to take place in areas under the direct influence of the Taiping rebels. In both North and South China, communal militia groups with hundreds of members appeared, and further aggregated into larger military units across communities (Fu 1944/1982; Kuhn 1970; Perry 1980). For example "Nien" groups had appeared since the early 19th century, but they had only been "widely dispersed congeries of individual bands" before 1850 (Kuhn 1978:313), and only began to build larger organizations and stable coalitions during this period.

An important indicator was the establishment of fortifications, which was not only closely associated with the founding of militarized groups, but also showed the mobilization, storage, and manpower strength (Skinner 1971; Perry 1980; Zhang and Niu 2002). Enclosed by protective stockades, these fortified communities varied from hundreds to thousands of meters by perimeters, and could hold 1000-3000 inhabitants (*Fanglue-Nien* 1872: vol. 9, 60,147; Fu 1944/1982: 436; Skinner 1971; Ma Changhua 1992:110; Perry 1980:127). Hundreds of forts were constructed in each county of North China during this period. In the town of *Zhiheji*, the headquarters of the Nien Alliance, for example, 211 forts were reportedly built in the middle 19th century (*Guoyang Gazetteers*, vol.2; Zhang & Niu 2002:361, 393-396). The entire North Huai Valley, according to the Governor of Anhui, had at least 2,000 forts in 1862 (*Fanglue-Nien* 1872: vol. 147).

The *Gazetteer of Taihe County* (1925) kept the annual data of new fortifications in this county and thus offers a temporal trend. Figure 4.2 shows the accumulative numbers of fortifications in this county. Only two were built before 1853 (one each in 1822 and 1852 respectively), while 13

were built in 1853 alone and the others were continually built in this period (*Taihe Gazetteer* 1925; Ma Changhua 1992:115, 126-140).[24] Figure 4.3 shows the average size of new fortifications in this county: the size of forts built in 1853 was the largest while the size was kept at a high level in subsequent years. Among those forts with size data reported, the largest one (with a perimeter of about 3,000 meters) was built in 1853, while all five of the largest forts (the perimeter > 2,000 meters) were built in the middle 1850s (*Taihe Gazetteer* 1925). The overall message is clear: communal militarization was quickly heightened in 1853, continuing at a high level for a decade, and eventually leading to a kind of saturated fortification world—a militarized world.
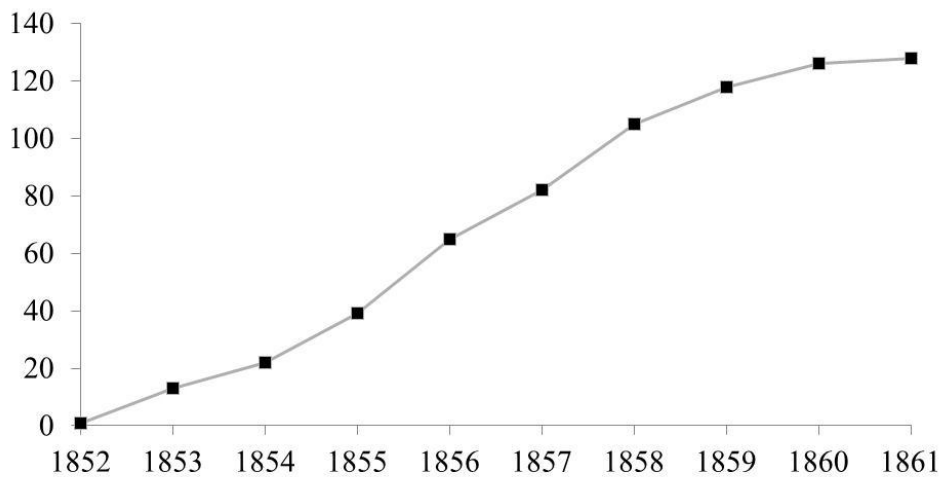
Figure 4.2. Cumulative number of fortifications in *Taihe* County, 1852-1861.
Source: Taihe Gazetteer 1925; Ma Changhua 1992:115, 126-140

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[24] Among all 273 forts between the 1820s and the 1920s, 217 were recorded with information of construction date. Other forts were intensively built in 1910s and 1920s, after the collapse of the Qing Empire and the rise of banditry and warlords in this area.
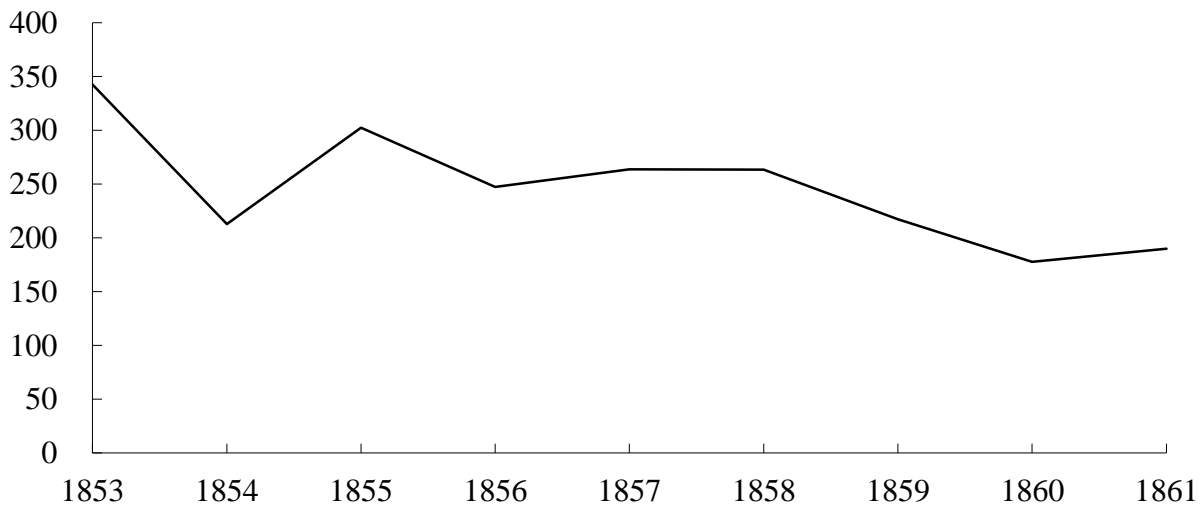
Figure 4.3. Average size of new fortifications in *Taihe* County, 1853-1861.
Source: Taihe Gazetteer 1925.
Note: The data records the perimeter of each fortification; 1 *Zhang* = 3.33 meters.

In terms of orientation, these groups were not initially organized to resist the state, but as (or in

the name of) defenders of local communities and protectors of residents against outside rebels,

especially the Taipings. In North China, for example, militia groups did not intend to become

rebellious; nor were they perceived as rebellious by the state at their onset. As noticed by Kuhn,

"Nien village organizations were indistinguishable from orthodox t'uan (local defence

associations), and indeed must be considered generically the same sort of group" (Kuhn

1978:313).[25] They often used the term 'militia' to legitimize their activities and recruit more

people, and were even endorsed by the state itself. In both court records and local gazetteers, terms

such as "official Nien" or "Nien militias" frequently appeared. For example, in the uprising of the

Golden Coin Society in Zhejiang province, both the Golden Coin Society and its opponent were

initially approved by officials as righteous militias (Li 2006; Lo 2011). Likewise, the Long Spear

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[25] The Nien groups used to be bandits, but since 1814 "the *nien* bands ceased to be mere gatherings of the desperate and deprived and became instruments of the wealthy and powerful in settled society" (Kuhn 1978:311).

Society in Shandong Province was initially granted official status by the Prefect. Even the Muslim

uprising originated from Muslim militias who had originally been authorized to assist the state in

fighting the invading Taiping army in Shaanxi Province (Lipman 1997).

Not surprisingly, most groups were led by local elites rather than by poor, powerless

peasants/commoners (Fu 1944/1982; Zhang & Niu 2002) because elites controlled organizational

bases, economic resources, and cultural legitimacy that allowed them to play a leadership role in

communal militarization. As shown in Table 4.1, in these four provinces (across South, East, and

Middle China), for militia leaders whose background information was available, more than 90%

and sometimes 100% of the leadership came from a gentry background (Zheng 1986: 657). Other

leaders were also other kinds of local elites from landlords to local strongmen. As commented by a

Marxian historian, in South China, "the lords provided the leadership while peasants were the

actual combatants" (Marks 1984: 71). In North China, for example, leaders of militia groups were

usually landlords or wealthy peasants with a strong lineage and/or governmental/military status

(Perry 1980, 1985; Fu 1944/1982:430-431; Fu 1945/1982:443-445). Likewise, gentry with

imperial degrees or landlords also played the role of leadership in the Golden Coin Society and the

Long Spear Society, as did their major opponents. In sum, these elite-led blocs had identical

backgrounds and orientations at the outset, regardless of their later divergence as either rebels or

repressors. In other words, elite insurrections were not automatically generated, since there was no

intrinsic enmity between the state and local elites who were initially defenders and protectors of

the communal order.[26]

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[26] In other words, the key mechanism was not "diffusion": these insurrections were not spin-off rebellions from the initiator

Table 4.1. Social background of militia leaders

Provinces	Gentry as leaders	Commoners as leaders	No information	*Total*
Guangdong	78.4%	2.6%	18.9%	79
Guangxi	80.9%	0	19.1%	89
Hunan	56%	0	44%	57
Zhejiang	72.6%	4.7%	22.7%	234

Source: Zheng 1986:656-658.

The elite-led communal militia groups and state actors gradually connected with each other, often via the brokerage of either local officials or those imperial commissioners who were dispatched to their hometowns. The imperial commissioners were particularly critical brokers linking the state and societal groups: On the one hand, they were authorized by the court to organize, integrate, and rebuild new forces; On the other hand, they had enormous local connections in their hometown areas, and were thus able to extract resources and recruit combatants (Smith 1974; Liu 1978; Wang 1980).[27] That's why the court originally chose this method to remedy the shortage of regular forces when coping with the expanding Taiping rebels.

Given the counter-mobilization from the state and local elites, *why did some defenders defect to the challengers? Why did loyalists become insurgents?* Debating these questions is fruitless if we only focus on the initial background and identity of these groups/elites. The eventual political alignment of those involved was less the result of pre-existing structural cleavages than the result of short-term interactions among multiple forces over this turbulent period. Regardless of their later roles in triggering insurrections, at least both the state and elites did not originally intend to

rebellion, the Taiping Rebellion. For most groups were not imitators of but defenders against the Taiping. Moreover, in many areas, such as Guizhou Province in the Southwest, without the direct influence of external rebellions, similar patterns of extensive rebellion formation also appeared. It was thus a structurally equivalent competition mechanism rather than a diffusion mechanism (Burt 1987) that generated a similar process of elite insurrections across time and space.

[27] By comparison, in the imperial administration system, local officials were basically forbidden to hold posts in their hometowns, and were likely to govern a jurisdiction far away from their birthplaces. They were also rapidly circulated from one area to another (Chu 1962).

provoke rebellions. As pointed out by Traugott in his analysis of the Parisian uprisings in 1848，"revolutionary conflict must be seen as a dynamic social process in which collective forces determine outcomes progressively…" (Traugott 1980: 47-48). We now turn to the mysterious course in which the elite counter-mobilization became elite insurrections.

Counter-effects of the Counter-mobilization

The above analysis shows the counter-insurgent mobilizations of the state and elites in reaction to the emerging rebels. On the state side, it took three actions: military redeployment, authorization of military power to civilian officials, and appointments of imperial commissioners to organize new troops. On the society side, local elites built communal defensive militias on a massive scale. However, the *counter-mobilization* soon resulted in unintended *counter-effects* on both sides.

On the state side, the state's reactions produced fragmentary political structure and intensified intra-state competition in many regions. Bureaucratic factions and competitions are normal in any polity. What makes this period extraordinary was that the creation of new state institutions/actors caused the fragmentation of the authority structure and accordingly incoherent and competing state behaviors. Now all three lines—existing administration, imperial army, and imperial commissioners—were responsible for maintaining political order as well as enjoying certain levels of administrative functions. They each had powers to independently organize their own armies and levy taxes, even in overlapping areas. Regional and local officials such as governors, prefectures, and magistrates no longer had monopolized administrative authority within their jurisdictions alongside the former hierarchical line. Instead, a dual and even triple power structure was created

(Michael 1949; Kuhn 1970; Zhang and Niu 2002; Cui 2014). An Assistant Minister of War described the fragmentation of state authority in a memorial in 1860:

> "In each province, there had been governor-generals and governors, then marshals and generals, and then imperial commissioners… This structure decisively caused the disunification of administrative authority and disagreements over decision making" (Cui 2014:167).

Especially, appointed without any substantive resources, imperial commissioners often rapidly built their power bases, and encroaching upon existing power structures. With authorization from the court and titles higher than the local officials, the commissioners created dual political structures that were parallel to existing administrations, sometimes even in the same jurisdiction. Their competition over recruits and revenues intensified. Furthermore, as will be shown, commissioners were deeply involved in local politics, supporting some militias while repressing others, sometimes as a strategy to confront the local administrative system. Even worse, worrying about their enormous expansion, the court sometimes deliberately designed additional mechanisms to let them check and balance each other.

On the societal side, the extensive militarization soon led to intensified inter-elite competition and communal cleavages. Under the name of "militias," most groups were competitive in nature, plundering other communities while protecting their own against neighboring settlements (Kuhn 1978:313). Instead of fighting rebels who just occasionally raided their communities, these militias used their new muscles in local battles against local rivals with whom they competed for resources, recruits, and security.[28] Certain kinds of inter-elite cleavages existed before this age, but during regular periods, skirmishes only occasionally broke out, rival coalitions were only mobilized

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[28] In Guizhou Province, for example, "many of the militia units were established entirely on local initiative, and their interests often diverged from those of the government" (Jenks 1994:123).

temporarily, and thus local states were able to contain or pacify them. In contrast, during this chaotic period, militarization provided these elites with weapons and a large quantity of fighters for armed feuds, quickly extending beyond the control of the state. The logic is iterative: as these communal elites began to build their own militia groups, they were in increasingly heightened competition with each other for manpower and resources.

This intensified inter-elite competition was present in all the cases to be discussed below. For example, the competitive nature of the Nien militias was noted in an 1855 memorial by Commissioner Yuan Jiasan, a top repressor of the later Nien Rebellion,

> "The Niens originated neither from rebels nor from invaders; they were just village strongmen who sought to prevail over others and thus invoked tough men as their 'talons and fangs.' Later, they recruited poor peasants, plundered wealthy landlords' estates, engaged in revengeful actions, and gradually ran wild" (*Fanglue-Nien* 1872: vol. 26).

This was also the case for the Muslim uprising in Shaanxi Province. When the Taiping and two other external rebellions intruded in 1862, the Qing state encouraged both local Muslim and Han Chinese gentry to organize local corps to resist the outside rebels. "But instead of doing so, the Moslems and the Chinese local corps soon started to fight each other… Since local corps existed almost everywhere, each became a potential source of disintegration" (Chu 1966:15). In other words, the Muslim uprising also started from the counter-effects of the counter-mobilization rather than preexisting cleavages between Muslims and the state.[29]

It was once noted that "armed strife contributed to the violence that gave rise to all four of China's major mid-century rebellions—the Taiping, the Nien, and the Moslem uprisings in the

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[29] Chapter 5 will further discuss different processes that led to the Muslim revolts across three regions.

northwest and southwest" (Lamley 1977:31-32). In Chapter 3, we saw how inter-group conflicts drove the militarization, organizational concentration, and rebellious turn of the initially religious society, the Taiping. The next task of this chapter should disentangle the process by which inter-elite competition led to rebellious transformation. After all, the inter-elite cleavage could not yet be equated with a rebellion.

Logically speaking, rebellions only appear when there is vertical opposition between state actors and societal groups with sufficient strength. If the cleavage was only within the state or only within local communities that were themselves not linked together, we would not expect the rise of sizable and sustained rebellions. How then were the elite-led insurrections born out of this situation? This question contains two parts: first, *how did multiple, disconnected elite-led militia groups build sufficient organizational strength to allow them to challenge the state*? Second, *even if they possessed enough organizational strength, why did these elite-led blocs choose to exercise their force against the state*? We now turn to the transformative process towards elite insurrections.

Converting to Insurrections: Transformative Processes

Insurgent formation is comprised of emergent processes. However, these processes were not necessarily contingent or spontaneous happenings; underlying mechanisms exist. In my case, I argue that the varying and changing relationship among different organizational, militarized forces in each locality caused the rebellious transformation of initially defensive groups and the eventual divergence of similar blocs. Specifically, the increasingly heightened inter-elite competition resulted in a horizontally oppositional alignment of disparate elite-led groups, while the intra-state competition drove state actors to make vertical alignment with these rival blocs. The first process

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built insurgent *organizations*, while the second process made insurgent *orientations*. Taken together, they led to the eventual generation of elite insurrections.

Inter-Elite Competition and Horizontal Alignment

The first process characterizes how intensified inter-elite competition resulted in the horizontal coalition building of disparate elite-led groups and the concatenation of initially disconnected communal cleavages. In this period, instead of fighting against rebels, these communal militias soon used their new muscle to combat local enemies. When their conflicts heightened, rival groups were driven to align with each other across communities and even across districts, thus leading to stronger organizations/coalitions. Even if a coalition was built mainly for a defensive purpose, it might be deemed offensive to its local opponents, thus stimulating them to seek a parallel expansion and build countervailing coalitions. Like a meso-level process of *competitive mobilization*, this process could be called "*competitive meso-mobilization*"[30] (or what I call "*oppositional alignment*"). Competition and meso-mobilization (or, opposition and alignment) are two sides of one coin, mutually strengthening each other in an interactive manner: the greater the rivalry between the two blocs, the larger the coalitions they make; the more allies they invite, the higher the threat they pose to their rivals.[31]

This oppositional alignment process resulted in three consequences that were related to eventual insurrections. First, to prevail over their communal rivalries, these emerging elite-led

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[30] For meso-mobilization (or, bloc recruitment) in social movement literature, see: Oberschall 1973:125; Staggenborg 1986; Gerhards & Rucht 1992. Simmel and Coser lay out a deeper foundation for the *competitive meso-mobilization*: "Just as conflict may bring together isolated individuals into an association, it may also bring together isolated groups and associations into some form of coalition" (Coser 1956: 143).

[31] As Fligstein and McAdam put in the context of modern social movements (2012:15), elites "form coalitions with some groups in a strategic action field (i.e., community) to build a larger group and then use that larger group to coerce or compete with other groups."

blocs built stronger organizations or larger, more stable coalitions that the state could no longer

control. Second, the cross-community bloc recruitment concatenated originally disconnected

communal cleavages and often created polarized cleavages on a larger spatial scale. Third,

simultaneously with strengthening organizational power, the two rival blocs often engaged in

escalating armed feuds that were difficult for the state to contain. To be sure, this horizontal

oppositional alignment alone was not sufficient to drive elite insurrections, but did generate an

opposing structure of societal forces. Their final rebellious turn was contingent upon the

identification and reaction of the state.

Case: The Nien Rebellion Formation, 1853-1855

I illustrate the horizontal oppositional alignment process with the case of the Nien[32]

Rebellion formation in North Huai Valley[33]—the first large-scale revolt in the wake of the Taiping

Revolution. In this area, several independent militarized groups aggregated into a strong rebellious

alliance in September 1855, under the leadership of Zhang Lexing, the self-proclaimed "King of

the Great Han with a Heavenly Mandate" (For historiography of the Nien Rebellion, see: T'eng

1961; Perry 1980; Ke 1988; Guo 2001). As shown below, the fuel for this insurrection was the

intensified competition and oppositional alignment between Zhang Lexing's bloc and the Old Cow

Society as seen throughout a series of combats between 1853 and 1855.

As mentioned earlier, in the North Huai Valley, the communal militarization and competitive

mobilization appeared after the establishment of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in 1853 (Kuhn

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[32] The meaning of "Nien" changed over time, but it could literally be understood as "a band of people" (Perry 1980:98).
[33] Narrowly defined, the North Huai Valley was at the border areas of North Anhui and Southeast Henan Provinces.

1978:513; Perry 1980).[34] Facing the pressing threat of the Taiping, numerous communities were

now undergoing rapid, extensive militarization at an unprecedented speed in the name of defense

(e.g., the aforementioned *Taihe* county was located in this area). Throughout the intensified

inter-group conflicts, these militarized groups progressively aggregated into two rival factions:

Zhang Lexing's bloc and the Old Cow Society. Once a landlord with a lower-level imperial

degree, the Nien chieftain Zhang Lexing confessed after his arrest:

> "I farmed the land to make a living, yet have also engaged in salt smuggling.
> Only in 1851-1852 when we fought against the 'Old Cow Society' at Yongcheng
> and Shangqiu counties in Henan Province did we begin to amass people" (*Zhang
> Lexing's Deposition*, 1863).

Once enlisted by a Provincial Militia Commissioner in early 1853, Zhang later built his own

military corps in his hometown, *Zhiheji* of the *Bozhou* District, under the rubric of communal

defense. In his hometown, Zhang was seen as a protector of the social order and a defender of

rebels during this period. Meanwhile, the Old Cow Society, led by a few landlords such as Sang

Dianyuan, was another expanding community military organization in *Yongcheng*, *Shangqiu*, and

neighboring districts in this area (Fan 1953: vol. 1, 349). The two blocs had old animosities,[35]

but their conflict reached a new level as of 1853.

Instead of fighting the Taipings, who quickly passed through this area, these new emerging

militia groups soon engaged into conflicts with each other, in turn strengthening the oppositional

alignment of two rival blocs. For example, one of Zhang Lexing's allies, Gong Deshu's group

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[34] Taipings briefly passed the Huai Valley on their way toward the Lower Yangzi Delta in early 1853. After the founding of the Heavenly Kingdom in March 1853, the Taiping soon launched proactive attacks against the Qing dynasty by dispatching two Northern expedition armies, who respectively swept Huai Valley in May 1853 and February 1854.
[35] During the largest feud in 1851, Zhang Lexing temporarily assembled thousands of followers and allied with several groups to fight the "Old Cow Society" (Perry 1980:108; Guo 2001:106; Fan 1953: vol. 1, pp.349; vol. 2, pp.98). These coalitions were usually short-lived, being dismissed after the feud.

attacked several villages in *Taihe* County in the middle of 1853, triggering the militarization of that county: eight large lineages began to organize militias and join the alliance of the Old Cow Society in early 1854 (Ma Changhua 1992: 103). Conflicts of this type were commonplace and served to enlarge coalitions in both sides. Nevertheless, this was still an undecided period: they did not yet identify themselves as anti-state forces and were not yet taken as rebels by state officials.

The militarized elite competition arrived at the summit in a series of battles between the two rival blocs in 1854. On March 23, Su Tianfu, a *Yongcheng* native and Zhang Lexing's old ally, followed the second Taiping northern expedition army and took over the county seat of *Yongcheng*, just after the Taiping left. He was attacked by tens of thousands of combatants of the Old Cow Society, under the leadership of Sang Dianyuan and Sang's political patron, local official Zhu Kai. Su's group was defeated, with more than 1000 followers killed in the battle, on April 9th and retreated to *Bozhou*. The Old Cow Society chased after Su and indiscriminately killed more people in *Bozhou*, including some of Su's followers, other Nien members, local gentry families, and innocent residents. The fight between Su and the Old Cow Society was suddenly transformed into armed combat between two expanding blocs. Zhang Lexing soon participated and took leadership in these cross-district battles. Both sides made bloc recruitments by allying dozens of groups, mobilizing tens of thousands of fighters and engaging in a series of violent battles until the early 1855. In the process, both sides developed organizational militarization to an unprecedented level in this area. The Old Cow Society assembled a corps with more than 50,000 militias, while Su and Zhang united 47 groups with more than 20,000

recruits. To give some perspective, the entire regular force stationing in Anhui province was 9,500 (Luo 1984). What had once been a temporary and meager alliance now became larger and more stable. The elite conflicts arrived at a critical moment: although neither side had yet challenged the state, they already owned sufficient power to do so.

When the Nien Rebellious Alliance was founded at *Zhiheji* in September 1855, it consisted of more than 100 groups from more than a dozen neighboring districts in North Huai Valley (Ke 1988:73-77; Guo 2001:145-149). Elites, especially local gentry, played a critical role in building this cross-district coalition (Guo 2001:134-135). These groups had already become allies over the past three years in battles against their common rivals. From then on, their major enemy was regular forces.

This horizontally oppositional alignment process was also seen in other cases. The Long Spear Society at *Caozhou* Prefecture in Shandong Province was initially a militia bloc organized in 1859 by a few gentry to countervail the existing militia coalition. In a number of fights, the Long Spear Society soon extended its influence across several districts, particularly by absorbing those initially marginalized or oppressed societal forces, and recruited more than 30,000 members in just one year (Zhang 1885/1953: vol. 22, pp.1218-1219). The coalition building paved the way for the later rebellious transformation, as will be discussed.

Likewise, in the Golden Coin Rebellion in Zhejiang Province, two gentry-led blocs—the Golden Coin Society and the White Cloth Society—made a horizontal alignment of communal rival groups. Both sides soon incorporated dozens of groups, and owned several thousand fighters. They engaged in a series of armed conflicts that finally led to the insurrection of the Golden Coin

Society, as commented by General Tso after his investigation of this incident, "commoners and soldiers hated each other; gentry and local officials hated each other. Gradually the hostility among commoners led to armed feuds, and the enmity among local gentry led to bloc conflicts" (Ma 2002: 251-252[36]).

Similar patterns have also been found in other contexts. In South China, two village alliances polarized a few counties into two great camps under two Flags in the 1860s (Marks 1984:71). Even in Taiwan, the largest rebellion during this period—the Dai Chunchao Rebellion—showed a similar process of oppositional meso-mobilization. Two prominent families—Dai Chunchao and Lin Wencha—were authorized to organize militias, but soon engaged in fierce conflict with each other. Both sides built larger coalitions in their increasingly heightened feuds, eventually leading to their divergence (Meskill 1979).

Intra-State Competition and Vertical Alignment

In the initial process, these rival blocs built organizational strengths, but had not yet challenged the state. In other words, they already had *organization*, but not yet *orientations*. So why did these rival blocs choose to challenge state actors? A second, parallel process intensified the intra-state competition that drove fragmentary state actors to make a *vertical alignment* with rival elite-led blocs, throughout which inter-elite cleavage was gradually displaced by state/elite cleavage. Elite insurrections then appeared.

This process was above all related to how old and new state actors interpreted and responded to these elite-led militias. Disconnected from the center while different from each other, these state

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[36] General Tso's memorial on 1/12/1864.

actors were not only in heightened competition with each other over authority and resources, but more importantly, they often endorsed competing societal blocs. Not surprisingly, the most salient fault line was between the existing administrative system and the new imperial commissioners, who urgently incorporated societal militias to build their own power bases. More than constraining the state from unifying its cooptation/containment strategy towards social forces, this dual/triple structure also created a vertical alignment across the state/society boundary on the rival sides. This top-down logic was supplemented by a bottom-up logic, in that elite-led blocs also sought to make alignments with state actors in order to defeat or delegitimize their societal rivals.[37]

The vertical alignment gradually drove the divergence of rival elite-led blocs as rebels and repressors. When severe armed conflict between the two sides took place, their rivalry could be polarized (by their state patrons) to an uncompromised level. Moreover, the inter-elite cleavage was now potentially transposed by the cleavage between the state actors and elites on the rival side, resulting in further elite insurrections. Which side actually became rebellious was contingent upon the power balance in the emerging cleavages. Sometimes stronger state actors directly delegitimized the elite bloc on their rival sides; sometimes state actors appeased their cliental blocs and encouraged them, at least tacitly, to take violent revenge against their common enemies and thus become unruly. In other words, under the generic process of rebellious transformation, multiple peculiar pathways existed.

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[37] In other contexts, it is found that "conflicting political parties counter local-level attacks from their opponents by mobilizing resources at higher levels of organization that are better equipped to defeat their rivals" (Hillmann 2008:323). Again, both elites and state actors were relational agencies, interplaying with each other.

Case: The Uprising of Golden Coin Society, 1858-1861

The uprising of the Golden Coin Society at *Wenzhou* in Zhejiang Province also started with armed conflicts of elite-led militia blocs. As the Taiping approached *Wenzhou*, from 1858 militia groups were increasingly built and gradually merged into two oppositional blocs—the Golden Coin Society (*Jinqian Hui*) in Pingyang county and the White Cloth Society (*Baibu Hui*) in Ruian County. Under the leadership of local elites, Zhao Qi and gentry such as Cai Hua, the Golden Coin Society quickly expanded into *Wenzhou* and neighboring regions and recruited more than 10,000 members beginning in 1860 (Liu 1902/2002: 156; Li 2006: 154-155, 166). Another quickly expanded bloc was the White Cloth Society, constituted by a few militia groups across several counties in *Wenzhou*. Both blocs expanded in a series of conflicts. Several pairs of deadly enemies were incorporated into the two blocs, and these antagonistic groups prompted a series of battles that thus escalated their rivalry (Lo 2011: 186-193).

The Golden Coin Society and White Cloth Society were respectively endorsed by local officials and a middle-level imperial commissioner, Sun Qiangming. On the one hand, the leaders of the Golden Coin Society made close relationships with a few local officials: upon the approval of prefectural officials, it was authorized as a Righteous Militia by the magistrate of *Pingyang* County in early 1861. As can be seen, even though it eventually became rebellious, this militia bloc was originally a state-conferred, defensive group. On the other hand, the White Cloth Society was directly coordinated by Sun Qiangming, who had earned the highest imperial degrees, held official positions in Beijing and was authorized by the Qing court as an imperial commissioner (Lo 2011:179-180). Sun organized his militias and built forts in his hometown beginning in 1854, and

became more aggressive when witnessing the rapid expansion of the Golden Coin Society. Starting in 1861, Sun annexed a few militia groups, sometimes forcefully, in order to expand his militia alliance (Lo 2011:186-187).

Local officials and Commissioner Sun had opposite viewpoints on the Golden Coin Society. With higher status than any official in the *Wenzhou* Prefecture, Sun's aggressive intervention in local politics, such as taxation and militia coordination, encroached on the authority and interests of local officials. Accordingly, local officials endorsed the Golden Coin Society to balance the power of Sun and his militia alliance (Li 2006:160-162; Liu 1995:86-87; Lo 2011:183-188). On the other hand, Commissioner Sun opposed the legitimization of the Golden Coin Society in the very beginning and repeatedly suggested demobilizing it, but none of his suggestions were taken by local officials (Sun 1871/2002:129).

Local officials thus handled the conflicts between the two blocs in a way that almost encouraged the Golden Coin Society to take revenge. In mid-1861, another battle between members of the two blocs over the control of resources took place at *Ruian* County.[38] When the feud arose, the Prefect replied to Sun's request for a relief army: "Killing and firing, or the revenge between the two blocs, were all because of the activities of these militia groups, not the business of the prefect or magistrate" (Huang 1862/2002: 95; Sun 1871/2002:130). Realizing the local officials' ineptitude, Sun and his allies organized several groups to conduct a counter-attack within two months—very much like the aftermath of the Su Tianfu Incident in the Nien case. In late September 1861, Sun even hired notorious mercenaries from a neighboring prefecture (*Taizhou*)

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[38] While the garrison commander stationing at *Wenzhou* originally planned to send regular forces to crush Jinqian members, most local officials opposed this idea, and they instead carried out a series of negotiation activities.

and pirates from the South China Sea. They initiated several battles, looted hundreds of households in *Pingyang* County, and burned the house of Zhao Qi (Lo 2011: 194-195). Zhao fled and then got revenge on Sun by raiding his loot and attacking his major allies. Until then local officials still took the fights as conflicts of two militia blocs and did not take a side.

In early October, the Golden Coin Society attacked the seat of *Wenzhou* prefecture and plundered 1,700 gentry or wealthy families. Even at this time, one higher provincial official still commented: "It was the fight between the Golden Coin Society and Sun's militia group, so it was not our business" (Sun 1871/2002:132). Within two months, the Golden Coin members had besieged *Wenzhou* and *Ruiyang* several times. In order to increase the speed of prevailing over their rival, some members of Golden Coin Society began to contact the approaching Taiping rebels. The situation had become an overt rebellion. However, even now local officials (especially those of *Pingyang* county) continued to perceive the Golden Coin Society as a rightful militia bloc rather than a rebel group (Sun 1871/2002:133; Lo 2011), and thus preferred negotiation to using brute force (Liu 1995:80-81). They basically saw the fight as a conflict between two opposing yet similar militia blocs, and thus chose inaction or an appeasement strategy towards the Golden Coin Society's increasingly unruly and relentless revenge seeking.

In the end, the Golden Coin Society was identified as a rebellion, and regular forces were dispatched to put it down. Even after the suppression of the uprising, General-Governor Tso still supported the local officials in his investigation memorial:

> It was said [by Commissioner Sun Qiangming] that the local officials should be held responsible for the guilt of conniving rebels, but it was actually the impetuous activities of the militia bloc [sponsored by Sun Family] that triggered

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the incident……" (Ma 2002: 249[39]).

It is clear that the rivalry between local officials and Commissioner Sun played an important role in making the rival alignments across the state-society boundary. Tacitly allowed by local officials, the Golden Coin Society made violent revenge on Sun and his militia bloc and became increasingly wild, eventually becoming outright rebels.

The vertical alignment on rival sides was also seen in other cases. In the Nien case, both Zhang Lexing's bloc and the Old Cow Society had their own state sponsors who themselves were in opposition to each other. Zhang was seen as a protector by imperial commissioners, such as Yuan Jiasan (Jiang 1983:70, 75).[40] The Old Cow Society was in turn sponsored by the official, Zhu Kai, who earned the title of cross-district coordinator of local militias in 1854 and thus grasped power far beyond his ordinary jurisdiction. From the state's perspective, both commissioners and local officials had tried to integrate the dispersed local militias into a coordinated system under their control since late 1853 (Fan 1953: vol.6, pp.3-4[41]). This rival vertical alignment played a critical role in enlarging the bloc conflicts and provoking the insurrection in one way or another.

In the Su Tianfu Incident, this dual patronage structure not only made coordinated state action unlikely, but also directly resulted in the escalation of the armed conflict. On the one hand, Zhu Kai, the Old Cow Society's state patron, directly participated in these bloc conflicts, thus transposing

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[39] General Tso's memorial 1/12/1864.
[40] For example, when Yuan Jiasan passed through *Zhiheji* in the spring of 1854, Zhang Lexing was in the greeting party, together with other local gentry, who praised Zhang's contribution as the "protector of local order" (Jiang 1983:70, 75). Zhang Lexing had once been co-opted by Zhou Tianjue, a provincial-level senior commissioner, and was even dispatched to repress the first overt uprising in this area in 1853 (Guo 2001:114-117). The sudden death of Zhou Tianjue in mid-1853 weakened Zhang's political status. Otherwise Zhang Lexing might have been identified as a loyalist, regardless of his armed conflicts with the Old Cow Society in 1854.
[41] Yuan Jiasan's memorial.

the inter-elite cleavage to a vertical cleavage between the state and elites. Despite that senior

officials had ordered Zhu Kai to cease the attack and make a truce agreement, Zhu Kai disobeyed

the order and continued to attack and plunder *Bozhou* in late 1854, further escalating of the

inter-bloc confrontation. In a memorial in 1855, Yuan Jiasan said:

> "The Yongcheng resident, Sang Dianyuan, also amassed people to fight Su
> Tianfu, and they killed and burned each other. At that time, Zhu Kai, the
> Magistrate of Taikang and the coordinator of local militias [Old Cow Society],
> led the militias to exterminate [Nien groups], burning and killing without
> differentiating good from evil. From then on the two regions sought revenge on
> each other and their hostility became unsolvable" (*Fanglue-Nien* 1872: vol.7).

On the other hand, Zhang Lexing's bloc was appeased by other officials. As seen in this memorial,

Yuan Jiasan tended to interpret these events as feuds between similar blocs, rather than the

"repressor vs. rebel" scenario held by Zhu Kai and his allies. The emperor initially agreed with

Yuan Jiasan's judgment on this incident (*Fanglue-Nien* 1872: vol.7: pp.9). As a result, even in late

1854 and early 1855, Qing officials still tried to co-opt Zhang Lexing, rather than identify Zhang's

bloc as rebellious (Jiang 1983:80; Guo 2001:134). Taking the two factors together, while the attack

from the Old Cow Society led by Zhu Kai drove resistant identities of Zhang Lexing's bloc, the

appeasement policy from Yuan Jiasan gave Zhang opportunities to build organizational strength.

The Nien bloc finally united more than 100 groups and declared rebellion in September 1855.

Likewise, in the Long Spike Rebellion in Shandong Province, the provincial commissioner

and local officials supported two rival militia blocs. In particular, the Long Spear Society was

purposively endorsed by the Prefect to balance the expanding power of the existing militia bloc

endorsed by the province-level commissioner: "considering that the militia leaders were usually

domineering, the Prefect tacitly encouraged the Long Spear Society to be their enemy and

balance their influence" (Liu 1957:264). This competing patronage structure gave the two blocs

legitimacy to expand and polarized the opposition between the two. Eventually, this horizontal

cleavage became vertical. In fact, in the entire Shandong Province the tension intensified with

the arrival of the new Provincial Militia Commissioner, Du Qiao, in 1860. Du Qiao took a very

aggressive policy by integrating all existing militia blocs within the province and putting them

directly under his own control, thereby creating a parallel ruling structure in addition to

Shandong's existing administration. Supported by Du Qiao, some militia blocs became unruly

and openly challenged state actors, leading to a number of conflicts and even revolts (Zhang

1885/1953: vol.22). As commented by a local gentry in Shandong: "Since Imperial

Commissioner Du Qiao has been in charge of militia affairs, he has infringed on the authority of

the existing administrative system, thus causing the militias to become domineering. They then

no longer yielded to local officials, and extensive revolts appeared" (Cui 2011:43).[42]

   In sum, these cases exemplified how intensified intra-state competition polarized the

cleavage of elite-led blocs and created rival alignments across the state-society boundary. When

certain bloc conflicts took place, the inter-elite cleavage was further transposed by cleavage

between state actors and elites on the rival side, finally leading to elite-led insurrections.

Furthermore, since either side had the potential to become rebellious, which actually converted

was contingent upon the power and positioning of their state patrons and rivals. There were a few

typical, but also peculiar, pathways: sometimes stronger state actors directly intervened in their

conflicts and suppressed their opposing blocs; sometimes the increasing pressure from its rival

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[42] The court finally realized that the dual bureaucratic structure itself had become a new source of disorder and decided to recall
Du Qiao to Beijing.

side drove one bloc to make pre-emptive rebellious actions; in other situations certain blocs were encouraged to become unruly. Regardless of these peculiarities, the divergences of these initially similar groups were all progressively made through the two generic processes mentioned above.

Jurisdictional Competition and Recurrent Rebellions

So far, I have shown the generic process, by which some initially defensive elite-led forces became rebellious in the emerging local cleavages. More interestingly, in some areas the changing cleavage generated new rebellions in a recurrent manner. While inter-elite competition and intra-state competition still constituted the basic drive for bloc conflicts and their divergent outcomes, a new competition—between state actors and quasi-state elites—created new dynamics of rebellious transformation. As certain elites continued to build their power and acquire state legitimization, they became quasi-state actors; meanwhile, formal state actors lost real strength and became powerless. The relationship between state actors and certain elites was then reversed and the state-society boundary was blurred. The two engaged in *jurisdictional competition* (Loveman 2005:1663) for taxation and manpower when they had overlapping turfs. Under some circumstances, the expanding societal force contested and even usurped administrative authority from the weakened state actors. This aggressive move sometimes incurred repression. Below I illustrate this process with the case of the revolt of Miao Peilin, a former militia leader who rose to power when fighting the Nien Rebellion in the North Huai Valley beginning in 1855.

Case: The Miao Peilin Rebellion, 1857-1861

In responding to the Nien Rebellion, a number of militia groups were organized in North Huai Valley beginning in 1853. One bloc was led by a lower-level gentry, Miao Peilin. Building upon

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his reputation in several successful battles against the Nien, Miao became the leader of an

expanding militia alliance across districts. In 1857 Miao's group was approved as an "official

militia" by local and provincial officials. Among many other entitled militia groups in this area,

another prominent group in the *Shou* District was led by Sun Jiatai, who gradually became one of

Miao's major foes. In 1853, Sun Jiatai was appointed as Commissioner to organize and coordinate

militias in his home area (Zhang and Niu 2002:221). Born into a prominent family and having once

served as an imperial official, Sun enjoyed higher political status than Miao, but did not have the

physical force. In order to limit Miao's restless expansion, Sun made allies with a few other militia

leaders who also had enmity against Miao, such as Xu Lizhuang (Chi 1999:81-84). At times, as the

two blocs tried to expand their influence, clashes between them took place—a process parallel

with the above cases.

When the Nien rebels left this region in 1857, their common enemy no longer existed. Old

cleavages disappeared, while new cleavages emerged. Both Miao Peilin and his rival bloc annexed

a number of militant groups and fortifications across several districts in the wake of fierce

competition against each other. It is recorded that, by 1860, Miao controlled dozens of county seats,

hundreds of fortifications, and several thousand soldiers—he then commanded a force "even

stronger than the Niens" (Liu 1978:461). Both sides made close connections with senior officials.

Miao's major patron was *Shengbao*, a Manchu aristocrat and the most powerful imperial

commander of counter-rebellion affairs in this region. He requested that the court grant Miao

middle-level imperial titles. On the other side, Sun Jiatai held good relations with the governor

who was stationed in the same city.

What makes this case extraordinary was that Miao, as well as his rival, further contested

jurisdictional authority with state actors, who were so weakened that they became incapable of

containing these emerging elite-led blocs. Miao levied land taxes and even indirect (commercial)

taxes in several districts, united many forts in strategic positions, and even replaced several

district-level administrations by his own militias (Chi 1999:59-63). In other words, the

relationship between the state and societal forces was now reversed. As commented by Yuan

Jiasan: "governmental forces are now used by Miao and are no longer able to use Miao's forces"

(Chi 1999:59). As was eventually recognized by the court, "In the name of assisting officials to

repress the Nien Rebellion, Miao coerced other militias everywhere, made militias in several

districts his followers, and eventually became too powerful to be contained" (*Fanglue-Nien* 1872,

vol. 108). When the British-French joint army invaded Beijing in 1860, Miao tried to capitalize on

this opportunity to further expand his influence beyond the district level. In reply to *Shengbao*'s

request to Beijing for a relief army, Miao answered with a clear powerful ambition, seeking to

replace the formal administrative and military institutions and control the entire region himself:

> "I would propose that you station yourself at Hefei to suppress the Taiping rebels,
> and have Marshal Yuan [Jiasan] return to Beijing to fight the British invaders and
> protect the emperor. I, with my militia forces, guard *Shouzhou* and *Linhuai* and
> repress the Nien rebels led by Zhang Lexing… As several strategic positions
> need to be strengthened by building new forts, and the number of my militias
> have reached 100,000, I request to monopolize the tax of the entire Huai Valley."
> (Zhang 1871/1953: vol.1, pp.291).

Albeit in a smaller scale, Sun Jiatai and Xu Lizhuang also contested power with the waning

state actors, as memorialized by Yuan Jiasan to the court (*Fanglue-Nien* 1872:vol. 95:14-15; Fu

1945/1982:445). At that time, both Sun and Xu, and the Governor of Anhui Province, Weng

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Tongshu, were stationed at Shouzhou, the temporary provincial capital. It was said that Sun

hijacked Weng to expand his influence. Later on, in a memorial to the court, Yuan Jiasan wrote a

vivid comment on the two militia leaders:

> "Sun Jiatai is headstrong, capricious, ruthless, and tyrannical, arbitrarily killing
> the innocent, and thus out of the control of local officials. If he had owned tens of
> thousands of members, it is unknown how rebellious he would have been. Xu
> Lizhuang had no talent in commanding an army, but was even more unruly than
> Miao Peilin in every aspect" (*Fanglue-Nien* 1872:vol. 95).

The conflict between the two blocs culminated in the *Shouzhou* Incident. Miao desperately

tried to extend his influence into this city, the temporary provincial capital, and his clash with the

Sun/Xu alliance erupted when Sun killed seven spies sent by Miao to *Shouzhou* in December 1860.

Miao immediately dispatched militias to besiege the city of *Shouzhou*. Regardless of the

complicated processes of investigation and identification for this incident, Qing officials decided

to sacrifice Sun and Xu in mid-1861 to pacify Miao since Miao owned much stronger physical

forces. Xu Lizhuang was killed, and Sun Jiatai was arrested. Still Miao did not cease fighting. In

late October of that year, Miao took over the city of *Shouzhou*, exterminated the Sun family and

Sun's followers, and captured and detained Governor Weng.

To the court, Miao's aggressive contest for jurisdictional authority with the provincial

officials was no longer acceptable. Both high-level officials and commissioners and the court

increasingly tended to consider Miao as rebellious as the Nien. In a memorial on October 12, 1861,

for example, Yuan Jiasan said: "Miao Peilin is domineering and rebellious, and has angered

everybody…Instead of a cooptation policy, I now support suppression as the primary policy"

(*Fanglue-Nien* 1872: vol.112). A once counter-insurgent and state-approved powerful militia

leader had now become a rebel.[43]

Interestingly, the Nien Rebellion and the Miao Peilin Rebellion constituted sequential cases (Haydu 1998), showing how the changing relational nexus among state actors and elites transformed militias into insurgents. Miao had no preexisting contradictions with the state. He actually organized militias not only for communal defense, but also to help the state fight the Nien rebels. However, after the Nien left, the old militia alliance divided, and new cleavages between them appeared. Furthermore, since the boundary of state actors and social forces was blurred, quasi-state actors such as Miao and his rivals began to compete with provincial state actors for authority. His restless power contest eventually resulted in his insurrection. Zeng Guofan made a vivid comment on the Miao Peilin Incident in his diary in 1861:

> "There were regular soldiers, militias, Niens, Taipings, Niens first as rebels but then becoming officials, and Niens first as officials but then becoming rebels—they fought and killed each other. Now it is hard to differentiate right from wrong, to differentiate obedient from insurgent groups! How can we pacify a society that has changed to such a level?" (Zeng Guofan's Diary, 1861)

In the end, the changing cleavages became entirely ambiguous. In many areas, who were rebels and who were repressors became the situational results of the rapidly shifting political context. For example, Miao Peilin frequently swayed in position between the Qing and the Taiping/Nien, eventually becoming what some historians called "Modern China's first warlord." (Liu 1978:462). Defection, after all, was not uncommon in many areas.[44]

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[43] To be noted, this incident was further rooted in intra-state factionalism at the top level. Miao bloc's political nature was differently identified between its patron, the Manchu aristocrat *Shengbao* (*Fanglue-Nien*, 1872: vol.90, 118), and *Shengbao*'s political rivals, the rising Han Chinese officials, including the national leader Zeng Guofan as well as Yuan Jiasan (*Fanglue-Nien* 1872: vol.128; Wang 1889/1983: vol. 7:92-93). Both sides tried to capitalize on this incident to acquire higher authority in this region. As Zeng Guofan and his colleagues made a series of military achievements in fighting the Taiping at that time, they garnered increasing empire-wide influence over counter-rebellion policies. Eventually they persuaded the Qing court to identify the Miao bloc as a rebel force.

[44] For instance, in Guizhou province, "in these local power struggles expedient alliances with rebel forces could also blur the

Discussion

At this point, it is useful to summarize my findings by disentangling three kinds of variations tackled in this chapter in order to present a better rationale for my argument. The three variations were: the temporal variation of the same militia group over time, the divergent outcomes of rival militia blocs in the same locality, and different pathways of the rebellious transformation (See Figure 4.4). For my theoretical purposes, I mainly focus on the first and second variations that constitute the generic process for all cases, but also touch upon the third type of variation that constitutes the peculiar trajectory of these transformed groups. Below, I will briefly summarize how the three types of variations have been addressed by the dynamic, relational model.

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distinction between orthodox and heterodox forces. For example, one weak militia leader caught between powerful rebel forces on one side and aggrandizing militia leaders on the other, changed sides no less than five times within a three-year period" (McCord 1990).
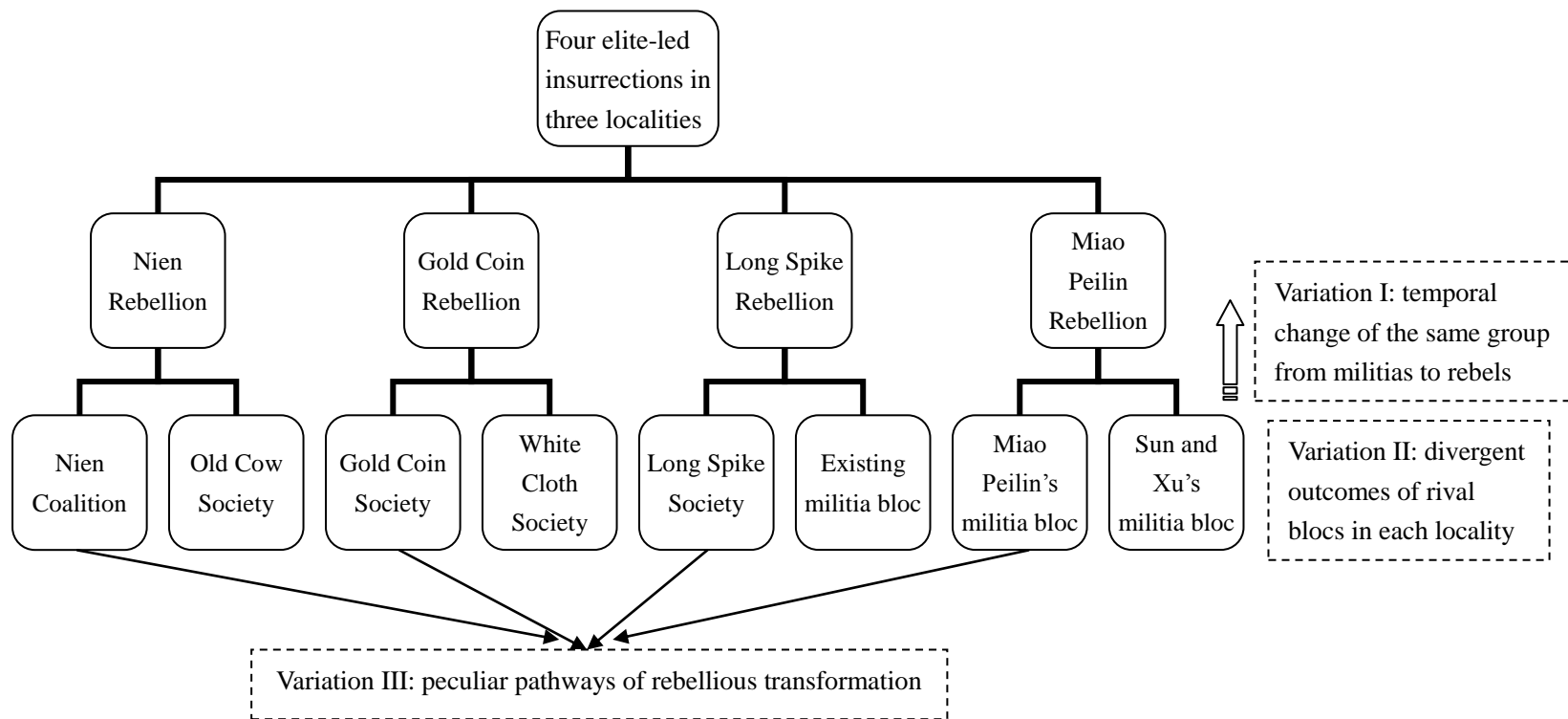
Figure 4.4. Structure of the comparison: Three levels of variations.

The first variation involves temporal variations of individual militia blocs: why did some turn from counter-insurgent groups to outright rebel groups? This is the central question of this chapter. That's also why I use a pattern identifying method to find commonalities. Throughout extensive historical evidence and case studies, I find that there had been no preexisting cleavages between the state and elites to produce an insurgent identity or grievances that would lead to elite insurrections. Furthermore, local elites mobilized militias to fight rather than join in the external rebels at the outset. These elite-led militia groups became rebels as the situational result of emerging and changing local cleavages that were the counter-effects of the counter-insurgent mobilizations. This is the essential message conveyed by my empirical analysis.

The second variation is then the divergent outcomes between two rival blocs in the same locality: after all, *which became rebels and which remained state allies? Why?* My answer is that each side had the potential to become rebellious or repressive, albeit with slightly different potentials in the beginning. The eventual results were *processually* made by the *relational* power between the two rival blocs and their state patrons. Once one bloc had greater possibility of insurrection, it was then more possible for the other bloc to further connect with the state. They were indeed relational rebels and repressors.

It might be argued that those eventual insurgents came from relatively lower-status elites, if compared with their respective rival elites. They were continually disadvantaged in their competition with their rival blocs, and eventually became rebellious or were identified as rebellious by the state. This perhaps contributed to the rise of the Nien Rebellion, because its rival bloc built better relations with local officials. However, ironically, the local state was not

always inclined to endorse the stronger militia bloc or constrain the weaker bloc. In the Golden

Coin Society uprising, until its final revolt the state continuously supported the Golden Coin

Society in order to balance the expanding power of the militias led by upper elites. It was the

state's appeasement and inaction rather than coercion that encouraged the Gold Coin Society to

take risky and relentless revenge and eventually became outright rebels. In sum, the difference

between the cases of the Nien and Golden Coin Society shed interesting light on how state actors

"*refracted*" and *reacted* differently from each other to the similar situation (Wilson 2011).

Furthermore, during this rebellious period, local officials were no longer rulers "above" the

society, but actors "within" the context. They were not objective arbitrators of elite conflicts, but

relational actors in the local political field with their own interests and considerations.

Furthermore, in many cases, the rival sides actually had nearly identical political and

cultural status at the onset, and their final divergence was purely the processual result of

emerging political contexts. In the uprising of the *Jinshi* and the former official Liu Shuyu in

South Shandong, Liu Shuyu built his own militia groups and allied himself with neighboring

militias to prevail against his local rival competitor, who was also a *jinshi* degree holder. So their

initial political status explained nothing of their divergence. Just as in the Long Spike Society

case, Liu's competitor built better connections with the provincial commissioner. In the

intensified bloc conflicts with his competitor's militia corps, Liu eventually joined a rebellious

coalition in the adjacent region and became a "disgraceful" insurgent that he had never imagined

(Chen 1983: 207-208; *Sources of Modern Shandong History* 1957: 207-214).

The third variation is about the different pathways leading to elite insurrections. Sometimes

a state patron was directly involved in the fights, and changed the nature of the cleavage (Zhu

Kai in the Nien Rebellion). Sometimes stronger state actors delegitimized their rival societal

blocs as rebellious (Provincial Commissioner Du Qiao in the Long Spike Rebellion). Sometimes

the militia bloc was appeased by their state patron to gradually become unruly and rebellious (the

Gold Coin Society). In other situations, militia blocs accumulated great power and became

quasi-state actors, thus usurping state authority from the formal administration, eventually

leading to insurrections (the Miao Peilin case). Across these peculiar pathways, the key was still

the intensified inter-elite competition accompanied by horizontal oppositional alignment, and the

fragmentizing of state authority accompanied by vertical rival alignment. Only the Miao Peilin

case saw further jurisdictional competition between formal state actors and quasi-state elites.

Varied by distinct and changing political contexts, different combinations of these competitions

resulted in alternative pathways of the rebellious transformation of initially similar groups.

Readers might have interest in a fourth variation—why elite insurrections appeared in some

cases/regions, but not others. This variation is interesting but is not my empirical purpose in this

chapter. So I have not directly addressed this variation. Nevertheless, my hypothesis is that the

more communal militarization and new state actors exist, the more possible for them to lead to

bloc conflicts, intra-state competition, and elite insurrections. This hypothesis needs systematic

data for testing. After all, my primary goal is identifying patterns and tracing the process of elite

insurrections. So I focus on temporal variations of one group and divergent outcomes of

competing groups within one area rather than variations across regions.

Conclusion

In one of China's four classical novels, *Outlaws of the Marsh* (*Shuihu Zhuan*), the rebel

army's most ferocious enemy was not the state, but a communal militia group (led by the Zhu

Family). It was also their infighting that eventually shocked the imperial court, which then

dispatched regular forces to combat the rebels. This story is situated in the early 12th century in

the Song dynasty, 700 years earlier than the case discussed in this chapter. Nevertheless, the

striking parallel suggests that there should be underlying patterns.[45] This chapter thus strives to

explain the patterns of elite insurrections during the mid-19th century Qing China, and hopes that

the findings could be generalized to examine cases in other contexts. It contributes to the current

literature on three abstract levels. Above all, it helps explain elite-led militia rebellions in

insurgent civil wars. Furthermore, it reveals the processual nature of state/elite relationships in

political contentions. Finally, it enriches the general dynamic, relational model.

It is then helpful to consider the scope conditions of my explanation. In the most specific

sense, my case fits states whose formal power is limited but not entirely absent or collapsed. On

the one hand, the state has not yet monopolized the legitimate use of collective violence and thus

often encourages elite-led militarization. On the other hand, it is not a Hobbesian condition or

total anarchy that will produce warlords rather than state/rebellion interactions (Bull 1977;

Kalyvas 2003) and/or the lineup of communal cleavages without the state/elite rivalry (Barth

1959:134).[46] The oppositional alignment in my case aligns with competing factions within the

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[45] As this fiction was written in the late Imperial China (the Ming Dynasty), it perhaps represented the social reality of its contemporary age more than the age of the story, the Song dynasty (Smith 2006).

[46] In Barth's classical study, when the state was absent, there was continual alignment and opposition of communal groups "into two dispersed, politically corporate blocs of allies."

state and was finally transposed by state/elite opposition. In this sense, the model not only fits

some pre-modern or early modern empires/states (Fellman 1989;[47] Barkey 1994; Robinson 2001;

Mukhopadhyay 2014), but it can also be applied to contemporary societies, where the state's

monopoly of collective violence "remains ongoing and unsolved" (Ahram 2011:8). In Colombia,

for example, while the state encouraged self-defense forces to help fight leftist insurgents, some

militant groups, "originally formed to assist the army against leftist insurgents, were in alliance

with drug cartels" (Ahram 2011:9). Far from the typical description of internal conflict "as

dyadic engagements between the state and rebel groups, two-player games of incumbent versus

challenger," combats and coalitions are usually cross boundary and complicated (Ahram

2011:8-9).

To be noted, in studying modern civil wars, Kalyvas (2003, 2006) found that national and

local cleavages are simultaneously in disjunction and in connection, and thus civil war is

understood as "concatenations of multiple and often disparate local cleavages, more or less

loosely arrayed around the master cleavage" (Kalyvas 2006:384). This is a great point, yet we

focus on different processes. With insurgent civil wars, such as my cases, there are three kinds of

cleavages: 1) the national master cleavages: Taiping vs. Qing; 2) multiple communal cleavages;

3) intra-state political cleavages in each locality. There are multiple possible combinations of the

three cleavages. Kalyvas' focus is the disjuncture and linkage between the first and second types

of cleavages, i.e., between the master cleavages and local cleavages. Applied to my case, it

tackles how the master cleavage between the Taiping and the Qing Empire separated from but

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[47] Even during the ideology-driven American Civil War, similar small yet violent civil wars took place in Missouri (Fellman 1989).

also connected to multiple local cleavages. Instead, my focus is on two other processes: 1) how

multiple initially disparate communal cleavages were horizontally linked together, and 2) how

intra-state cleavage was vertically linked with inter-elite cleavage in each locality. Simply put,

we focus on different aspects of insurgent wars partly because of the different scale of our cases:

Kalyvas studies civil wars in relatively small-scale societies, while this study examines a war in a

large-size empire. In my case, many rebellions had no direct connection with the central cleavage

between the Qing Empire and the Taiping Regime, but were more related to local political

cleavages.[48] For example, many elite insurrections in Southwest China or Taiwan had no direct

connection with the Taiping Rebellion, but similar processual dynamics still appeared.[49]

On an even more general level, this chapter contributes to a dynamic, relational

understanding of elites in contentious politics. In recent studies in contentious politics, elites are

considered a crucial agency in institutional and insurrectionary politics: they can play different

roles in the insurrection, as either counter-revolutionary or revolutionary, interplaying with the

state and mass uprisings one way or another (Tilly 1964; Gould 1996; Markoff 1997; Lachmann

1997, 2000; Isaac 2002; Slater 2009). My research further shows that elites change their

identities and actions even during the same case, because as a relational agency, their actions are

contingent upon their major allies/opponents and state actors. This processual view can propel

our understanding of many phenomena in (not necessarily violent) political contentions, such as

the dynamic among movements, counter-movements, and state actors that is mainly addressed in

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[48] In some of these cases, such as the rivalry between the Nien and its rival bloc finally linked to the empire-wide master cleavage between the Taiping and the Qing, but that is not the key for the Nien's rebellious transformation, upon which I focus.
[49] For example, the aforementioned local conflicts between Dai Chunchao's bloc and its rival bloc in Taiwan had no contact with the Taipings (Meskill 1979).

social movement literature. In line with cutting-edge research that begins to tackle

state-countermovement interactions over time and space (Isaac 2002, 2010; Luders 2003; Irons

2006), this chapter further examines *counter-effects of the counter-mobilization* within certain

political contexts. Specifically, it shows that counter-mobilization elites could reverse their

identities in the course of intensified inter-elite and intra-state competition, and transform from a

countermovement to a movement, from state's friends to state's enemies. In sum, a dynamic

view deepens our understanding of the state/elite relationship and state/countermovement

interactions—after all, a thoroughly relational model presumes a processual view (Emirbayer

1997).

Linking this chapter back to the general model presented in Chapter 1, I contend that

insurgent formation (including elite insurrection) is the result of dynamic interactions among

multiple relational actors, and the recursive outcome in reaction to the changing relationship

structures during the revolutionary unfolding of an insurrection. Instead of taking these processes

as altogether contingent happenings or irregular occurrences, the dynamic model can reveal a

series of turning points that link several reversal processes by which initial conditions are linked

with final outcomes in an unexpected way. This viewpoint is similar to the discussion on the

"reactive process" in some endogenous models (Mahoney 2000; Falleti and Mahoney

2015:220-223),[50] but if that is the case, there are at least successive turning points rather than

one single critical juncture in the entire sequence—a central claim in the path dependent model

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[50] For example, "with a reactive process, early events are followed by backlashes and reversals of direction, which in turn may trigger further backlashes and reversals, such that the final outcome of the sequence may appear unrelated to early events in the sequence" (Falleti and Mahoney 2015:220).

does not then hold true (Lachmann 2000).[51] On the general level, this processual dynamic can be

applied to explain political contentions in many other contexts. For example, during the Cultural

Revolution in China, when Chairman Mao deliberately disrupted the existing power structure

and authorized college students power for self-organization, the rapidly changing political

context caused their oppositional alignment resulting in their divergent outcomes that were not

necessarily congruent with their family or political backgrounds (Walder 2006, 2009a). I will

further discuss the extension of the dynamic, relational model in the concluding chapter.

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[51] In other words, all path dependent explanations are wrong, but some are better, if an unexpected and significant critical juncture is correctly identified and its effects are articulated.

Chapter 5 Mobilizing Muslims, Unlike Uprisings

Massive Muslim Mobilization

Muslim uprisings during the mid-19th century were by no means less consequential than the Christian-inspired Taiping Rebellion, although they are less well known. Sizable Muslim rebellions appeared in four areas—Yunnan (1856-1872), Shaanxi (1862-1873), Gansu (1862-1873),[1] and Xinjiang (1864-1878)[2]—in Northwest and Southwest China (See Figures 5.1a and 5.1b).[3] Even if we only count the Chinese-speaking Muslim uprisings, they lasted over two decades from 1856 to 1873. A large number of Muslim communities in these provinces were mobilized and militarized. The human cost was startling—about 20 million people died in these areas, a number no less than its counterpart in the Taiping civil war.[4] Furthermore, two Islamic regimes—in Yunnan and in Xinjiang, respectively—made these rebellions more politicized than any other contemporaneous rebellions but the Taiping (Kim 2004; Atwill 2005; Setzekorn 2015). Historically, this wave of Muslim uprisings was an unprecedented event because, since the Muslim entry into China in the 7th century: "no major Muslim rebellions broke out during previous dynastic declines or during most of the period of the *pax sinica* of the Hing Ch'ing" (Israeli 1980:130).

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[1] Gansu, in the Qing Empire, was six times larger than its current size. It then contained the areas known today as the provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia. To give a perspective, Shaanxi was half of the size of California, Yunnan was as large as California, while Gansu was seven times larger than California.

[2] "Xinjiang" (literally, "old territory returned to the motherland") appeared as a geographical moniker in the 1760s after the Qing Empire destroyed the Dzungar Khanate, while becoming a jurisdictional province until 1884 (Millward 1998, 2007). During this rebellion period Xinjiang was comprised of three or four distinct areas in which about 600,000 people resided (Rudelson 1997).

[3] I have not included a few small-size Muslim uprisings that occurred during this period in Guizhou and Shandong Provinces.

[4] According to Cao (2001:554-646), Yunnan lost 20% of its population (2.4 million) and Shaanxi lost more than 30% (4.7 million), while Gansu lost 75% (14.6 million), due to the combination of war, killing, plague and famine.
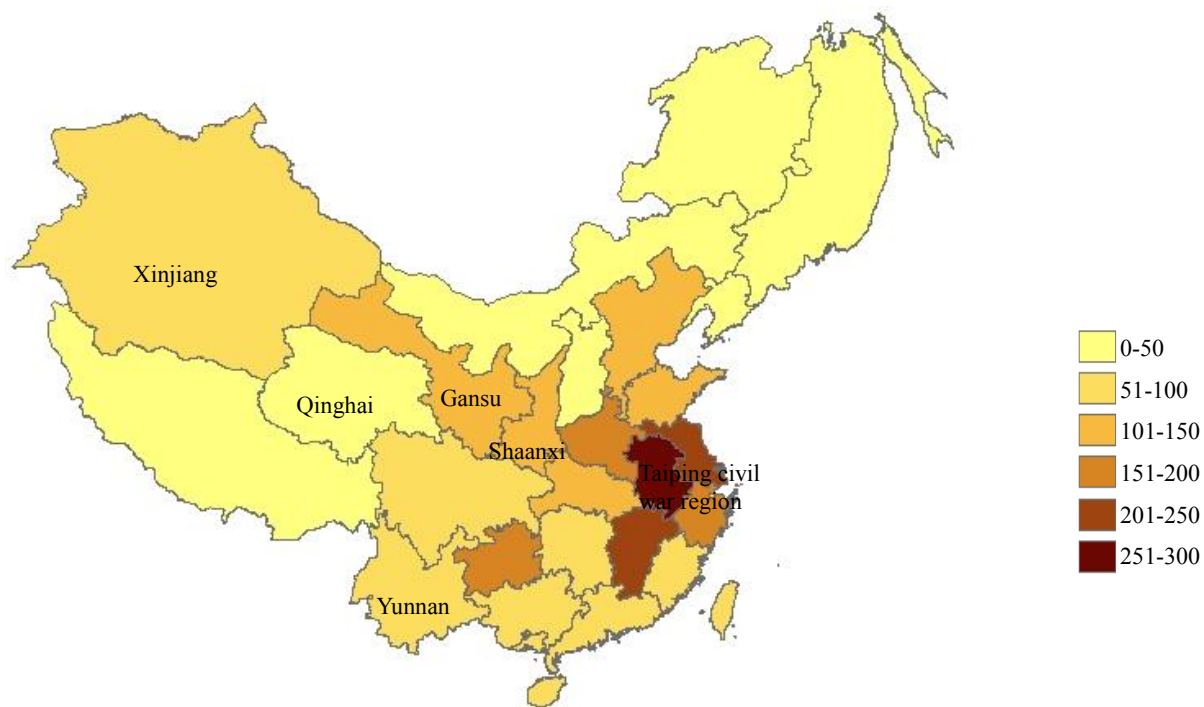
Figure 5.1a. Provincial distribution of mass action incidents, 1856-1865.
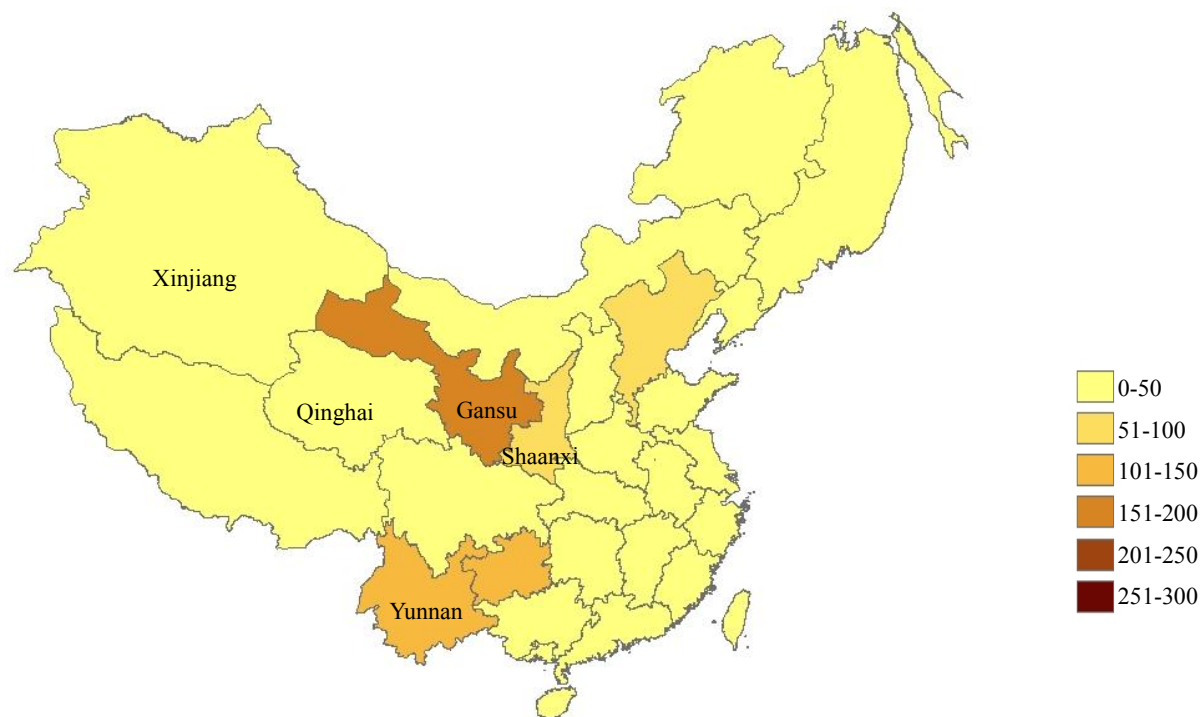
Figure 5.1b. Provincial distribution of mass action incidents, 1866-1875.
Source: Yang 1975.
Background database: CHGIS.
Note: Though separated in the maps, Qinghai was part of Gansu during the Qing dynasty.

Why were Muslims mobilized on such a massive scale, unprecedented in the imperial history of China? Arguing against the conventional wisdom that often regards Muslim mobilization as the inevitable outcome of intrinsic cultural confrontations or monolithic ethnic tension, this chapter examines how rebellions of Sino-Muslims (or, *Hui*) came into being out of different ethno-religious identities and institutions in the three provinces—Yunnan, Shaanxi, and Gansu. Under the same "Hui" Rebellion label were three Muslim uprisings that were unlike each other and changing from their onset to crystallization: the de-ethnicization and division of a coalition for ethnic clashes in Yunnan Province, the ethnicized conflict and rebellion of initially defensive militarization in Shaanxi Province, and the balkanized politicization of Sufi solidarities in Gansu Province. Furthermore, none of these were the obvious outcomes of existing ethno-religious conditions. Instead, they unfolded as the unexpected and unplanned results of major regional actors' reactions to the external rebellions and their iterative interactions with each other. Methodologically, this chapter demonstrates how a dynamic, relational model can explain cross-sectional variations in combination with a process tracing method.

Understandably, to explain the overarching question—why Muslims mobilized on such a massive scale—scholars tend to find certain monolithic ethno-religious cleavages to account for the pervasive mobilization and clashes. Without certain kinds of group consciousness as a unified framework, it was difficult for Muslims living in dispersed regions to arise altogether. Although it is the case that the Taiping and other external rebellions set in motion the Muslim uprisings, how the latter came into being still needs a specific explanation.[5] The key is thus

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[5] Moreover, Southwest and Northwest Muslim mobilizations were relatively independent of each other. There is little evidence

revealing what common factors sustained the mobilization and coalition of these otherwise dispersed and disconnected Muslim communities.

One explanation contends that Muslim uprisings were rooted in the structural contradiction between *Hui* and *Han* Chinese as two ethnic groups (Atwill 2003, 2005; Zhou 2011). It argues that ethnic tension was generated by discrimination by the Han Chinese, especially as practiced by officials and elites, and/or ethnic grievance of the Hui people. When the time was ready, this ethnic tension caused unprecedented extensive Han-Hui ethnic conflicts and Hui rebellions.

However, this explanation essentializes both Hui and Han ethnicities, but neither of them constituted a monolithic ethnic identity during the Qing Empire. Hui identity was also ambiguous and malleable because of its dual religious and ethnic nature, thus opening it to different and often contested interpretations. This explanation also underestimates the pragmatic, flexible policies towards Han-Hui conflicts in the Qing Empire, an empire ruled by a non-Han minority group, the Manchu. Simply put, Hui ethnicity was only salient in Yunnan in the 19th century, was maintained but latent in Shaanxi, and was largely absorbed by religious institutions and became insignificant in Gansu. As such, ethnic discrimination and grievance as a motivator provoking Hui mobilization varied across regions.

Even more important, the role of ethnicity changed in each of the three cases over the course of mobilization. In Yunnan, pre-existing ethnic tension and Han's preemptive ethnic killing served as catalysts for the onset of conflicts, but the conflicts were soon deflected in a non-ethnic direction. In Shaanxi, ethnicization became the immediate and durable outcome of the

of "diffusion" between the two.

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initially non-ethnic defensive mobilization against outside threats. In Gansu, Shaanxi's ethnic conflicts might have generated certain co-ethnicity consciousness, but religious organizational networks were quickly activated and further politicized, thus marginalizing the role of ethnicity. In short, we need to specify the exact role of ethnicity over time within each case.

The second explanation highlights the intrinsic cultural contradiction between the Islamic and Chinese culture that served as the mobilizational framework for Muslim uprisings and even "Holy Wars" (Wang 1996; Isareli 1980, 2000; Kim 2004). For example, while acknowledging that this era was unique in Chinese history, Raphael Israeli nevertheless offers an exclusively cultural account and claims that Islam and Confucianism were fundamentally incompatible and would inevitably lead to massive violence. Some accounts further take certain Islamic institutions, especially Sufi suborders, as intrinsically militant and rebellious.[6]

While not assuming that *Hui* constituted a unified ethnic group, this religious explanation nevertheless also suffers from serious limitations. First, Islam was not criminalized but was well acknowledged as a legitimate religion in the Qing Empire (Lipman 2006). Second, in many areas Muslims were well acculturated and reconciled with Chinese society: "Islam and Confucianism are thus presented as compatible, comparable, and mutually intelligible" (Benite 2004: 200). Third, this interpretation obscures the internal variations among Muslims—in fact intra-Islamic conflicts were more salient than conflicts between Islam and Confucianism. Fourth, to claim

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[6] For the Hui rebellion in the northwest, Raphael Israeli (1980:204) says: "This new Islam [the *xinjiao*], which started by disseminating Islamic puritanism among Muslims, partly through the use of *jihad*, turned into an extremist Mahdi movement which attempted to use *jihad* (mainly against non-Muslims) to bring the millennium." For the Muslim rebel regime in Yunnan: "This Muslim state, which took the Chinese name of P'ing-nan Kuo but was headed by a fanatical Muslim bearing the Arabic title of 'Sultan Suleiman,' was a strange hybrid creature, perhaps unique in the annals of both Confucian and Islamic civilizations" (Israeli 1980:210)

certain Sufi suborders were intrinsically militant is groundless since the same kind of Sufi

solidarities could be contentious in one area but obedient elsewhere. Furthermore, quite contrary

to the conditions in China, in the broader Muslim world Sufism was often perceived as tolerant,

flexible, and peaceful (Green 2012).

Moreover, while there were religious elements in Muslim uprisings during this period, it is

misleading to claim they were truly religious wars. The so-called Muslim regime in Yunnan was

not only ethnically inclusive but also religiously tolerant to Buddhism, Daoism, and

Confucianism. "Religious" institutions, especially Sufi suborders, did play a key organizational

role in Gansu, but it was not obvious that they served a "religious" purpose. Furthermore, the

politicized Sufi solidarities could become either rebellious or non-rebellious, and their political

orientation often changed over time. They barely raised the concept of "holy war" or "*Jihad*"

during this period.

The problem of the two essentializing explanations becomes more apparent if some

"negative" cases are considered. In addition to these mobilizations, there were other scenarios for

Muslims during this period: 1) The Hui people in northern and southeastern China were

completely unaffected by these uprisings; 2) in some uprisings led by the Hui, ethno-religious

identities were utterly suppressed by other cleavages; and 3) a number of Hui people served

counter-insurgent purposes during this period—ironically, even in the most ethnicized conflicts

of Shaanxi, the Hui were initially organized as defenders against the invading Taipings in 1862.[7]

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[7] I have not yet counted numerous cases of "ethnic defection" of voluntary cooptation or capitulation (Kalyvas 2008).

In sum, the mid-century Muslim rebellions were neither empire-wide religious confrontations nor monolithic ethnic conflicts. These seemingly similar Hui rebellions were three unlike uprisings with distinct patterns and processes: *de-ethnicization and division of initially ethnic coalition* in Yunnan Province, *ethnicized conflicts and rebellions from defensive mobilization* in Shaanxi Province, and *Balkanized politicization of Sufi solidarities* in Gansu Province. As elaborated below, they not only differed from each other, but were also the unexpected results of their respective pre-existing ethno-religious circumstances.

In Yunnan province, Hui made ethnic alliances around two power centers on eastern and western Yunnan in reaction to Han-initiated ethnic killing that evolved from increasing ethnic tensions over the past three decades. However, both blocs were later de-ethnicized—specifically, the western bloc built an ethnically inclusive regime and incorporated a large number of Han Chinese into the regime. Moreover, despite their occasional coordination, the ethnic alliance of the two Hui blocs eventually divided—an anti-dynastic rebel regime in west Yunnan and a pro-dynastic force in eastern Yunnan (Atwill 2003, 2005; Jin 1991).

In Shaanxi Province, both Han and Hui were initially encouraged to organize and cooperate to defend against the invading Taiping rebels. However, Han and Hui militias soon engaged in collective infighting that ethnicized and spread to a larger area. These conflicts eventually led to the Hui's ethnic rebellion against the Qing which was endorsed by the Han militias (Lipman 1997; Han 2006; Zhou 2011). To some extent, the Shaanxi and Yunnan situations constituted two opposite directions: In Shaanxi, non-ethnic defensive mobilization became ethnicized conflicts; In Yunnan, initially ethnic conflict was deflected to a largely non-ethnic direction.

In Gansu province, co-religionist consciousness triggered by neighboring Shaanxi province and long-term inter-Sufism disputes provoked sporadic Muslim mobilization at the onset, but soon a few Sufi solidarities took leadership positions and politicized themselves in a Balkanized manner. The orientation of the politicization was not obvious—instead of uniting for religious wars against the empire or engaging in religious feuds, these politicized Sufi institutions were officially entitled and became *de facto* wartime rulers until some of them were identified as rebels by increasingly assertive imperial forces (Limpan 1997; Zhou 2011; Huo 2012). Both their "non-rebellious" politicization and divergent outcomes need a clear explanation.

In sum, this chapter seeks to tackle variations among Muslim mobilizations and trace the temporal transformation within each case, not as supplementary aspects to but as constitutive of the overarching question. For only by disentangling the Muslim uprisings can we understand both their differences and aggregated effects.

The remainder of the chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section I lay out my main argument. The empirical parts start with an introduction of the varying ethno-religious identities and institutions of Hui (with Han and Manchu) across regions in the Qing. I then introduce how these pre-existing identities and organizations were reconfigured in the three provinces during the mobilization process. As a result, the initial Muslim mobilizations were crystallized into quite different forms of uprising yet contributed altogether to the unprecedented conflicts.

A Dynamic, Relational Explanation

If Hui identities did not provide a coherent, monolithic framework for mobilization, why did Han-Hui conflicts and Hui uprisings develop simultaneously and extensively in Northwest

and Southwest China during this period? The answer suggests how distinct ethno-religious identities and institutions in the three regions turned to pervasive mobilizations, albeit with different directions throughout emergent and shifting inter-organizational and political dynamics. My approach highlights a dynamic, relational view of both ethno-religious identities and ethnicity-related collective mobilization: 1) ethno-religious identities and institutions are of temporally punctured and spatially uneven processes in their interactions with other ethnic groups and state actors (Leach 1957; Barth 1969; Geertz 1971; Armstrong 1982; Duara 1995), so ethnicity or religion played distinct (rather than unifying) roles in mobilizations; 2) emergent and changing organizational and political dynamics can reconfigure, twist, and even reverse pre-existing ethno-religious institutions in a short term, thus crystallizing the mobilization into distinctive directions that cannot be anticipated by pre-existing structures (Brubaker 1996; Tilly 2005; Kalyvas 2008). Below I apply this approach to the overview of my argument, and then summarize specific explanations for the three cases.

First, varying preexisting ethno-religious conditions generated different types and scales of contentious collective action—including large-scale ethnic infighting (Yunnan), sporadic small strife (Shaanxi), and religious disputes and feuds (Gansu)—but the preexisting factors alone cannot explain the mid-century rebellions. In previous, endemic incidents, the conflicts or uprisings were often quickly demobilized, suppressed, or pacified; this time they turned into sustained mobilization and expanding conflicts. Why similar incidents became the onset of unprecedented mobilization needs to be explained in combination with other emergent factors.

Second, the onset of sustained, large-scale mobilization was above all the unexpected response to major actors' reactions to recursively emergent, external rebels, including the Taipings as well as other rebel forces in neighboring regions. In the three provinces, the internal reactions to outside rebellions triggered and shaped the initial mobilization throughout different combinations of a number of factors: the physical presence of external rebellions, military transfer to outside areas, imperial prioritization, and communal militarization level. In conjunction with pre-existing ethno-religious conditions, initial responses to external rebellions shaped the (varying) onset of the mobilization: ethnicized clashes (Yunnan), defensive mobilization (Shaanxi), and co-religionist uprisings and religious feuds (Gansu). However, these factors have not explained the development and crystallization of the mobilization.

Third, the unfoldings of the mobilization and conflicts in the three provinces were the unexpected and unplanned results of iterative interactions among key organizational actors—including central and local state actors, militia leaders, leaders of religious solidarities and communal Hui elites—who often employed distinct organizational frameworks, including sectarian religious solidarities, local militias, and mosque-based communities. Since all of these actors were reflexive, the crystallization of the mobilization was the unfolding of their recursive reception and reaction to each other's responses. The final outcome in each of the three provinces not only diverged one from another, but also continually changed from its initial mobilization: de-ethnicization of initially ethnic clashes (Yunnan), ethnicization of originally defensive mobilization (Shaanxi), balkanized politicization of religious disputes (Gansu). Finally, within each case, phenomena such as displacement of targets, deflection of orientations,

defection to the enemy, and the division of former allies frequently appeared among major Muslim blocs as well as other forces.

Fourth, although some moments were more critical, there was no single turning point or critical juncture. The direction of the mobilization was often deflected or even reversed before its crystallization. The ongoing interactions of major organizational actors shaped and reshaped the outcomes altogether.

Overview of the Specific Explanations

To sum up, the divergent outcomes of the three Muslim mobilizations were not the autonomous, inevitable results of pre-existing ethno-religious institutions; nor were they the direct consequences of initial reactions to the external rebellions. Rather, they were unintended and unanticipated results displayed throughout a series of interactions involving multiple organizational actors. Table 5.1 summarizes the predominant pre-existing factors, initial reactions, and ongoing interactions that will be examined in the empirical analysis.

In Yunnan, the heightened competition between native Hui and Han immigrants since 1820 resulted in a series of large-scale ethnic killings leading to the 1856 massacre of Hui in the provincial capital. Due to the waning controlling capacity of the state, this incident sparked rapid and pervasive mobilization of Hui communities and Han-Hui conflicts. However, the ethnic conflict was soon deflected because of two relational factors: low-level prioritization and intervention of the state gave Hui forces an opportunity for rebel regime building; additionally, a split within Han militias blurred the ethnic cleavage of the conflicts. Accordingly, two major Hui forces that had emerged in the period were both de-ethnicized and proceeded to engage in a

power competition with each other and with the provincial authority, thus creating a power balance and the eventual divergence of the two initially allied Hui forces.

In Shaanxi, latent ethnic identity and localized religious institutions did not produce any sizable ethnic or religious conflicts/uprisings until 1862, when the Taipings and other rebels invaded Shaanxi. Given the low ethnic tension, Han and Hui communities were both initially mobilized in reaction to the invading rebels and were often mixed together for joint actions. However, after a few sporadic, spontaneous disputes, this defensive mobilization transformed into sustained ethnicized conflicts and retaliations, undergirded by an organizational framework of high-level communal militarization. Furthermore, the state's high priority in this area caused rapid and fierce suppressions, thereby supplementing the horizontal Han-Hui conflict with vertical rivalry between the Hui and the state.

In Gansu, ethnic identity had been assimilated into a few institutional Sufi suborders, which provided the organizational infrastructure of the Hui mobilization for continuous religious disputes. The co-religionist consciousness driven by Shaanxi's emerging conflicts and inter-Sufism disputes triggered sporadic incidents in 1862. A few Sufi leaders further capitalized on the opportunity to politicize and militarize their religious authority in the power vacuum created by a combination of emerging conditions: 1) a large quantity of regular forces had been transferred from Gansu to the interior provinces; 2) threats from external rebellions were not sufficiently pressing to provoke the Han communities' high militarization to sustain continuous ethnic conflicts (as occurred in Shaanxi); 3) the lower priority of the court before 1869 left the provincial authorities with a cooptation policy as a feasible option. Accordingly, these politicized

Sufi-based organizations were conferred with official titles by provincial authorities, and became

de facto rulers in their controlled territories instead of initiating religious wars against the state or

engaging in sectarian conflicts with each other. Their political fates only began to diverge in

1869 when they were targeted by the increasingly assertive Qing armies.

Table 5.1. Existing and emerging factors during the three Hui rebellions

		Yunnan	Shaanxi	Gansu
Existing factors	Ethnic identities	Salient	Latent	Silent
	Religious institutions	Localized, dispersed	Localized, dispersed	Organized, cross-district
Initial reactions	Military deployment	Middle	Middle	High
	Influence of external rebellions	Low	High	Middle
	Initial communal militarization level	Middle	High	Low
Ongoing interactions	Imperial priority	Middle	High	Low
	Provincial policy	Cooptation & repression	Suppression	Cooptation
	Rebels' relations	Power competition	Coalition without integration	Segmentation

Note: Emerging factors comprise both "initial reactions" and "ongoing interactions" in the table.

A Note on Methods and Materials

This chapter employs both cross-sectional comparison and process tracing of each case

(Falleti and Mahoney 2015). Furthermore, unlike the last chapter which identifies common

patterns, this chapter aims to explain variations. I highlight how the divergent outcomes can only

be partially explained by the preexisting cross-sectional variations, while more are accounted for

by changing relational structures in the unfolding processes. In other words, this chapter also

serves as an example to show that the dynamic model can be applied to both the identification of

common patterns and finding variation across cases. For either purpose, we need to clarify causal

mechanisms and processes rather than simply present several factors across cases (Steinmetz 2004).

As in previous chapters, various archival sources are used when analyzing mobilization and conflicts in the three provinces. First, I use several edited volumes of internal communication between the court and provincial authorities: *Grand Strategies on the Suppression of the Hui Rebellion in Yunnan*, 50 volumes (*Fanglue-Yunnan*, hereafter), *Grand Strategies on the Suppression of the Hui Rebellion in Shaanxi, Gansu, and Xinjiang*, 320 volumes (*Fanglue-Northwest*, hereafter), and *Materials about Muslims in the Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty* (*QSL-Muslim*, hereafter) (Ma Saibei 1988).

Second, I use various records by contemporaries including generals, officials, and local gentry, some of which were compiled into special volumes. The most used sources include: *The Complete Zuo Zongtang* (ZZTQJ, hereafter) that contains General Zuo Zongtang's memorials, letters, and notes on the counter-insurgent wars in Northwest, *Historical Materials on the Hui Uprisings* (*HMHU*, hereafter) (Bai 1952), *Sources on the Shaanxi Hui Rebellion* (SSHR, hereafter) (Shao and Han 1987) that includes several kinds of diaries, memoirs, and gazetteers, *Sources on the Yunnan Hui Rebellion* (SYHR, hereafter) (Jing 1986) that is a counterpart of the SSHR for Shaanxi Province, and similarly, *Compiled Historical Sources on Gansu, Ningxia, and Qinghai* (CHSGNQ, hereafter) (Mu 1972).

Third, a number of surveys conducted by contemporary historians also offer valuable local knowledge on these rebellions, including *Survey on the Society and History of the Hui in Yunnan*

(2009), 4 volumes (SSHHY, hereafter), and *Records of Historical Investigation on the Hui*

Rebellion in Shaanxi During the Reign of the Tongzhi Emperor (Ma Changshou 1993/2009).

Finally, I also made slight use of the Chinese translations of Arabic and Persian sources on

the history of Sufi suborders in Gansu Province, which provide a perspective supplementing

official documents and Han elites' records, since they are often recorded by Sufi disciples.

Ethno-religious Identities and Institutions in the Qing Empire

Distinct ethno-religious identities and institutions set the stage for the subsequent events

during this period. However, these subjects themselves have puzzled scholars. Compared with

the understanding of Manchu and Han identities (which is certainly uneasy), figuring out the *Hui*

is even more difficult for it is a matter of weaving in at least four additional elements.

First, the Hui as a category contained both religious and ethnic elements which overlapped

but were not congruent. In the Qing Empire, "Hui" as a moniker was used to indicate both the

Hui people ("Huimin") and their religion ("Huijiao", i.e., Islam) (Atwill 2005; Lipman 2006),

which were not necessarily compatible or mutually reinforcing,[8] given that religious

identification often trumped ethnic identity in the pre-modern era (Toynbee 1947:14-20;

Armstrong 1982:54). Second, unlike the Manchu, who did have a common "ethnic" origin,[9] the

Hui had no such genealogical origin: their paternal ancestors entered into China from different

societies since the 7th century, so they barely even shared "ethnic" bonding on their paternal side.

Third, Hui ethnicity was not only made in its interactions with Han ethnicity, but also with other

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[8] In contrast, Buddhism or Daoism were taken as purely religious categories in late imperial China.
[9] It should be noted that the Manchu Banner system did include Han Chinese and Mongolians, some of whom were eventually classified as Manzu (nationality) in the PRC in the 1950s. Yet, it is also clear that there existed clear distinctions among the three ethnic groups within the Banners in the Qing dynasty (Elliott 2001).

non-Chinese speaking Muslim groups which were also marked by the "Hui" moniker, such as Turkic Muslims (called "*Chan Hui*", the predecessor of the modern "Uyghur" people) and Tibetan Muslims (called "*Salar Hui*").[10] Fourth, the temporality of Hui ethnic formation in modern period is more controversial than it is for other major ethnic groups: the Hui people were classified as Han Chinese with Islamic beliefs by the Republic government in the 1930s-1940s, but were identified as minority nationalities by the Communist regime in the 1950s.[11] Accordingly, there are two opposite, but teleological ways to historicize Hui ethnicity: a primordial ethnic group or a purely modern creation.[12]

Given these challenges, how do we situate the Hui ethno-religious identities on the eve of the mid-century rebellions? The key is to understand the Hui as dual, malleable, and flexible categories until it was fixed as a static category of nationality in the 20th century. Since the Ming Dynasty, "Hui" was such a fluid category that it could include those Muslims who were initially non-Chinese speaking but who later dropped their homeland identities while accepting the new "Hui" identity. Further, the dual ethnic and religious nature of the Hui was open to different self- and other-identifications. Taken together, this means that there was no monolithic, consistent Hui identity across regions and time periods in China.[13]

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[10] In contrast, the PRC divided Muslims into 10 minority nationalities: *Hui* was only used to indicate Chinese-speaking Muslims as a Hui nationality (*Huizu*), while other Muslim groups are indicated without any longer using the Hui marker, such as the Uyghur nationality.

[11] In contrast, both Han and Manchu ethnicity became salient in the end of the dynasty and their status as ethnic groups was identified by both the Republic and Communist governments (Rhoads 2000; Elliott 2001; Zhao 2006).

[12] On the one hand, primordialists (mostly PRC scholars) consider Hui ethnic formation as an inevitable linear, continuous process from a "pre-modern" ethnic group to a "modern" nation, and look backward to identify certain of its "ethnic origins"; on the other hand, modernists divide the "pre-modern" and "modern" into two entirely disconnected periods, and thus conceive Hui ethnicity as a purely modern (political) creation and claim that the only thing Hui people had in common before the 20th century was an Islamic belief (Gladney 1991: 96-97; Lipman 1997; Mullaney 2010).

[13] In other words, Hui as an ethnic group in the Ming and Qing Empire was not necessarily the same as the *Huizu* (*Hui* Nationality) that was later categorized by the Communist Party in the 1950s. Furthermore, there was not necessarily either continuity or discontinuity of the Hui identity across the imperial, republic, and communist regimes: looking forward, there were

To elaborate this viewpoint, I first offer a short introduction of the theoretical approach used

in the subsequent empirical analysis. In general terms, I consider ethno-religious identities and

institutions as changing properties of temporally punctuated and geographically uneven

processes rather than fixed categories or entities in a monolithic style (Armstrong 1982; Duara

1995; Brubaker 1996; also see: Leach 1954; Geertz 1971; Mann 1986). This interpretation

differs from both modernist (e.g., Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991) and primordialist approaches

(e.g., Shils 1957; Geertz 1971; Smith 1986, 1991). There is a mirror among scholarship on

ethnicity in China between the modernist (For Hui ethnicity, see: Gladney 1991; Lipman 1997;

Mullany 2008; For Manchu ethnicity, see: Crossley 1990a, 1990b, 1999; Rhoads 2000; Rawski

2000; For Han ethnicity and the Chinese nationalism, see: Zhao 2004)[14] and primordialist

approaches (Elliott 1990, 2001; Atwill 2005; Yao 2008).[15] Instead, my perspective—"recurrent

perennialism" as in contrast to "continuous perennialism" (Smith 2001: 50-51)—considers that

ethnic making and unmaking is perennial and ubiquitous, though it is often discontinuous and

ruptured. Furthermore, *perennialism* is not equal to *primordialism* since we "do not have to

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multiple and often contested possibilities for the *Hui* identity after the fall of the Qing Empire. My interpretation on this point differs from the modernist view. For example, anthropologist Gladney says that "like many other groups, the Hui emerged only in the transition from empire to nation-state" (Gladney 1991:95). Historian Lipman also disagrees with applying the concept of "ethnicity" (or *minzu*) to the history of Chinese Muslims before the 20th century, because "minzu" was "created only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, [and] applied consistently as a political tool by effective central government only after 1949" (Lipman 1997:215).

[14] For example, Crossley (1990a:1) argues that "it is not self-evident that 'ethnicity' is an appropriate exceptionally fruitful concept for the analysis of Chinese late imperial social history." Ethnicity is understood as a fundamental modern phenomenon, "the product of imperial disintegration, and thus of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Crossley 1990a: 27). Likewise, Rawski claims that "ethnicity is a concept that developed fully only with the emergence of the modern nation-state, first in Europe and then elsewhere" (Rawski 1996:5).

[15] For example, "ethnicity historically as a way of constructing identity (i.e., 'selfness') whenever and wherever human groups come into contact and discover meaning in the differences between each other, which they may then turn to various purposes" (Elliott 1990:19). I do not include many scholars in mainland China, most of whom hold a primordial and even essentialist viewpoint towards ethnicity, sometimes in Stalinist terms.

regard nations as natural, organic or primordial" (Smith 2001:50); rather, they were culturally

and politically constructed in the past as they are in the present.[16]

This perspective has three implications when we examine ethnicity in imperial and modern

China. First, ethnic categorization and identification is repeatedly, non-linear, punctuated

phenomena in different periods of the Chinese empire (Duara 1995:51-56; 2009). That means a

rejection of the dichotomy between the pre-modern and modern eras in terms of ethnic

consciousness; instead, ethnicization and de-ethnicization are both possible in any period.[17]

Second, ethnic identification was also a geographically uneven process in imperial China, since

the state had not yet advanced a strong agenda to construct nationalizing identities and minority

groups had not yet pursued any modular self-identification movement (Brubaker 1996). This is

also the case for religious institutions: In societies such as Indonesia or China, the regional

variation among Muslim communities was immense (Geertz 1971; Laitin 1986).[18] Third,

temporal and spatial unevenness partially came from uneven contact between different groups

across time and space. In pre-modern empires without a universal ethnic identification project

(Deutsch 1953; Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991), the degree of ethnic consciousness was to a

greater degree determined by the specific forms of interaction and competition among different

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[16] In this regard, even "modern nationalism" is conceived "as part of a cycle of ethnic consciousness" because "widespread intense ethnic identification, although expressed in other forms, is recurrent" (Armstrong 1982:4). Furthermore, historical ethnic identification and modern nationalism are not necessarily path dependent, but could be punctuated, even if the same "moniker" is used. As will be shown soon, this statement is crucial for us to understand the making, unmaking, and remaking of "Hui" as an ethnic category in the imperial, republic, and communist eras of China.

[17] Some salient cases of de-ethnicization in imperial China include: the decline of ethnicity in Taiwan in the late 19th century (Elliott 1990); the decline of Manchu ethnicity in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Elliott 2001); the de-ethnicization of the Hui people in Southeast China (Dillon 2004; Benite 2005).

[18] For instance, "Indonesian Islam has been, at least until recently, remarkably malleable, tentative, syncretistic, and more significantly of all, multivoiced… In Indonesia Islam has taken many forms, not all of them Koranic, and whatever it brought to the sprawling archipelago, it was not uniformity" (Geertz 1971:12).

groups and regional state actors who might execute distinct ethnic policies (Barth 1969;

Horowitz 1985; Brubaker 1996, 2004; Wimmer 2008).

This theoretical approach is applied in overviewing the identities of Han, Manchu, and Hui

in following subsections. I will first briefly describe Han and Manchu ethnicity since they were

vital components of the story. Next I will decompose and articulate the religious and ethnic

elements of the Hui identity. I will present a history of Hui ethnicity in imperial China, with

special attention to its differentiation with both Han and other Muslim ethnic groups. It is then

followed by an introduction to the religious identity and institutions of the Hui and their

relationship with Confucianism. Finally I provide an overview of the regional variations of Hui

ethno-religious identities in the three regions examined.

Manchu and Han Ethnicity

Descended from the Jurchen people, the ruling Manchu maintained an ethnic identity

through a number of institutional arrangements, especially the Banner system. Nevertheless,

Manchu ethnicity had been in decline since the middle 18th century: Most Manchu no longer

spoke the Manchu language and kept few Manchu customs. It was only partially reinvigorated

by the ethnic discourse of the Taiping rebels who slaughtered Manchu garrisons in the Lower

Yangzi Delta (Crossley 1990a, 1990b, 1999),[19] and was remade during the watershed decades of

the dynastic crisis and the Chinese nationalist revolution in the 1890s and 1900s (Rhoads 2000;

Elliott 2001).[20] However, Manchu elites were clearly aware that they were the ruling alien group.

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[19] "*Manzu*" (the modern Chinese moniker of Manchu) was first used by Taipings in their categorization of "ethnic" groups in the Lower Yangzi Delta (Crossley 1990b: 27). But "non-use" of the modern word "Zu" (nationality) does not necessarily mean that Manchu was not a self-identified or other-identified ethnic group.
[20] My understanding of Manchu ethnicity differs from the revisionist (i.e., modernist) but now mainstream viewpoint (Crossley

This has two implications for the Muslim mobilization: on the one hand, when handling Han-Hui conflicts, Manchu elites often had a more detached and neutral position when compared with Han officials;[21] on the other hand, as the ruling but minority group, the Manchu rather than the majority Han could become the target of the ethnic uprisings of other minority groups.

Han Chinese constituted the majority of imperial subjects under the Qing, but the Han ethnicity was not a unifying and coherent category as well. Before the Han nationality became a universalizing identity in the 20th century,[22] Han ethnicity had been recurrently made, unmade, and remade in imperial China (Shin 2006; Elliot 2012[23]). Despite its salience during the Ming-Qing dynastic transition, Han ethnic identity became latent after Manchu rulers incorporated Han elites into the ruling group beginning in the late 17th century.[24] In addition to the empire-wide temporal trend, Han ethnicity was like a mosaic—fragmented, and even contradictory across regions—since it was constructed in contrast not only to the Manchu but also other minority groups (Mullaney *et al.* 2012; Giersch 2012; Joniak-Lüthi 2013). It could be suppressed, absorbed, or activated in certain non-core areas of the Empire. In particular, it might become salient in some frontier areas where "Han" immigrants came into frequent contact/competition with native people such as the Hui (Giersch 2012); in contrast, the "Han"

1990a, 1990b, 1999; Rhoads 2000; Rawski 2000). Revisionists basically argue that: 1) Manchu ethnicity was a purely modern creation; 2) Manchu as a "minority nationality" was established in the ethnic identification project under the PRC in the 1950s; 3) in the Qing dynasty, Manchu was instead understood as either a racial group (Crossley 1990b) or occupational caste, i.e., a hereditary military status group (Rhoads 2000).

[21] To give an example related to the Hui rebellions, a Manchu official (Mutushan) explained in a memorial (1869) why he had insisted on a cooptation policy towards the Hui people: "I humbly think that I am a Manchu servant of your majesty, so what benefits I have given to the Hui? Why should I have hatred against the Han people? In addition, all of my subordinates and staff were Han people, so how would I bias against [the Han]." (ZZTQJ, vol.4: 166).

[22] Understandably, a modernist view also considers that Han ethnicity can only be dated back to the late-19th century domestic and international conflicts with other groups and foreign powers (e.g., Zhao 2004).

[23] "For while Han as an ethnic term can be dated at least as far back as the sixth century i.e., its meaning and usage varied greatly over the succeeding millennium, stabilizing only in the fifteenth century or so, after the founding of the Ming dynasty" (Elliott 2012:174-175).

[24] At least before the Taiping, "ethnic conflicts were not a primary cause of political or social unrest" (Crossley 1999: 342).

identity might be *silent* while the intra-Han sub-ethnic identity became *salient*, as was the case

with the emergence of the Hakka ethnicity in its competition with other native Han in South

China (Leong 1997).

Taken together, we should keep in mind that both the ruling Manchu and the majority Han

could become the target of ethnic uprisings by other minority groups, including the Hui.

Furthermore, the target could be displaced each by the other during the mobilization process.

Hui as an Ethnic Category

Hui people are Muslim Diasporas in China without a common homeland. "The people now

known as the Hui are descended from Persian, Arab, Mongolian, and Turkish Muslim merchants,

soldiers, and officials who settled in China from the seventh to fourteenth centuries and

intermarried with local non-Muslim women" (Gladney 1991).[25] Especially during the

Mongolian Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), about 2 to 3 million foreign Muslims settled in China

across multiple regions and gradually formed a community under their common belief. This

religious community was further strengthened by their official category, "*semu people,*"[26] a

privileged status group only lower than the ruling Mongolians. However, since they migrated

from different societies, spoke different languages, and kept memory of their distinct homelands,

they had not yet constituted *an* ethnic group in the Yuan dynasty (Yao 2008:122).

The Hui as an ethnic group first appeared in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). "In the history of

Muslim communities in China, the Ming dynasty was a crucial turning point. During the Ming

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[25] It was also not uncommon for non-Muslim Chinese to convert to Islam or be adopted by Muslims. These also became "Hui" during the imperial era (Dillon 2004).
[26] The category "*semu ren*" contained subjects of various categories (Lipman 2006; Yao 2008).

dynasty Muslims gradually became an ethnic minority permanently settled in China rather than an immigrant community looking towards Central Asia as their homeland" (Wang 1996:126; Dillon 1999:27). The founding emperor of the Ming encouraged *semu* people in China to intermarry with the Han. Most Muslims changed their names from Turkish, Arabic, or Persian forms to Chinese, began to use Chinese as their language, and took the civil examination to become Mandarins (Yao 2008: 86). From the middle Ming, their connection with the broader Muslim world was interrupted when the "once-vital sea links" were closed in 1470 (Lipman 1997:213-214). Since then their old ethnic identities further eroded and a new, localized ethnicity began to crystallize.[27] It was about the late Ming that "Huihui" was used as an ethnic moniker for self-identification by some Muslims (Wang 1996; Yao 2008:70). After all, they had "changed from being 'Muslims in China' to 'Chinese Muslims'" (Leslie 1986:105).

During the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), Manchu conquerors not only continued to classify Hui as an ethnic group, but also encountered new categorization challenges after multiple non-Chinese speaking Muslim groups were incorporated in the newly conquered Northwest frontiers in the 18th century.[28] "Hui" as an ethnic category was documented in both official records and folk records, clearly meaning more than a religious category: there was a distinction between *Huijiao* (Islam religion) and *Huiren* (Hui people), and *Huimin* (Hui subjects) and *mumin*

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[27] For one thing, since "religious belief remained the heart of diaspora identity," (Armstrong 1982: 212), their common Islamic belief played a critical role in making the new ethnic group. For another, the mainstream "Chinese" culture also played a vital role in making Hui ethnicity by creating many shared features of these nevertheless unlike Muslim diasporas and, above all, offering a common language to replace their disparate homeland languages.

[28] The Qing completed the annexation of Xinjiang in 1759. "As a result of this annexation the Ch'ing [Qing] had suddenly acquired a lot of Muslims to deal with and began to notice them" (Fletcher 1995:22). The most well-known Turkic speaking Muslim group was what would later be called "Uyghur." A term disappearing in the fifth century after they had converted from Buddhism to Islam, the concept of Uyghur as an ethnic group was reinvented by modern elites who were affected by nationalist discourses abroad in the 1920s-1930s (Gladney 1991; Rudelson 1997; Millward 1998, 2007; Bovingdon 2013:12).

(Muslims) in governmental records (Atwill 2005:38-40).[29] "*Huizu*" first appeared in official documents during the Qianlong reign in the late 18th century and was also used by Hui intellectuals themselves since then (Yao 2008:70-71). After all, Han and Hui peoples were perceived as different in terms of appearance, lineage, and customs by both officials and common folk (e.g., ZZTQJ, vol.4: 404).

In addition, non-Chinese speaking Muslim groups had enormous influence on the self- and official identification of Chinese Muslims in areas where they cohabitated. A new moniker "*Hanhui*" was created to differentiate the two groups of Muslims under the same "Hui" category, especially between Chinese speaking Muslims (*Hanhui*) and Turkic speaking Muslims (*Chanhui*) in northwestern frontiers.[30] All of these parties (Manchu and Han elites, *Hanhui*, and *Chanhui*) were aware of the differences, albeit in distinct terms.[31] They all understood Chinese Muslims and Turkic Muslims as two different people who nevertheless held the same Islamic faith.[32]

In practice, certain kinds of legal discrimination against Hui did exist in the Qing dynasty, especially beginning in the late 18th century. In some regions where the Han population dominated, both common folks and Han officials might perceive Hui people as naturally "fierce

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[29] In contrast, there were only terms such as Fojiaotu (Buddhists), Daojiaotu (Daoists), but no terms such as Foren or Fomin. Clearly, Buddhism or Daoism was conceived as a purely religious category, while Hui was more than that.

[30] In other words, "Hanhui" does not indicate they were "Han" Chinese with "Hui" (Islam) belief, as interpreted by Millward (1998:173)—"the Qing classification of Tungans as a subcategory of Han (*Hanhui*)"—but was used as a way to differentiate from other non-Chinese speaking Muslims.

[31] For Han and Manchu, Chinese speaking Muslims were known as *Hanhui*—Chinese or Sino-Muslims—a Chinese term that distinguished them from Turkestanis, whom the Qing referred to officially as *Huizi*, or *Chanhui* (i.e., Turkic Muslims) (Millward and Newby 2006:123). The Chinese Muslims called themselves as *Huihui*, while calling Turkic speaking Muslims *Xihui* (Hui in the far west), or *Chantou Huihui*. Among those Turkic speakers, they understood themselves as Turks (Yao 2008:102), while "the Sino-Muslims were called Turgan, a term that became Dungan in Russian after Sino-Muslims fled to czarist Kazakhstan and Turkestan in the later nineteenth century" (Millward and Newby 2006: 123).

[32] For another example, a Muslim group that was later identified as the Salar-Hui ethnic group in the Qing and Salar nationality in the PRC was initially perceived as a subgroup of Tibetans until its first uprising in 1781. The Qianlong Emperor commanded a thorough investigation and eventually created this hybrid category "Salar-Hui" to characterize their dual features (Ma Haiyun 2008). This incident clearly demonstrates that ethnic identification existed not only in the modern state, but also in the imperial state, albeit in a more opaque way given enormous technical limitations. Moreover, the ethnic identification was always dynamic—the imperial state continually changed its identification contingent upon new available information.

and brutal." However, the Manchu rulers commanded overall same treatment of Han and Hui by reiterating the adage of "Han Hui yishi tongren," even on the eve of and during the Muslim uprising. When arbitrating disputes between Han and Hui, the court always ordered local officials to "investigate who were good and who were evil, not who were Han and who were Hui" (Lipman 2006). Except in the Southwest after the 1820s, ethnic discrimination or grievance spurred little Muslim mobilization.

Hui as a Religious Category

In contrast to the cultural confrontation thesis, Islam was legitimately practiced among Hui communities and was reconcilable with Confucianism in the Chinese Empires. Most Chinese Muslims practiced the Sunni teaching under two different institutions until the late 19th century. The first system was the traditional Gedimu—a Chinese version of *Hanafi*—in which spiritual and secular activities were organized around relatively independent local mosques, under the dual leadership of lay elders and religious professionals (*ahong*). Institutional supra-communal religious authority did not exist. In China, the Gedimu was the only system until the seventeenth century and was still the dominant institution in Yunnan and Shaanxi Provinces throughout the Qing dynasty (Lipman 1997:47-49). In the Northwest frontiers (Gansu Province), Sufism—the Islamic inner mysticism often within the Sunni tradition—arrived during the late 17th century and generated a distinctive institution: *Menhuan* (hereditary Sufi suborders). The recombination of Sufi sectarianism, Islamic charisma, and patrimonial leadership structure produced a lineage-based succession of Menhuan institutions (Lipman 1997; Dillon 1999; Ma Tong 2000).

Unlike Gedimu system, Sufi suborders expanded their influence and recruited adherents across

districts and hence owned stronger and broader organizational bases.

Qing rulers and officials considered Islam a legitimate religion, just as Buddhism and

Daoism were, except they expressed occasional anxiety with some "new teachings" of Sufism as

heterodox religious sects (ZZTQJ, vol 5:50). Overall, "the Qing emperors and law courts never

found Islam itself, as a religious system, to be illegal or dangerous to the state" (Lipman

2006:93). Furthermore, it is problematic to claim that Islam and Confucianism were

irreconcilable by teleologically referring to mid-19th century conflicts (Israeli 1980; Wang 1996).

Quite the contrary, since the Ming Dynasty, a number of Hui scholars initiated movements to

reconcile Islam and Confucianism throughout the Han *Kitab* and Muslim educational networks

in Southeast and Southwest China (Benite 2005). Therefore, "Islam and Confucianism are not

here presented as alternatives at all. One need not be either Muslim or Confucian…One can be

neither…one can in effect become both Muslim and Confucian" (Benite 2004:199). To give

another example, Qing rulers and officials even understood the newly arriving Catholicism

through the lens of the Islam,[33] while the already "localized" Hui elites perceived the

Muslim-Jesuit encounter in China as "east vs. west" rather than sister faiths (Benite 2012:517).[34]

Overall, to say Islam and the Chinese culture were "intrinsically" contradictory simplifies the

resilience of the two as a pre-modern version of the "clash of civilizations" (Huntington 1996).[35]

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[33] In 1785, Qianlong emperor said in a decree: "I recently heard that Europeans and Muslims initially belonged to the same religion." (*QSL-Muslim*, vol.1: 863)

[34] "Chinese Muslims clearly saw Christianity not as a sister faith but as a Western one…the Chinese Muslim scholars should be considered not as rivals of the Jesuits but primarily as Chinese scholars engaging Jesuit knowledge and using it selectively for their own purposes" (Benite 2012:517).

[35] The cultural clash lies in an assumption that "Islamic and Sinic civilizations differ fundamentally in terms of religion, culture, social structure, traditions, politics, and basic assumptions at the root of their way of life" (Huntington 1996:185).

In effect, before 1850, the more serious problem was not the confrontation of the Chinese culture with Islam, but between different Muslim communities who practiced Islam differently in overlapping areas, especially in Gansu province and Xinjiang. There were three kinds of religious disputes within the Muslim communities: between Gedimu and Menhuan systems, among different Menhuans, and intra-*menhuan* competition over authority (Ma Tong 2000; Li and Ma 2011). As will be presented in detail, these disputes were often less about contentions over interpretation than conflict over authority, resources, adherents, and mosques. In disputes that had occasionally erupted since the late 18th century, the Qing court and officials often sided with the "old teaching" and against the "new teaching", a distinction that is only comprehensible in different local contexts. Nevertheless, Qing authorities merely sought to pacify these disputes in order to avoid being involved in any religious controversy.

Regional variations of Hui identities

Having introduced Hui's ethno-religious identity and institution empire-wide, I now turn to its regional variations. A common misunderstanding of the current literature—despite the rivalry found therein—is taking ethnicity as a monolithic concept: that the *Hui* people must either be a subgroup of the Han or a coherent nationwide ethnic group itself. However, "in the early modern period there was no such thing as *a* Chinese Muslim identity" (Benite 2005:6), but there were *multiple* relatively unified Hui identities in different regions during certain periods. As the empire did not (or was unable to) create a clear-cut, fixed classification system (as the PRC did in 1950), the "Hui" was a continually open, ambiguous, and fluid category. Below I briefly summarize Hui identities and institutions across regions in the pre-rebellion era.

In Yunnan, Hui ethnicity resurged in reaction to challenges from rising Han ethnicity among migrants from the interior provinces in a series of large-scale violent feuds in the first half of the 19th century (Harrall 2012). Most Muslims practiced Islam around local mosques in the Gedimu tradition, while some prominent Muslim literati maintained a double identity as a way to keep a unique Islamic culture while adapting to mainstream Confucianism in the 19th century. In Shaanxi, Hui ethnicity was latent, and few ethnic clashes arose before this era. As was the case in Yunnnan, the Shaanxi Hui practiced traditional Gedimu teaching in disparate, community-based mosques. In Gansu, ethnicities of Hui and other non-Chinese speaking Muslims were largely absorbed by competing institutional Sufi suborders (*Menhuan*) which recruited disciples across districts regardless of their ethnicities. The inter-*Menhuan* disputes were endemic and occasionally led to armed feuds.

Keeping these complexities in mind, Table 5.2 offers geographical and demographic information of the three provinces to provide clarity.

Table 5.2. Overview of the demographic information of the three provinces

	Yunnan	Shaanxi	Gansu
Area (million sq.km)	0.4	0.2	3
Population (million)	12.7	13.7	19.5
Hui population (M)	0.4-0.6	2	6
Hui percentage	3%-5%	15%	30%

Sources: Cao 2001; Lu 2010; Ma Cheng 2012:63; Yunnan: 1851; Shaanxi: 1861; Gansu: 1861.

What were the implications for the purpose of studying mid-19th century Hui mobilization by surveying the ethno-religious identities and institutions? First, there was no ground to argue that an intrinsically cultural confrontation existed between Islam and the Chinese culture. The

idea of religious war or "Jihad" was absent in most Hui mobilization or uprisings. Second, there

was no such monolithic ethnic conflict between Hui and Han or between Hui and Manchu, as it

could be latent or silent by religious institutions. Third, even if Hui people were involved in

certain collective conflicts, the nature of these conflicts was not necessarily "ethnic".[36] Fourth,

the intra-Muslim disputes did constitute an endemic problem in Gansu, but there was no basis to

contend that divisions among Sufi orders would inevitably result in extensive bloody conflicts

since this kind of sanguinary warfare was rare in other parts of the Islamic world (Fletcher 1995;

Lipman 1997:217). Fifth, the Hui could be either rebellious or repressive. In effect, in the Qing

Empire Hui militias assisted the state in pacifying a variety of rebellions—including the White

Lotus Rebellion (1796-1804)[37]—but also were encouraged by the court to fight against the

invading Taiping rebels in Shaanxi during this period.[38] Sixth, Hui Muslims living in

non-rebellious areas were completely unaffected by the rebellion.

Most crucially, while in each province these distinct modes of ethno-religious identities and

institutions might partially anticipate the onset of Muslim mobilization (or non-mobilization) in

combination with some emergent factors, they had little ability to explain the subsequent

unfolding. In Yunnan intensified ethnic tension did generate massive ethnic conflicts in 1856,

but this ethnic mobilization was soon de-ethnicized and the ethnic alliance was divided. In

Shaanxi, low-level ethnic identities allowed Han and Hui to initially cooperate in defending

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[36] For example, one Nien leader—Su Tianfu—was a Hui, but his deadly conflict with other militia blocs in the North Huai Valley was not been interpreted as Han-Hui conflict; most of Su Tianfu's allies were Han, as were his enemies.
[37] For example, Ma Guangzong, a leader of a major Sufi suborder led 3000 disciples to participate in the counter-rebellion war against the White Lotus Rebellion in Shaanxi in 1797 (Ma Tong 2000:166-167).
[38] During this period, Hui officials such as Ma Xinyi and Zheng Kuishi became high-rank officials and were important counter-insurgent leaders.

themselves against the invading Taipings in the early 1860s, but the counter-insurgent militias later led to violent, ethnicized conflicts that further resulted in Hui ethnic rebellions. In Gansu, sporadic Hui mobilization was originally provoked by religious disputes as well as co-religionist consciousness, but soon a few Sufi solidarities were politicized and became legitimate administratorsin a balkanized style without engaging in religious wars or religious conflicts. To unpack these puzzling "turns" in each region is the next task.

Yunnan: De-ethnicization and Division of Coordinating Hui Forces

The central puzzle for the Muslim rebellion in Yunnan is: despite the intensified ethnic tension inspired by the Muslim mobilization in 1856, why did Muslim rebels quickly deflect their goal from ethnic retaliation to non-ethnic directions? Furthermore, given their original close coordination in reaction to their common ethnic enemy—Han Chinese, why did they divide into anti- and pro-dynastic forces? I argue that in the midst of the conflicts, the emerging power balance among several autonomous Hui forces and the provincial authority caused the waxing and waning of the Muslim mobilization in Yunnan.

Intensified Ethnic Tensions Before 1850s

A large number of Muslims from Central Asia entered Yunnan with Mongolians as officials and soldiers in the 12th and 13th century. Most Muslims in Yunnan practiced Sunni teaching in village or communal mosques in the *Gedimu* tradition. Since the Ming Dynasty, Muslim intellectuals also began to include elements of Confucianism with Islamic practice. One such figure in the 19th century was Ma Dexin, who played a key role in reconciling Confucianism with Islamism and who was later influential in the Hui mobilization.

Yunnan's Muslim mobilization began with the appearance of internal ethnic tensions that occurred during the previous three decades. Among all provinces with Muslim populations, Yunnan was the only one that witnessed heightened Han-Hui ethnic conflicts and increasingly salient ethnic identification in the pre-rebellion period. This competitive ethnicization, nevertheless, started with the Han Chinese who, since the 18th century, migrated to Yunnan to engage in various businesses, especially in the bronze and silver mines that produced about 90% of the empire's total products. Between 1796 and 1850, Yunnan province absorbed about 2.3 million migrants, 20% of whom were mine workers. Until 1850, immigrants comprised more than 20% of Yunnan's entire population (Lee 1982: 742). The Han identity had become more salient from among a variety of regional immigrant identities until the 19th century due to a number of factors, including increasing economic competition, the state's differentiated legal treatment of natives and immigrants, and violent conflicts about the mines (Giersch 2012). In particular, Han and Hui engaged in several large-scale conflicts in the 19th century, which united the Han from multiple regional identities and reactivated the Hui ethnicity.

Table 5.3 lists the landmark Han-Hui conflicts that led up to the outbreak of mid-century uprisings. The increasing size and violence level of these conflicts was remarkable. The two most important to-be Muslim rebels—Du Wenxiu and Ma Rulong—had their family members killed respectively in the 1845 and 1855 conflicts.

Table 5.3. Han-Hui conflicts in Yunnan, 1800-1856

Name	Year	Description	Deaths
Xiyi Mine Conflict	1800	Mine conflict between Hui and 200 Han from one native-place background (Hunan province)	18 Hui people were killed
Baiyang Mine Conflict	1821	Mine conflict between Hui and hundreds of Han from three native-place backgrounds (Lin'an Prefecture, and Hunan and Hubei Provinces)	Nearly 100 were killed, mainly Hui
Mianning Incident	1839	A mass killing by Han Chinese from multiple birth-place backgrounds led by Qing military chiefs	Nearly 2,000 Hui people were killed
Yongchang Incident	1845	Han-Hui feuds	About 4000-8000 Hui people were killed; about 1000 Han were killed or executed by the state
Talang Incident	1850	Han-Hui feuds	About 100 Hui were killed
Shiyang Incident	1854	Disputes over the silver mine	hundreds of Hui were killed; about 300-400 Han were killed
Nan'an Incident	1855	Disputes over the silver mine	More than 1,000 Hui were killed
Kunming massacre	1856	Han militias killed Hui as traitors in the provincial capital	3,000-10,000 Hui were killed

Sources: HMHU; SYHR.

Historical archives show that the Han identity became increasingly salient among migrants who had come from different regions and hence held distinct regional identities rather than one unifying Han identity. For example, the Xinyi Mine Conflict in 1800 "did not pit 'Han' against Muslims because the conflicts were between Muslims and people from particular native-place backgrounds, in this case, Hunanese" (Giersch 2012:205) In the Baiyang Mine Conflict of 1821, however, "men from various native-place backgrounds were identified with the collective moniker

Han, and increasingly, the Baiyang conflicts were labeled as 'Han-Hui' violence, a term that was later applied repeatedly to other conflicts leading up to devastating Hui uprising (1855-73)" (Giersch 2012:206). Juridical archive records describe how Han migrants from different regions (Lin'an Prefecture in Yunnan, Hunan Province, and Hubei Provinces) began to make alliances in order to fight their common enemy, the Hui mine owners and workers (SYHR: pp.1-61). Since then, these conflicts were interpreted as Han-Hui conflicts in both official accounts and popular records. Han and Hui built and enlarged their frameworks for mobilization: dispersive Mosque networks across communities for the Hui, and coalitions of militias and secret societies for the Han. In sum, violence was increasingly articulated as Han against Hui and began to spread over the entire province (Giersch 2012; Ma Jianxiong 2014).

Kunming Massacre and Ethnic Clashes, 1856-1857

The Kunming massacre in 1856 was the turning point in provoking province-wide Muslim mobilization. On May 19-21, endorsed by both Manchu and Han officials, a few precipitants led Han militias to kill about 3,000-10,000 Hui in Kunming, the provincial capital, in the name of preventing further Hui uprisings. This incident was the culmination of mounting ethnic clashes and increased state involvement in anti-Hui violence over the previous three decades, especially since the 1840s. Unlike previous incidents, this one sparked prolonged conflict.

Extensive Hui mobilization immediately followed the Kunming massacre in various areas. In Dali in western Yunnan, Hui from several districts united together in their battles against Han militias and took over the city. In Southern Yunnan, Hui forces arose in four districts: Haikou, Chengjiang, Xinxing, and Lin'an. Unlike the cross-district coalition around Dali, "the Hui

communities in southern Yunnan were far more dispersed. This gave rise to multiple centers of

insurgency, each with an independent leader but all competing for a common vision" (Atwill

2005:105). Since Han's communal militarization was not yet well developed due to the absence

of external rebellions, Han militias were often trumped by better-established Hui forces

organized through mosque-based networks.

Given that ethnic clashes were endemic in Yunnan, why did the Kunming Massacre spark

province-wide and sustained mobilization and conflicts? Above all, since Kunming was the

provincial capital and the political, economic, and cultural center, its impact was much stronger

in terms of political significance, information diffusion, and signal effects. In addition, the

influence of the recursive redeployment of the military in reaction to emerging rebellions,

although the Taiping and other external rebellions had not approached Yunnan is remarkable.

Between 1850-1856, about 5,000 of 30,000 Green soldiers were transferred to fight the Taiping

who were outside of Yunnan (*Fanglue-Yunnan*, vol.2: 2). Furthermore, uprisings in neighboring

Guizhou province continuing since 1854 distracted Yunnan's resources and attention since the

two provinces were under the same political macro-region (Jenks 1994). In particular, just before

the Kunming Massacre the Governor-General of Yunnan and Guizhou, Henchuan, led another

force to Guizhou to quell the rising insurgencies and was thus away from Kunming, weakening

the leadership and capacity to respond to Yunnan's emerging crisis. Finally, after the Kunming

massacre, the internal military transfer gave further opportunities for extensive Hui mobilization

within Yunnan: for example, *Wenxiang*, Yunnan's Commander-in-Chief (*Tidu*), who was

initially stationed in the city of Dali, moved outside of Dali and thus opened opportunities for conflicts and mobilization in Dali.

Gradually two centers of Hui forces emerged on the western and southeastern sides of Yunnan. In the west, Hui built a rebel regime in the city of Dali after an unprecedented alliance across several adjacent districts. Du Wenxiu, whose family members had been killed in the 1846 incident, was invested with the title of "Generalissimo" in October 1856, and later became the synonym for Hui uprisings in Yunnan. However, at this time, the Hui mobilization at Dali was just one of many in Yunnan.

In the Southeast, the aforementioned prestigious religious leader Ma Dexin and a military leader Ma Rulong (whose older brother was killed in the 1855 mine conflict) led another major force. In June 1857, Ma Rulong and Ma Dexin united a few Hui rebel forces to besiege Kunming. This siege lasted one year but failed to overtake Kunming. Several thousand Kunming residents died from famine and plague. The Manchu General-Governor Hengchun commited suicide. It was only after the new Governor-General made a temporary truce with Ma Dexin and Ma Rulong in 1857 that eastern and southern Yunnan was temporarily pacified.

Given the ethnic tensions accumulated in the past three decades, we would expect these rising Hui forces to push forward the ethnic clashes and rebellions. Furthermore, it would have been logical to unify these forces, undergirded by their common relationship with master Ma Dexin.[39] However, ethnic conflict ceased to play a significant role in subsequent events.

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[39] Having travelled to Mecca in the 1840s, Ma Dexin (1793-1874) was the most prestigious Islamic scholar and religious leader in Yunnan, as well as the teacher of many rebellious leaders including Du Wenxiu and Ma Rulong. Interestingly, during this rebellious era (1858-1874), Ma Dexin translated the first Chinese version of the Koran.

Furthermore, the two major Hui forces divided according to their political orientations: Du Wenxiu's regime deflected to an anti-dynastic rebellion, while Ma Rulong's bloc defected to the imperial authority. Given the long-existing ethnic tensions and the family tragedies of both Du Wenxiu and Ma Rulong, why did their *de-ethnicization* and *divide* occur?

In what follows, I argue that since 1857 ethnic revenge and feuds ceased to be the foci of all major organizational forces. The emphasis was then on how best to divide the political, military, and fiscal power amid the disorder among these major state and non-state actors, including provincial authorities, the religious leader Ma Dexin, Ma Rulong's bloc, Du Wenxiu's force, as well as a number of relatively independent Hui and Han military leaders. It was their ongoing relationships, rather than categorical ethnic cleavage, that shaped the subsequent trajectory of Hui mobilization in Yunnan. Only through this dynamic lens can we understand both the de-ethnicization of their mobilization and the divisions of the Hui coalition. To start with, we must first understand why the major Hui rebel force—the Dali Regime—de-ethnicized its institutions and deflected its goal from ethnic conflict to anti-dynastic rebellion.

The De-ethnicization and Deflection of the Dali Regime

Like other Hui uprisings, the Dali Regime was originally triggered by the ethnic conflict, but it soon deflected its direction from ethnic killing to anti-dynastic revolution. To this end, it became an ethnically inclusive regime: unlike other major Hui forces in Shaanxi or Gansu provinces, 90% of the Dali Regime's officials were non-Muslims, 80-90% of soldiers were also non-Muslims. The dual nature of this regime—Islam-ness and Chinese-ness—was shown in Dali's official seal, half in Arabic and half in Chinese characters. The Dali Regime also showed

respect to both Buddhism and Confucianism. The policies on multi-ethnicity and plural religions constituted the very potent foundation of this regime, and were put into its written codes and rules in 1860 and 1861.

The de-ethnicized turn of the Dali Regime has often been presented as the result of Du Wenxiu's tactical strategy. Du reframed the "Han/Hui" conflict to be a common anti-Manchu enterprise of both Han and Hui, by contending that the Manchu had occupied China for over two hundred years; thus it was the time for Han and Hui to unite to overthrow the rule of the Manchu Qing. This had to be a joint movement: as Du Wenxiu said, "The Han were populous while the Hui were small in number, so we especially need to rely upon Han people." Lu Fan, who was a Taiping veteran and Du Wenxiu's most trusted military counselor, also suggested: "Now China ("the earth under heaven") was in disorder, and it is the time for heroes to shape the course of history" (Wang 1968:167).

While it is true that the Dali Regime strategically absorbed the Han, this "strategy" explanation does not answer why the leadership of the Dali Regime was willing to tame their ethnic hatred towards the Han and recruit Han into their regime. It was even more puzzling why the Han were content to serve in this Muslim regime that initially emerged for ethnic conflicts. To make sense of these puzzles, we need to turn to situational and relational factors.

First, as a frontier province, Yunnan was not receiving imperial attention, leaving aside the Dali Regime, which was at the periphery of the periphery. In the 1850s, most attention and resources were put into the battles against the Taiping and Nien rebels in the heart of the empire—the Yangzi Delta and North China rather than the peripheral southwest. The Dali

Regime only rose to the court's attention in 1857, and Du Wenxiu's full name first appeared in a memorial only in 1861 (Atwill 2005:141). Furthermore, on the provincial level, rather than the Dali Regime, it was Ma Rulong's force that posted a direct and urgent threat to the provincial authority since it was close to the provincial capital. The provincial commander-in-chief, though stationed at Dali, was away from the city for other military tasks, thus further weakening guard of the city. Finally, local officials in Dali—the Circuit Intendant, Prefect, and Magistrate—were divided about how to best handle the Han-Hui conflicts. All of these reactive factors gave Hui opportunities to build a rebel state, a situation that was unlike Shaanxi's Hui mobilization in 1862, which was quickly and ruthlessly counter-attacked by imperial forces at its onset.

Second, a major militia force, led by a Han precipitator Zhang Zhengtai, further split the counter-Hui forces, since Zhang Zhengtai's domineering behaviors were disliked by both officials and his fellow militia leaders. It was Zhang Zhengtai's merciless massacre that sparked the Hui mobilization around Dali in 1856. Meanwhile, Zhang also treated other Han militia leaders badly, thus triggering their resistance. Soon, some of these Han militias allied with the Dali Regime to fight together against Zhang Zhengtai. This alliance certainly blurred the ethnic boundary of the conflicts. Ironically, after Zhang Zhengtai was killed by his fellow militia leaders in 1859, most remnants of the Zhang Zhengtai coalition, including his younger brother, joined in the Dali Regime, despite their former enmity. In other words, this initially "Han" militia force became an important part of the "Hui" rebel regime, thus further blurring the ethnic confrontation as a key political cleavage (Jin 1991; Lin 2006; SSHHY:164-167). Overall, these

non-ethnic cleavages enabled Du Wenxiu to absorb non-Muslim forces into his regime and gradually de-ethnicized this originally Hui force.

Power Balance and Final Divide, 1857-1863

The next question is: Why did the two major Hui forces divide in terms of political orientation, given that they were initially mobilized for ethnic conflict? The division was mainly because Ma Rulong switched position between the two rival regimes to maintain a power balance. In other words, consideration of the power balance, rather than co-ethnic consciousness, shaped Ma Rulong's political choices between 1857 and 1863, resulting in the final divide of the two major Hui forces in Yunnan.

Since the truce of 1857, there were two rival regimes but three power centers in Yunnan—a mini-version of the well-known "Three Kingdoms" in imperial Chinese history. Residing in Kunming, the Qing's provincial authority controlled most of eastern and northeastern Yunnan. Du Wenxiu's Dali rebel regime controlled most parts in the west: 37% of Yunnan province in its full-blown stage. The two regimes were rivals, but they had not yet carved up the entire province. Between the two rivals, Ma Rulong led an autonomous force in southeastern Yunnan and presented a direct threat to the provincial capital. In addition to the three politico-military forces, Ma Dexin, the prestigious religious leader, played a brokerage role in coordinating various relatively independent Hui forces and negotiating between them and the provincial authority.

On the one hand, both Ma Rulong and Ma Dexin sought to survive Du Wenxiu's Dali Regime for their own political interests. In March 1860, when governmental forces initiated

attacks against Du Wenxiu, upon Du Wenxiu's request, Ma Dexin suggested that Ma Rulong aid

Du (SYHR, pp. 206-207). In his letter to Ma Rulong, Ma Dexin analyzed the situation:

> "Hui in eastern and western Yunnan were the same family. It is good to aid each other and deploy in strategic positions (to be able to render instant mutual assistance). If the Hui force in western Yunnan were annihilated by governmental forces, how could the Hui force in southeastern Yunnan survive alone?" (Yunnan Gazetteer, vol.108; Jing 1991: 126-127).

Ma Rulong took Ma Dexin's suggestion, and saved the Dali Regime by giving critical aid.

On the other hand, Ma Hualong had little interest in formally joining with the Dali regime

since he never considered himself subordinate to Du Wenxiu but aimed to maintain an

autonomous force. He made his position clear during this joint action. After Ma Rulong and Du

Wenxiu defeated Qing's attack, they made a deal to divide the territorial control and revenue

within the province, with Chuxiong as the dividing line. Later, when Du Wenxiu tried to

formally incorporate Ma Rulong's bloc by offering a position to him, Ma rejected the offer.

Instead, Ma Rulong gradually built a military force—including Hui, non-Han, and Han—perhaps

as large as Du Wenxiu's rebel force and the imperial army in Yunnan (Atwill 2005:118). After a

see-saw period between battles and truces, Ma Rulong was again coopted by the Qing in 1862,

yet he still kept his independent military force.

Furthermore, Ma Rulong had an interest in keeping Du Wenxiu's force in the eastern

Yunnan out of sight. The reason for this became clearer when Du Wenxiu tried to extend his

influence to Kunming and control the entire province. In 1863, when the new Governor-General

was killed by another Hui military leader, who tried to collude with Du Wenxiu to control the

provincial capital, Ma Rulong rapidly returned to Kunming to help the Qing pacify the mutiny.

In short, it was in Ma Rulong's political interest for the two rival forces to coexist.

Ma Rulong became a whole-hearted repressor only after imperial forces gained

predominating power over the Dali Regime in the late 1860s, after the suppression of the Taiping

and Nien Rebellions in the imperial interior. Even in 1864, after Ma Dexin and Ma Rulong had

formally surrendered to the Qing authority, Ma Dexin still realized that the continued existence

of the Dali Regime gave him more leverage:

> "Provincial authorities granted the Hui in eastern Yunnan enormous power
> and asked us to kill the Hui (in the west). This was a most vicious plot, that
> we should act in the opposite way [to survive the Hui in western Yunnan],
> and then trap these officials into our control sphere rather than be set up by
> them ourselves" (Jing 1991:136-137).

Overall, it was not religious and ethnic identity, but the changing power balance and

relationship structure that propelled the unfolding of events in Yunnan. The divided loyalties

among the Hui make sense to us only when we cease to perceive Hui mobilization as a monolithic

enterprise in a uniform manner. Furthermore, Ma Rulong's behaviors "do not reflect a

predetermined plan thoughtfully pursued over time. Instead, both moves were reactions to events

as they unfolded" (Atwill 2005:131). Interestingly, some gentry referred to the well-known

"Three Kingdoms" story to interpret the relationship between Du Wenxiu and Ma Rulong:

> "The reason why Ma Rulong did not capitulate to Du Wenxiu was not
> because Ma was loyal to the Qing, but because of the 'circumstance.' It was
> just like Sun Quan [the head of Wu Kingdom] should not have surrendered
> to Cao Cao [the head of Wei Kingdom]. If Sun had surrendered, how would
> he have been placed?" (HMHU, vol. 2:475; Wang 1968:163).

This situation persisted until the Qing Empire was able to deploy more forces in Yunnan.

It was then that Ma Rulong completely diverged from Du Wenxiu's rebel regime.

Shaanxi: From Defensive Mobilization to Ethnicized Conflicts

Shaanxi province witnessed extensive Muslim mobilization and ethnicized conflicts within only four months in 1862, a distinctive feature that was otherwise not expected by state authorities or Han/Hui elites in the beginning of the mobilization. Instead, the ethnicization of the conflicts was surprising because the ethnic tension in Shaanxi had been mild (unlike in Yunnan province) and Islamic institutions were merely local (unlike in Gansu province) before the rebellion age. If merely considering the preexisting ethno-religious identities and institutions, one would predict minimal clashes in Shaanxi. Furthermore, even when taking the invading Taipings into account, both Han and Hui communities were initially encouraged by the state to mobilize for self-defense. In other words, the turn from the defensive mobilization to ethnic conflicts and rebellions was an unplanned result. The explanatory key here is to make this ethnicized turn comprehensible.

Pre-existing Hui identities and institutions

Examining ethno-religious identities and institutions would show that the Hui ethnic identity was not salient and religious organization was dispersed in Shaanxi. Unlike Yunnan, there was no massive influx of Han immigrants into Shaanxi following the early years of the Qing Empire. Accordingly, Han and Hui cohabited Shaanxi and both of their ethnic identities were latent. Furthermore, like Han, Hui could take the civil examination and become officials. In addition, both Han and Hui enlisted in the regular military forces at a nearly even rate, as documented by some official records (*Fanglue-Northwest* vol. 13:8, vol.14:2, 6, vol.21:2). In terms of Islamic practice, unlike Gansu, Hui in Shaanxi still followed the Gedimu tradition and

had not yet joined the Sufi orders. Thus, "mosque-based local solidarities [were] connected to one another by the emotional ties of shared Islamic identity but not by any institutional bonds" (Lipman 1997:119).

Before the rebellious era there was no such large-scale clash between Han and Hui in Shaanxi as there was in Yunnan. Even in the largest Han-Hui conflicts, less than ten people were killed while a dozen were arrested respectively in Lintong County (1857) and Jingyang County (1861) (Ma Changshou 1993/2009:275-276, 341). These local, small-scale incidents were quickly controlled without provoking further mobilization or confrontation. In some *post hoc* interpretations, these incidents might still be taken as signals of Han-Hui ethnic tension (Zhou 2011), but if we compare them with incidents in pre-rebellion Yunnan, where sometimes thousands of people were killed in an ethnic feud, then there is no ground to overemphasize Shaanxi's ethnic tensions. Furthermore, while some local officials were slightly biased against the Hui in these disputes, local government was largely impartial.

The low pre-rebellion ethnic tension was also noticed by contemporaries. For example, the court made a sharp observation on the sea change of ethnic conflicts before and after 1862: "In the past, when Han and Hui revenged each other and engaged in feuds, their conflicts remained within a single village or a single town, but they had not dared to make alliances across districts and counties and simultaneously make troubles all together… [This time] Han and Hui both arose simultaneously in Xi'an and Tongzhou prefectures and firing at and killing one after another" (*QSL-Muslim*, vol.3:50). Another Confucian gentry in Shaanxi made similar comments after the appearance of the Han-Hui conflict: "In the past, Hui and Han had no entrenched hatred.

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They might have small grudges against each other because of disputes over livestock. However, bystanders did not take these seriously" (SSHR: 172).

Given the low-level ethnic identities, locally organized religious institutions, and small-scale ethnic conflicts, the Hui uprisings in Shaanxi were by no means inevitable. Quite the contrary, these structural conditions in effect explained why there was no large-scale mobilization but only small, sporadic uprisings in Shaanxi until 1862—more than one decade after the rise of the Taiping and six years after the Muslim mobilization in Yunnan. In other words, if Shaanxi's preexisting ethnic tension had been as intense as that in Yunnan, ethnic conflicts and uprisings would have appeared far earlier in the wake of the Taiping's rise.

Defensive Mobilization Against Invading Rebels

Shaanxi's massive mobilization and militarization started from reactions to the Taiping rebellion, especially after the intrusion of the outside Taiping and Nien rebels into Shaanxi in Spring 1862—the first major turning point in the entire sequence of events. However, uprisings were not direct spin-off uprisings diffused from the outsiders. Quite the contrary, both Han and Hui initially mobilized themselves for defense. In other words, just like the Nien in North China, the mobilization in Shaanxi initially served a counter-insurgent purpose. It was only through a sequence of unintended consequences over a short period that the initially defensive militarization became Han-Hui conflicts and eventually Hui rebellions.

Though the Qing court ordered provinces in non-Taiping civil war areas, Shaanxi included, to organize militias as early as June 1853 (Shao and Han 1992:20; Zhou 2011:140), Shaanxi's militarization level remained low in the 1850s. In 1860, when the Taiping and Niens were more

likely to invade Shaanxi, the court again ordered Shaanxi officials and gentry to organize and drill militias (*QSL-Muslim* vol 2; Huo 2012:71). Since then communal militarization became more pervasive. In the third lunar month of 1862, a major Taiping force entered into Shaanxi and triggered greater communal militarization. Though they only stayed for two months, both Han and Hui were encouraged to organize communal militias and were jointly assembled without differentiating ethnicities.

For example, Yan Shuseng, a former Governor of Henan province who continued to reside in his hometown in Shaanxi, suggested recruiting Huis for state-led militias because "Hui people were brave and willing to fight to death" (HMHU vol. 3:59). In Fengxiang Prefecture, "in the beginning Han and Hui were initially not differentiated in the Charters for organizing Militias"; and several state-conferred militia leaders were Hui, who further suggested the prefect recruit 2,000 more Hui to the militias (SSHR: 172). Another gentry noticed that "when the militias defended against outside enemies, Han and Hui militias united to coordinate with and assist each other" (SSHR: 105).

The most critical, albeit ironic, evidence was that the 500 Hui combatants who triggered the ethnic conflict were initially recruited by Han elites as part of state-led militias to fight against the Taipings outside of their hometown (SSHR: 65; Han 2006: 36-37; Zhou 2011: 82). If Han-Hui ethnic confrontation had been intense or if they had initially been mobilized for ethnic feuds, it was hard to imagine that Han gentry could recruit Hui to militias and dispatch them to fight in a deadly war against the powerful Taipings. In other words, at the onset both Han and

Hui militias served as communal defenders and the state's allies—a very similar scenario to that in North China as described in Chapter 4.

Spontaneous Han-Hui Ethnic Conflicts

Also similar to the Nien case, the initial defensive mobilization turned to inter-bloc conflicts, albeit around the ethnic boundary this time. The Taiping's rapid mobility and retreat left those militias without external rebels to fight, so some of them shifted their targets to use their new weapons and muscles. Sporadic incidents led to extensive large-scale fighting this time given that many communities were well militarized and organized. At the time, it was broadly considered that this episode of ethnic clashes was sparked by a small dispute in Huazhou—a second turning point in the entire sequence. In their journey to fight the Taipings, the aforementioned 500 Hui combatants from Weinan County heard that the Taipings had left, so the unit dissolved but did not disarm. When some tried to buy bamboo poles from local Han residents in Huazhou district, the two sides had disputes over price. A quarrel became a fight: a few were injured and perhaps two Hui combatants died. At that point, both sides still appealed to the local government and trusted its verdict. However, some nearby Han militias fought, fired, and looted Hui communities, thus kindling further clashes (HMHU vol.3: 5-6; *SSHR*: 65-67).

Given there were militia corps in each village, the tension soon intensified (Ma Changshou 1993/2009: 234). On the 18th Day of the fourth lunar month, various militia blocs united together and searched for a few Hui and killed them as "traitors." On the 21st day, Han and Hui made a truce when they heard the Taipings were again approaching. On the 24th day, the roving Taipings defeated a few militia groups, then left. However, during their joint action against the Taipings,

Han militias all knew of the recent Bamboo incident and some proposed to kill and loot the Hui.

Over the ensuing few days, Han militias burned and destroyed a few Hui villages in Huazhou

and spread leaflets calling on militia units in neighboring districts to kill Huis. Meanwhile, Hui

communities in these districts also quickly organized (by no later than the 25th day) to

counterattack Han militias in the two counties as well as neighboring districts (SSHR: 68;

HMHU vol.4: 217). On the 25th Day alone, thousands of Han and Hui died in two battles, which

were often taken as the start of the "Hui uprisings" (Han 2006: 42-45).

Since both Han and Hui had already been organized into local militia blocs, the subsequent

fighting quickly spread to dozens of districts in the Central Shaanxi Plain and became extremely

violent (Chu 1966: 25; Dillon 1999: 62; Han 2006: 46-53). Initiated by precipitators such as

Feng Yuanzuo, anti-Hui leaflets rapidly spread across districts claiming that Hui colluded with

the Taipings as traitors in plotting uprisings. For example, in Jingyang county, a gentry recruited

more than 1,000 young fighters from 82 neighboring villages which shared the same temple as

their lineage center (Ma Changshou 1993/2009:342). Furthermore, intensified clashes spread to

the outskirts of Xi'an (the provincial capital) in the middle of Fifth Month. Mei Jintang, a Han

gentry with a Prefect title, united about 2,000 soldiers and exterminated dozens of Hui villages

on the 18th Day—a fact that was acknowledged in the investigation conducted by the Qing's

senior commander (*Fanglue-Northwest*, vol.22: 4). This mass killing soon provoked retaliation

from the Hui community on the 22nd Day. They counterattacked Han militias as well as innocent

villagers to take revenge. On the 26th Day, Hui forces destroyed Mei's militia unit (SSHR:123).

While "similar incidents happened in many other places where the Moslems had neither the

intention nor the means to start trouble" (Chu 1966: 25),[40] it is also fair to say that the security

dilemma and fear-driven preemption were mutually reinforced between Hui and Han

communities at this heightened moment.[41]

Until then it was still "horizontal," inter-community fights but not "vertical" opposition

between the Hui and the state. Although local authorities—the majority of them Han—tended to

side with the Han from the beginning, at this point the outcome was still undecided and had not

yet necessarily escalated to become the eventual "Hui Rebellions." On the societal side, in the

first two months there was still a possibility for negotiation to control the conflict since both Han

and Hui elites frequently met each other to make a truce. For example, on the 6th day in the Fifth

Month in Xi'an, a Han gentry was still able to invite a number of *ahong* and Hui community

leaders to discuss a possible peaceful solution; even after a few battles, on the 23rd day, they

again met to discuss how to make a truce in Xi'an (*SSHR*: 122, 124). A memorial early in the

Sixth Month confirmed that most Hui gentry in the city were good (*Fanglue-Northwest* vol. 14:

2). Furthermore, it pointed out that Hui troops were still trustworthy:

> "Take the current battalions, for example, Hui soldiers comprise half of the
> troops. Not only these officers who held rank disliked the misconduct of
> their co-religionists, but also those ordinary Hui soldiers who understood
> right or wrong: they all agreed that Hui in the north Valley were lawless, so
> they cannot tolerate their uncivilized behaviors despite that they belonged to
> the same religion. In terms of Hui gentry within the city [of Xi'an], there
> were even more good citizens" (*Fanglue-Northwest* vol. 14:2).

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[40] When Zuo Zongtang took over the counter-insurgent task several years later, he still viewed the origin of the Hui Rebellion in Shaanxi as Han-Hui ethnic feuds rather than as a planned rebellion and believed that Han militias should take the major responsibility in provoking the resistance and uprisings of the Hui communities (ZZTQJ, vol.5: 545, vol.14: 320).

[41] Some folklore on Hui's demographic composition in northwest (30% in Shaanxi while 70% in Gansu) was less an accurate estimate of the Hui population than a misperception of the Hui organizational power at that time and reflected and reinforced the insecurity of Han communities.

On the state side, at least the court and provincial authorities strove to make a truce. At this point, they still did not perceive the Hui as the state's enemy or view the Hui as "threatening to themselves (HMHU vol.3:61). In fact the court and provincial authorities had not even perceived the rebel/repressor (or "evil/good") distinction as congruent with the Hui/Han ethnic boundary. Internal communication shows that they understood that both Han and Hui could be either good or evil (*QSL-Muslim*, vol.3: 42, 44, 48, 50). In the late Fifth Month, the court underscored that "[in some places] both Han and Hui refused to be civilized, firing at and killing each other"; therefore, the court ordered the extermination of these "uncivilized" people regardless of whether they were Han or Hui (*Fanglue-Northwest* vol.13: 11, 13). Furthermore, the court warned that the militias should only be organized to fight against invading Taiping and Nien rebels, not used to fight against each other: "Hui people should not be relied upon in suppressing the Han, while Han militias should also not be used to suppress the Hui, in case avoiding the deflection of the orientation will leave problems in the future" (*Fanglue-Northwest* vol.13:13; *QSL-Muslim*, vol.3: 44-45). The court further warned provincial authorities: "don't be credulous of local [Han] gentry or citizenry in order to avoid being inclined to the Han side" (*Fanglue-Northwest* vol.13: 15). On the provincial level, several times Zhang Fei ordered Feng Yuanzuo to disperse his militia blocs and threatened to accuse him of rebellion. For this reason Feng Yuanzuo had to disband his combatants on the 9th Day in the fifth lunar month, the day before Zhang Fei's negotiation trip. Finally, both the court and provincial authorities made efforts to make a truce. On the 8th and 11th days, in its first and second decrees on Han-Hui conflicts in Shaanxi, the court ordered provincial authorities to find a way to negotiate the two sides in order to unite them

for the purpose of defense (*QSL-Muslim*, vol. 3:37, 39). On the 11th day, Zhang Fei, the

provincial militia commissioner, led a number of officials (including one Hui prefect) to pacify

Hui communities. This negotiation journey, however, became the third turning point in this short

sequence of mobilization and conflicts.

Rebellious Turn of the Ethnic Conflicts

All of these described attempts at resolution failed: the divergence between Hui forces and

Han militias as rebels and repressors became clearer in the late Fifth and Sixth Months, partially

as the consequence of a third turning point—the commissioner and envoy, Zhang Fei, was

accidentally killed by a Hui while on his negotiation trip in Lington County. As mentioned above,

Zhang Fei, together with a few Han and Hui officials, was so confident about their security that

Zhang even ordered Han militias to leave their visiting mission unguarded when the militias

rallied around the town to offer protection (HMHU, vol.3:61). However, while Zhang tried to

appease most Muslims, he imprudently ordered them to hand over the "conspirator," Ren Laowu,

who happened to be in the same room. Zhang Fei was subsequently kidnapped and murdered by

Ren Laowu and his fellows on the 12th /13th days in the Fifth Month. Without accurate details,

rumors about his kidnapping and murder spread among Shaanxi's officials and gentry; the news

was not verified until several days later (SSHR: 125). Given that Zhang Fei had been a

high-ranking official and was the highest imperial commissioner in Shaanxi Province, his death

became a turning point for authorities' attitudes towards the Han-Hui conflict. At the end of the

sixth lunar month, the provincial governor's public notice replaced the horizontal ethnic conflict

with vertical state-Hui confrontation: "Hui were rebels, so they should be exterminated; Han

were militias, and thus should make coordinated actions with officers to wipe out the Huis."

(SSHR, 125-126). The gentry who recorded this notice in his diary commented: "that's how the

feuds became [counter-insurgent] military affairs. Provincial magnates turned out to make

trouble for the state." (SSHR: 125-126) Rumors had been memorialized to the court in the late

Fifth and early Sixth Months (*Fanglue-Northwest* vol. 13: 7-8, 19; vol. 14:13)[42] and were further

confirmed in the Seventh Month (*Fanglue-Northwest* vol. 17: 12-13, vol.19: 10; *QSL-Muslim*,

vol.3: 73, 91). The court then ordered both Shaanxi authorities and Han militias to thoroughly

suppress Muslims. The tone of the state authorities was utterly turned against Hui forces—the

ethnic boundary then became the boundary between rebels and repressors.

Nevertheless, the significance of Zhang Fei's murder should not be overemphasized, given

that Han-Hui conflicts pervasively emerged as the result of a self-reinforcing "oppositional

alignment" mechanism even before the news of Zhang Fei's death arrived. While it was difficult

to disarm the newly mobilizing Hui and especially Han militias, their undifferentiated mass

killing triggered a similar kind of revenge from the other side. As pointed out by a Han gentry in

Shaanxi: "Militias were founded in the name of counter-insurgency, but they were in effect the

origins of disorder…Now the mutual killing between Hui and Han in the Central Shaanxi Plain

(the Guanzhong Basin), though stirred up by Hui, was in effect provoked by Han [militias]"

(SSHR: 68). Considering that the entire major battlefield—the central Shaanxi Plain—was a

small valley (36 thousand square kilometers) alongside the Wei River, "news of these conflicts

traveled rapidly via the Muslim trading networks as well as through Qing official channels,

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[42] In official documents, it was in the 26th Day of the Fifth Month that Zhang Fei's kidnapping was first memorialized to the court (*Fanglue-Northwest* vol.13:7-8).

increasing tensions all over Shaanxi and Gansu (Lipman 1997: 121). In Xi'an, for example, Hui and Han engaged in another series of battles in the Sixth Month: tens of thousands of Han soldiers were killed and Mei Jiantang's entire militia bloc was wiped out (SSHR: 123-124).

After the news of Zhang Fei's death was confirmed by provincial authorities, a watershed of conflicts appeared in the late Sixth Month: The horizontal Han-Hui conflicts were displaced by Hui-state confrontations. Regular forces were dispatched to suppress Hui forces while Huis united to besiege a number of prefectural cities and even the provincial capital. The diary of a gentry recorded a number of critical events in 1862, showing the appearance and rise of collective violence that was viewed less as Han-Hui conflicts than as purely Hui rebellion (SSHR: 121-142). On the 25th Day of the sixth lunar month, Hui forces took over Liucun Fort, the center of Han militia units in Xi'an, defeating a large group of regular forces, and killing several senior commanders (HMHU, vol.3: 254). This first major battle between Hui and governmental forces was the start of a decade of state-Hui battles. The Han-Hui ethnic conflict was eventually displaced by conflicts between the Hui and the state, aided by Han militias.

Plus, the court gave higher priority to Shaanxi conflicts than to those in Yunnan or Gansu because it considered Shaanxi a key part of China proper, rather than a frontier province. As a result, in 1862 alone the court dispatched several high-ranking officials, including two Manchu generals from the counter-Taiping and counter-Nian battlefields—Shengbao and Duolonga—and several thousand soldiers to Shaanxi. They carried out the thorough repression policy towards Hui forces rather than the cooptation policy that was often used in Yunnan and Gansu.

Finally, the murder of Zhang Fei left Hui leaders little room for negotiation except to fight. Meanwhile, Han militias also aligned with the state to gain legitimacy for their mobilization and killing. They also tended to interpret the incident as an ethnicized conflict between the "evil" Hui and the "good" Hans who were "native subjects" and thus a "natural ally" of the empire, despite the fact that the rulers of the Qing Empire were Manchu rather than Han. A proclamation of a militia unit clearly shows that Han militias understood the ethnicized nature of their conflict:

> "Hui in Fengxiang Prefecture: you stayed with Han descendants ever since you came here, and enjoyed the state's deep charity for two hundred years… Now you have killed officials and claimed to 'exterminate Han.' Our Han Chinese were sons of the Great Qing, so how dare you rebellious Huis kill us? (SSHR: 176)

Just as Hui forces became the state's enemy, Han militias became the state's ally, despite that some of them were initially disliked by the state. This process can be illustrated by the case of the aforementioned militia leader, Feng Yuanzuo, who was something of a local strongman like Zhang Lexing, the Nien leader in North China. Ironically, in an incident initiated by Feng and his friend in late 1861, some Hui militias had in effect assisted the state to pacify the uprising, thus offending Feng (Zhou 2011:145). As mentioned earlier, when negotiating the Han-Hui feud, Zhang Fei and other officials viewed Feng Yuanzuo as a problem and several times ordered him to disperse his militia blocs. Zhang Fei even threatened Feng Yuanzuo: "if you continue to obstruct the truce agreement (and refuse to demobilize your militias), you will be accused of rebellion and killed as was Yang Shenghua [Feng's friend who led the anti-tax incident]." This is why Feng Yuanzuo had to disband the majority of his militias before Zhang Fei's negotiation trip. Feng was only able to mobilize another militia bloc elsewhere when the

ethnic conflict again intensified later. Just as Zhang Lexing gradually "became" a rebel, Feng Yuanzuo was not at the onset a repressor. Their divergent outcomes can only be understood in their distinct interactions with their rivals and state actors.

In the eighth lunar month of 1862, several centers of Hui rebel forces appeared. Instead of a centrally coordinated military organization, each of these battalions originally sprang from local mosque-based communal groups (*jiaofang*) (Han 2006:55-61).[43] It was recorded that about 300,000 Hui, i.e., nearly half of the adult Hui males, participated in the wars against Han militias and regular forces. The entire province was trapped into the Hui's ethnicized uprisings against imperial authorities which were endorsed by Han militias. Massive, indiscriminate killing was commonplace on both sides: hundreds and hundreds of villages and communities were exterminated in less than one year. At the end of the rebellion, 90% of Hui had been killed.[44]

To summarize, considering that Han-Hui ethnic tension was not as intense in Yunnan during the pre-rebellion era, the extensive ethnic violence appearing in Shaanxi was indeed startling and unexpected. The change from low-level ethno-religious identification and organization in the pre-rebellion era to the extensive Hui rebellions was linked by three processes, each of which was built upon, but not entirely determined by, the early stages: 1) extensive militarization and mobilization of both Han and Hui in reaction to the invading Taiping rebels; 2) Han-Hui ethnicized conflicts as a deflection from the defensive mobilization after the bamboo pole incident; 3) the displacement of Han-Hui ethnic conflicts by Hui-state confrontations after some contingent events

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[43] Even in the later stage, when Shaanxi Muslim forces were forced to concentrate in a small area in Gansu Province, there were still 18 large battalions and a number of small blocs without a unified leadership.

[44] Compared with Yunnan, indiscriminate ethnic killing was particularly salient in Shaanxi. The ethnicization of conflicts in Shaanxi was as significant and surprising as the de-ethnicization of conflicts in Yunnan. However, ethnic violence and cleansing themselves are not the focus of this chapter (e.g., Kalyvas 2006; Straus 2006).

(esp. the murder of the imperial commissioner during his negotiation trip) and continuous

mobilization and clashes between Han and Hui. There was no single critical juncture, but multiple

turning points that linked a sequence of reactions among multiple organizational actors. The final

crystallization of Hui mobilization in Shaanxi and Yunnan was also sharply different: since the

court paid much more attention to Shaanxi by transferring regular forces for thorough

suppression, Shaanxi's Hui forces had not gained any opportunity to occupy certain areas for

rebel regime building (as the Hui did in Yunnan), and so were quickly dispelled to the far

northwest in Gansu Province.

Gansu: Balkanized Politicization of Sufi Solidarities

In Gansu, sporadic Hui mobilization was originally sparked by religious disputes or

co-religionist consciousness, but soon a few Sufi solidarities were politicized and became

legitimate administrators in several disparate areas without engaging in further religious wars or

inter-Sufism disputes. This political balkanization was certainly related to Gansu's unique

Islamic institution—Sufi suborders ("*Menhuan*" in Chinese)—that were not seen elsewhere in

China (Ma Tong 2000; Huo 2012:7-9).[45] Nevertheless, as shown in many comparative studies

(Kalyvas 1996; Gorski 2000; Ayubi 2003; Ayoob 2009; Brown 2013), there was no ground to

assume that religious institutions would automatically be politicized in a specific direction.

Therefore it is important to explain not only the politicization of these Sufi suborders, but also

the very orientation of their politicization: how did they become legitimate rulers rather than

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[45] The *Menhuan* system was by no means a unique Chinese phenomenon, but was seen in many other places (Geertz 1971:48; Turner 1974; Gellner 1981; Green 2012). In general, "despite the otherworldly ideas and activities so often associated with it, Sufism, as an historical reality, consists of a series of different and even contradictory experiments, most of them occurring between the ninth and nineteenth centuries, in bringing orthodox Islam (itself no seamless unity) into effective relationship with the world, rendering it accessible to it" (Geertz 1971:48).

engaging religious wars or enlarging pre-existing religious disputes that seemed more "natural" directions of their politicization?

Sufi Suborders in Gansu

Gansu's distinctive *Menhuan* system, i.e., hereditary Sufi suborders, had developed since the late 17th century and evolved into multiple institutional *Menhuans* from the 18th century. These Sufi suborders were initially founded either by missionaries from the Middle East or Central Asia or by Chinese Muslim clerics who were influenced by Sufism in their pilgrimages to Mecca, Yemen, etc. As was true elsewhere, Sufism evolved into the institutional Sufi orders (*Menhuan*) in China by combining Sufi sectarianism, Islamic charisma, and lineage-based succession (Fletcher 1995; Lipman 1997; Dillon 1999:113; Ma Tong 2000). Even if the founders maintained an ascetic ethic, since the late-18th century most *Menhuans* "had evolved into essentially conservative local solidarities, organized to preserve the community power and wealth of important lineages" (Lipman 1997:166). In their overlapping areas, they engaged in intense competition over religious authority, adherents, mosques, and economic resources. In Gansu, both the disputes among different *Menhuans* and intra-menhuan competition over authority were salient (Ma Tong 2000). Some of these religious disputes had resulted in bloody feuds and uprisings since the late-18th century.

One long-lasting dispute was between the two most popular Sufi suborders, Khafiya and Jihriyya, both founded in the middle 18th century. Their respective founders, Ma Laichi (1680-1766) and Ma Mingxin (1719-1781) went to Mecca in the same year, 1728, and had

perhaps studied under the same Naqshbandiyya teachers.[46] Ma Laichi and Ma Mingxin returned

to Gansu and subsequently developed their Sufi suborders in the Hezhou district.[47] Their

nominal controversy was a dispute over *dhikr*: either silent or vocal remembrance of God. In the

beginning, their relationship was that of friendly enemies as they both competed and cooperated

with each other in spreading Sufism. However, the competition between Jahriyya and Khafiya

heightened after Ma Laichi's third son succeeded his authority in 1766 (Fletcher 1995; Dillon

1999; Ma Tong 2000:164-165)[48]. The local authority often sided with Khafiya in disputes,

because it took Khafiya as the "old teaching", while Jihriyya was viewed as the "new teaching"

and thus was perceived as more contentious and threatening.[49] These religious disputes (over

leadership and resources) and the state's selective endorsement led to two uprisings of Jihriyya

adherents: the "Su forty-three" Uprising in 1781 and the Tian Wu Uprising in 1784.[50] During

the two uprisings, many Khafiya adherents fought on the side of the government (CHSGNQ, vol.

24; Huo 2012: 26-27). These tragic religious feuds and uprisings were often considered

important background for the middle 19th-century Hui rebellions, especially for the Jihriyya.

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[46] Emerging as a loosely-organized Sufi brotherhood in 1100s, the Naqshbandiyya became institutionalized and centralized in central Asia, and spread over Mughal India, Southeast Asia, China, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire (Fletcher 1995; Le Gall 2005; Weismann 2007; Green 2012). The Naqshbandiyya was spread into Xinjiang by descendants of its fifth master, Makhdumi-I Azam (i.e., Ahmad Kasani) (1461-1542), who claimed to be an offspring of the Prophet Muhammad. In Xinjiang the Naqshbandiyya later divided into two opposing factions: the Aq-taghlyq, i.e., White Mountaineers (who used vocal remembrance of God), and Qara-taghlyq, i.e., Black Mountaineers (who used silent remembrance of God). To be noted, the leader of the White Mountaineers—Afaq Khwaja—spread this Sufi teaching to some Hui and Salar people during his exile trip in the late-17th century, thus contributing to the founding of a few Khafiya Sub-orders in Gansu, before Ma Laichi built his own Khafiya Sub-order in the 18th century (Ma Tong 2000; Kim 2004).
[47] Hezhou (now called "Linxia") was later considered the Little Mecca of China (Dillon 1999; Ma Tong 2000; Li and Ma 2013).
[48] As Fletcher correctly points out, "in substance, the dispute between Old and New Teachings in eighteenth century northwest China seems to have been a struggle over the leadership of the Naqshbandiyya in China" (Fletcher 1995:33).
[49] I avoid using old teaching and new teaching, as they indicate totally different and even opposite things in different temporal and spatial contexts. For example, Khafiya was called 'new teaching' in comparison to other early Sufi suborders, while being taken as 'old teaching' when compared with Jihriyya in those religious disputes. In contrast, all of these Sufi orders were "new" teachings compared with the Gedimu system (Ma Tong 2000; Lipman 1997). However, Qing officials and Muslims themselves did use "new teaching" and "old teaching" to indicate, and sometimes mis-interpret, different Sufi suborders.
[50] Ma Mingxin was killed in 1781 and was considered a saint since then.

Though siding with the Khafiya during the conflict, the Qing court conveyed an ambiguous message regarding the nature of the so-called new teaching and, after a while, even the disputes. In several edicts between 1781 and 1784, Qianlong Emperor made the analogy that the "old teaching" was like Buddhism and Daoism while the "new teaching" was like the heterodox White Lotus sect (*QSL-Muslim*, vol.1: 708-709, 738, 806). Yet in later edicts, he clearly stated that the problem was not "new teaching," as rebellious behaviors could appear in both new and old teachings. Furthermore, "Islam continued to be recognized by the emperors as a legitimate religious doctrine that could encourage virtue among the emperor's subjects, despite the claims of many officials to the contrary" (Lipman 2006:94). The ambiguity of these decrees should not be underestimated. For example, when Zuo Zongtang suggested that the emperor ban the new teaching after he made military achievements in Gansu, the court cited the decree of Qianlong Emperor and proclaimed that the problem was not the new teaching (ZZTQJ, vol.5).

Given that religious identity played such a vital role, "ethnic consciousness takes second place to religious affiliation" in Gansu (Dillon 1999:105). For one thing, multiple Muslim ethnic groups (*Han-Hui*, *Salar-Hui*, *Dongxiang-Hui*, etc.) joined in different *Menhuan* suborders and sometimes even opposed their co-ethnic groups. In addition, Han-Hui ethnic tension was kept at a low level, since the Han community lacked an institutional basis similar to the *Menhuan* for organizing Hui communities. So, even if there were Han-Hui conflicts before the 1860s, they were small-scale and quickly controlled. Finally, local authorities, many of whom were Manchu, by-and-large played a neutral role in these ethnic disputes.

Given the pre-existing ethno-religious identities and institutions in Gansu, there is no reason to expect that Han-Hui ethnic conflicts or the Hui's anti-empire rebellion would automatically appear—indeed there had been no major ethnic conflicts or uprisings until late 1862. Instead, due to strong Sufi solidarities, inter-*Menhuan* conflicts, and Qing authorities' discrimination against the "new teaching" in favor of the "old teaching," it is possible that certain Sufi solidarities initiated religious disputes against their rival Sufi suborders or even religious wars against the state. This is how Muslim mobilization started in Gansu province.

The Onset of Muslim Mobilization

Gansu's Muslim mobilization was partially triggered by Shaanxi's Han-Hui conflicts and partially provoked by religious disputes, in a time when the imperial power was weakened. It should be noted that Muslim mobilization did not simultaneously emerge in Gansu, given Qing Gansu's immense area (3 million square kilometers)[51]—about 15 times the size of Shaanxi, one quarter of the entire Qing Empire—and its larger and more dispersed Muslim population. Leaving details to three case studies in the subsequent subsections, here is a brief description of the common conditions.

Far away from the major civil-war battlefields, Gansu was never approached by the Taipings or Niens. Instead, it was affected by the emerging situation in neighboring Shaanxi province. News about the conflict spread to Gansu from the very beginning. Furthermore, some

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[51] Since 1760, under the jurisdiction of the Governor-General of Shaanxi-Gansu Provinces who was stationed at Lanzhou in Gansu (rather than Xi'an in Shaanxi), the Qing's Gansu province had covered today's Gansu, Ningxia, a part of Qinghai, and a part of Xinjiang. However, the Governor-General was not the sole authority in Gansu. Most importantly, the Manchu General-in-Chief of Ningxia and the Imperial Agent of Xining had relatively independent authority in the areas around the city where they were stationed (respectively, in Ningxia and Qinghai), and were directly responsible to the throne. This was a deliberately designed check-and-balance institution. There was certainly a division of labor, "but, in practice, especially in the field of making policy in the suppression of rebellion, the line of division became very vague and unstable" (Ch'u 1966:51).

Hui of Shaanxi had been forced to retreat to the provincial border since late 1862. About 10,000 Hui moved from Shaanxi to Gansu in the ninth month of 1862 (Chu 1966:55). Co-religionist consciousness and insecurity sparked the initial, sporadic Muslim uprisings in Gansu, although the specific cause of each of these incidents were not always similar.

In other areas that were not on the provincial border, inter-*Menhuan* disputes and feuds were no longer manageable, given that Gansu authorities' coercive power was greatly weakened after a large number of its regular forces were transferred to other provinces over the past decade. Meanwhile, Han militias spontaneously organized to fight the Hui and thus further enlarged the conflicts, though they were far weaker than the Sufi organizations of Hui.

Balkanized Politicization of Sufi Suborders

A few Sufi leaders further capitalized on the opportunity to politicize and militarize their religious authority in the power vacuum. By 1865, organized by Sufi leaders, Muslims created four large political-military bases and a number of small military centers (Table 5.4). The Jahriyya leader, Ma Hualong, made his headquarters at Jinjipu in Ningxia prefecture; a Khafiya *ahong* Ma Zhan'ao took the leadership in Hezhou Prefecture; the major leader of Khafiya, Ma Guiyuan became the political-military leader in Xining and accepted the Prefect title; finally, Ma Wenlu led another Muslim force in Suzhou in western Gansu. They communicated information amongst each other, but were not coordinated by a higher authority or as a coalition. Having been granted official titles, they governed certain areas, provided public services and maintained orders in their jurisdictional areas. They divided the entire province into different turfs. A Balkanized politicization of Sufi solidarities thus appeared in Gansu.

In other words, the orientation of this politicization was not religious war or inter-Sufism disputes. Most of them had no intention to expand their influence beyond their home areas in order to "rebel" against the state, but preferred ruling their own turfs. Only after 1869, were some of them were identified as rebel leaders by Zuo Zongtang's increasingly assertive forces which became impatient with the cooptation policy after successfully suppressing the Taiping, the Nien, and Shaanxi Hui uprisings. Leaving detailed processes to subsequent case studies (with an emphasis on the case of Ma Hualong), I argue that these Sufi leaders rose to power and became *de facto* regional rulers in a series of reactions to the emerging organizational power competitions with other Muslim leaders when the Qing's military power had been weakened.

Their politicization as legitimate local leaders was above all related to a combination of emerging factors. First, a large number of Gansu's regular soldiers were transferred to China proper to fight Taipings or Niens. According to a rough estimation, about 20,000 Green soldiers were enlisted from Gansu between 1851 and 1861, about 1/3 of its entire garrison troops (Han 2006:21-23). As a result, the coercive power of the state to control the mobilizing Sufi solidarities or to maintain political orders was greatly weakened. This also gave the politicized Sufi organizations the opportunity to serve as a wartime government.

Second, threats from external rebellions were not pressing enough to provoke the Han communities' high-level militarization to sustain continuous ethnic conflicts, especially when compared with Shaanxi which was close to the outside Taiping and Nien rebels. Even though the court ordered both provinces to organize defensive militias in 1860, they were so poorly organized in Gansu that they could not match the Hui's *Menhuan* system (Huo 2002:71-74; Zhou

2011: 92). This also meant that, except for the Sufi institutions, no other societal force was able to provide coherent organizations during wartime.

Third, the lower priority of the court left the cooptation policy as the only feasible option for provincial authorities, such as Mutushan, the Manchu General of Ningxia until 1868. Since part of Gansu's regular forces had been transferred to the counter-Taiping war in the imperial interior and with the unbearable logistics and manpower needed to organize another frontier war, the court accepted the cooptation policy version. This was quite different from the situation in Shaanxi where a hawk policy towards rising Muslims dominated from the onset. Even when Zuo Zongtang took over command authority in 1868, he still gave the lowest priority to Gansu. In several memorials to the emperor and letters to his friends, Zuo mentioned that the optimal counter-insurgent order was the Taiping, the Niens, Hui rebels of Shaanxi, and finally Hui rebels in Gansu. Accordingly, military manpower and resources were only redeployed to tackle Muslims in Gansu after all other uprisings were suppressed in 1869, thus giving Gansu's Sufi leaders opportunities to independently rule.

Table 5.4. Four centers of Muslim forces in Gansu Province

Name	Lasting time	Area	Religious status	Highest official title	Ending
Ma Hualong (1810-1871)	1862-1871	Lingzhou	The fifth leader of Jahriyya	Provincial commander-in-chief (1868)	Suppression
Ma Guiyuan (1843-1873)	1862-1873	Xining	The sixth leader of Khafiya order	Prefect of Xining (1869)	Suppression
Ma Zhan'ao (1830-1886)	1862-1872	Hezhou and Didao zhou	Prestigious *ahong* in Khafiya	Prefectual official (1866)	Cooptation
Ma Wenlu (?-1873)	1865-1873	Suzhou	N/A	Commander of Suzhou (1868)	Suppression

Ma Hualong in North Gansu: Jahriyya Mobilization

The case of Ma Hualong was significant because he was supposed to be the most religiously

inspired rebel leader since he was the fifth-generation leader of the Jahriyya, perceived as

intrinsically "subversive" not only by Qing rulers/officials but also by later scholars (Fletcher

1995; Israeli 1980, 2000).[52] However, this interpretation is incomplete, if not entirely wrong (at

least Ma Hualong and his Jahriyya adherents ended their enterprise in a tragic way).[53] A scrutiny

shows a completely different picture: Ma Hualong did not intend to become a rebel until the final

suppression moment. He was a great strategist, though he failed to acquire Zuo's permission for

capitulation in the end. True, he led an independent Hui force, but it was a reaction to the

emerging conflicts rather than mobilization for rebellion. Ma Hualong's case can give us a sense

that how religious solidarities were politicized during this era in a sequence of interactions.

Above all, we should keep in mind that even though the two Jahriyya uprisings were

suppressed in the 1780s, the Jahriyya resurged in the 19th century. During this time, its center

was moved from central Gansu (where it had intense competition with the Khafiya) to northern

Ningxia around its headquarters *Jinjipu*, about 20 miles away from Lingzhou. Furthermore, Ma

Hualong's grandfather, his father, and himself became the third (1812-1817), fourth (1817-1849),

and fifth leaders (1849-1871) of Jahriyya, turning this Sufi order into a hereditary, patrimonial

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[52] For example, Israeli offered a purely religious interpretation to the Muslim rebellion by highlighting the contentious nature of the "new teaching": "A Muslim rebellion on a large scale, however, was contingent upon a new militant ideology combined with a cohesive organization under charismatic leadership, which could sway the emotions of the Muslim populace at large. While receptivity [to] the new ideology was conditioned by the general revivalist trend among Chinese Muslims, it was the militancy of the New Sect and its offshoots which constituted the driving force and the *avant garde* of the rebellions, and crystallized the religious symbols of the *Mahdi* and the religious means of *Jihad*, around and through which many Muslims could at least temporarily rally" (Israeli 1980:205).
[53] After Ma Hualong was killed by the Qing court, his image as another martyr and the "jihad" myth of the Jahriyya was further spread in folk mythologies and popular literature, such as Zhang Chengzhi's influential novel, *History of the Soul*.

menhuan, thus no longer different from its rival Sufi suborder. More than a religious leader, by taking advantage of his enormous disciple networks, Ma Hualong had become a major land-owner and wealthy merchant before the 1860s, developing a colossal business network across the northwest, Mongolia, and China proper, including Beijing and the Yangzi Delta. To secure his wealth and status, Ma Hualong also acquired an official title by donation. In sum, Ma Hualong was a very different religious leader from the Jahriyya founder, Ma Mingxin. For running such an enormous religious and business enterprise, Ma Hualong was said to be own a quick-witted character (Ma Tong 2000:300-302; Zhang 2001:104; Zhou 2011).

Nearing Shaanxi, the entire Ningxia region was among the first rising area to be sparked by the emerging ethnic conflicts in Shaanxi. Ma Hualong closely watched the situation. The cataclysmal incident was started by a junior military commander (*Bazong*) of the Hui people, Ma Zhaoyuan, who used his position to organize Huis and plotted a mutiny in the eighth lunar month of 1862. It is said that Ma Hualong, as well as other Jahriyya leaders such as Mu Shenghua (who was a grandson of the second Jahriyya leader) and Jahriyya *ahong* Wang Dagui, also participated in the plot. However, Ma Hualong captured this opportunity to prevail over not only local state agents but also his Jahriyya fellows to become the ultimate *political* leader in this area.

In their joint siege action of *Lingzhou*, Ma Hualong was at odds with Ma Zhaoyuan who was not a Jahriyya adherent himself but who tried to rein in Ma Hualong's forces. Ma Hualong did not give Ma Zhaoyuan a hand. Furthermore, when *ahong* Wang Dagui surrendered to the Qing, Ma Hualong incited Wang Dagui to kill Ma Zhaoyuan, then sought cooptation in early

1863.   This move not only crumbled Ma Zhaoyuan's force but also gave Ma Hualong certain

credits that were often mentioned by state authorities (*Fanglue-Northwest*, vol.35:11).

If it is not that surprising that Ma Hualong killed Ma Zhaoyuan (who was not a Jahriyya

member), his strategy towards another Jahriyya leader, Mu Shenghua—whose grandfather had

passed the Jahriyya leadership to Ma Hualong's grandfather—further demonstrates that Ma

Hualong moved politically rather than religiously. At this point, Mu Shenghua sought fierce

revenge against the Qing authority and Han militias since his family and followers had been

killed and his grandfather's sacred tomb was destroyed in previous conflicts. Mu Shenghua's

bloc took over the city of Pingliang, and killed Wang Dagui who was dispatched by the Qing

authority to co-opt Mu Shenghua. Ma Hualong, on the other hand, rejected Mu Shenghua's call

to build a kingdom and in effect disliked Mu's self-proclamation as King.[54] To Ma Hualong, Mu

Shenghua became a power competitor. Accordingly, despite their strong family and religious

connections, when Mu Shenghua was besieged in Pingliang, Ma Hualong not only gave Mu

Shenghua no support, but also suggested Wang Dagui's adherents occupy Guyuan in order to

constitute another threat to Mu Shenghua. Eventually Mu Shenghua was defeated by the Qing

and became an unimportant figure.[55] (SHMG, vol.1: 4, 11, 12).

Ma Hualong eventually rose to power by taking the opportunity left by the reconciliation

policy of En'Ling, the Manchu General of Ningxia. In a memorial, En'ling explained his

cooptation policy:

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[54] Even in this exceptional anti-dynastic case, Mu Shenghua called for "toppling the Qing Empire, restoring the Ming Empire" as
he thought that the Hui people were better treated during the Ming dynasty. This slogan was certainly not an Islamic one, but a
typical version of Chinese rebellions, similar to the Triads in South China.
[55] Even Ma Hualong's adherents thought that Ma's attitude was contradictory and inconsistent. Furthermore, Mu Shenghua's
followers, albeit mostly Jahriyya disciples, did not give any support to Ma Hualong's later defensive war against the Qing.

"Among the Moslems, there are certainly evil ones, but doubtless, there are also numerous peaceful, law-abiding people. If we decide to destroy them all, we are driving the good ones to join the rebels, and create for ourselves an awesome, endless job of killing the Moslems… In the army, there are proportionately even more Moslems than Chinese among the rank and file. If we should offend them all, the damage would be beyond imagination. Therefore, I am ordering my troops to separate the law-abiding Moslems from the evil ones" (*Fanglue-Northwest*, vol. 29:13-15; translated by Chu 1966:57).

To make the reconciliation possible, En'ling even disbanded the Han Chinese local corps because he was convinced by local Muslims that Ningxia's disputes "were all started by the Chinese local corps and the Moslems were only retaliating for what they had suffered" (Chu 1966:60). However, this policy gave Ma Hualong the opportunity to further expand. In the tenth lunar month of 1863, Ma Hualong's adherents took over the city of Ningxia and Lingzhou. Ma Hualong then dispatched his subordinate, Ma Zhankui, to occupy the city seat, and "appointed" him as the Prefect of Lingzhou. Ma Hualong himself was still based at the Jahriyya headquarters in *Jinjipu*, about 20 miles away from Lingzhou. The two were so deployed in order to mutually assist each other. Since then, Ma Hualong continued fortifying Jinjipu by building about 570 forts around his headquarters (Huo 2002:111). In short, capturing these opportunities, Ma Hualong rose as the ultimate political leader of this area since late 1863.

However, Ma Hualong "was not a secessionist… Ma initially had no desire to establish an antidynastic enterprise" (Lipman 1997:131). Instead, Ma Hualong cooperated with Qing authorities to maintain social and economic order in his controlled turfs. For example, he ordered Ma Zhangui to "kill fewer people while focusing on agriculture" (CHSGNQ, vol.20: 32). The latter governed the city so well that even the Qing general, Liu Songshan, had to admit his

achievements when retaking the city in 1869 (CHSGNQ, vol. 22: 11-13).[56] In late 1865, Ma

Hualong was officially coopted by the highest Qing authority in this area, the Manchu Ningxia

General Mutushan. Ma Hualong was given a new name, Ma Chaoqing (literally, "Attending on

the Qing"), and given a senior title as Lieutenant (*Fujiang*, Rank Two Minus) in 1866 and the

nominal title of Provincial Commander-in-Chief (*Tidu*, Rank One Minus) in 1868, thus

prevailing over any other Qing officials in this region (*Fanglue-Northwest*, vol. 203:8; Huo

2002:109).[57] However, Ma Hualong never disbanded his militias, but continued to build his

power base, and gradually monopolized the regional revenue. Even the administration system in

Ningxia and Lingzhou was supplied by him. Ma Hualong became *de facto* ruler in Ningxia and

Lingzhou from that point until 1869. Neither religious war nor ethnic tension explained Ma

Hualong's politicization of his Sufi organizations.

During this period (1865-1869), Ma Hualong continued his political style as a "power

broker" among different forces, and became the indispensible actor for all parties. He, on the one

hand, claimed himself as the General Marshal among Muslims, while on the other hand

requesting cooptation 12 times between 1862 and 1870 and accepting official titles from the

Qing authority. He collaborated with Shaanxi Hui rebels who had retreated to Gansu, but refused

to enlist them into his own bloc in order to have leeway with the Qing. He supplied these forces

with horses and weapons but not manpower. He persuaded them to store their loot in his forts in

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[56] However, soon Ma Hualong and Zuo Zongtang engaged in fierce battles around Lingzhou and Jinjipu. Ethnic killing then rose to an unprecedented level: it was recorded that about 100,000 Han residents in Lingzhou were massacred when the city was again taken over by Ma Hualong in the ninth lunar month of 1869, while several thousand Hui were killed by Zuo's troop.
[57] Even in his deposition to Zuo Zongtang in 1869, Ma Hualong still called himself Ma Chaoqing with these imperial titles.

Jinjipu, while often playing "broker" between Qing authorities and Shaanxi Huis and "persuaded" the latter to surrender (Li Enhan 1978:111; Ma Tong 2000:307).

In any case, Ma Hualong did not view himself as a rebel leader: he neither followed Mu Shenghua's suggestion for an anti-dynastic enterprise, nor tried to unite Shaanxi's Hui forces to fight Qing forces outside of his base area. He merely intended to maintain an independent force and rule the turf where most of his believers resided. Ma Hualong once said:

> "I was originally a religious person, and had to govern my hometown and maintain political order when I was hailed by people in this chaotic period. When the counter-Taiping civil war ends in the Southeast and then Gansu province is also pacified, there must be sagacious officials to govern the Northwest. Then I would immediately come over to his side and become an ordinary subject in the peace time—my dream is then granted! How could I take this place (*Jinjipu*) as my cozy nest?" (CHSGNQ, vol. 20: 24).

It was then not surprising that he contacted Qing officials/generals several times to show his intention for cooptation before he was eventually taken as the major enemy by Zuo Zongtang's expedition army. Even in this letter to Zuo Zongtang in 1868, Ma Hualong repeatedly emphasized that he had no insurgent intention, but was willing to serve as a peace builder and broker between Qing and Shaanxi Hui rebels. However, Ma Hualong failed to convince Zuo Zongtang, given that Zuo's army had become increasingly assertive and had already put down the Taipings, Niens, and Huis in Shaanxi. At that time Zuo Zongtang also believed that Ma Hualong's new teaching was more rebellious than the "old" teaching (ZZTQJ, Vol. 5: pp.99) , although his Manchu colleague (e.g., Mutushan) and even the court reminded him that the difference was not between different teachings.[58] When Ma Hualong's bloc killed a few of Zuo

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[58] In the fourth lunar month in 1870, Zuo Zongtang memorialized the court that Islam was not a heterodox religion, but the "new teaching" was evil and rebellious, so "the Hui group would be peaceful after the new teaching was exterminated. Then Gansu

Zongtang's favorite generals (especially Liu Songshan), there was no leeway for Ma Hualong. Even though Ma Hualong came to Zuo's battalion to surrender in 1871, Zuo Zongtang's troops mercilessly sentenced Ma Hualong's entire family and their primary subordinates to death.

Ma Zhan'ao in South Gansu: Khafiya Mobilization

In Hezhou and Didao Zhou (He-Di area hereafter)[59] in South Gansu, Muslim mobilization was the most intense, but the Hui force there eventually became the only one in Gansu co-opted by Zuo Zongtang after its surrender. Its non-rebellious turn is as puzzling as the rebellious turn of other Hui forces.

Above all, two institutional and ecological features were important for the onset of uprisings in this area. First, as the birthplace of many Sufi suborders in China, this area supported many different *Menhuans*, including Khafiya and Jihriyya (Ma Tong 2000:86-87; Li and Ma 2013). Furthermore, when the grand leaders of Jahriyya and Khafiya successively moved to Lingzhou and Xining, the already diverse Sufi orders further divided into multiple fragmentary factions in this area where no even moderately unified authority existed. Second, this area was only about 100 miles west of Lanzhou, the provincial capital of Gansu, so the provincial authority perceived Hui forces in this area as more dangerous than others that were at a farther distance. Accordingly, unlike other areas, Muslims were unable to build a unified leadership around a single center that could be acknowledged by the provincial authority.

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could be secured for peace for a century" (ZZTQJ, vol.5: 49-52). However, in the reply decree one month later, the court disagreed with Zuo's viewpoint. Citing decrees of the Qianlong Emperor in dealing with early uprisings of new teaching believers, the court pointed out the conflict was only about the distinction between rightful or evil behaviors, not about the difference between new and old teachings (ZZTQJ, vol.5: 52-53).

[59] Hezhou District and Didao district located in South Gansu, and its residents included Tibetans and Mongolians, some of whom had been converted to Islam since the late Ming Dynasty. For example, a group of converted Tibetans were called *Shala* Hui in the Qing dynasty; some Shala Huis who belonged to Jahriyya initiated its first uprising in 1781.

In the He-Di area, Muslim mobilization was sparked by Shaanxi's Han-Hui conflicts in the tenth lunar month in 1862 (*Fanglue-Northwest*, vol.32:21-22). Watching the rising condition, a number of religious leaders met to plan a joint action and soon took over the leadership. Given the fragmentation of *Menhuan* systems in this area, it is not surprising that there was no unified political center similar to *Jinjipu* in North Gansu. To some extent the He-Di area was much like a mini-ecology of the entire political ecology of Gansu Province—generating further balkanization within the already balkanized politicization of Sufi solidarities. Given its relatively smaller geographical size, the balkanization of the Hui forces can even be seen through their spatial dispersion around the saints' shrines of each *Menhuan*, as depicted by Qing commanders in 1868 (HMHU, vol.3: 134).

Nevertheless, in order to fight the Qing forces, a fairly unified military command system was gradually formed under the leadership of Ma Zhan'ao, who was a renowned *ahong*, but certainly not the most authoritative religious leader within Khafiya. This is to say, Ma Zhan'ao became the commander-in-chief in this area not because of his religious status alone, but because of his strategic and flexible tactics. His flexibility was readily apparent in his ability to negotiate with Qing authorities: When Hui forces captured the city of Hezhou in 1864, Ma Zhan'ao protected a few officials and the Han people (*Fanglue-Northwest*, vol.83). He also accepted cooptation with prefectural-level officials in 1864 and 1866, and with Mutushan in 1868.

Unlike Ma Hualong, Ma Zhan'ao never really unified such fragmentary *Menhuan* systems in this area but was even squeezed out and forced to stay at his hometown for a while. However, after Zuo Zongtang initiated unprecedented attacks in 1871, the urgent situation again drove

other religious leaders to accept Ma Zhan'ao's military leadership (*Fanglue-Northwest*, vol.259: 5; Wu 1991:106). After a vital victory against Zuo Zongtang's troops in 1872, Ma Zhan'ao successfully convinced his fellows and allies to request cooptation from Zuo. As commented by Lipman (1997:127): "had Ma Zhan'ao been a separatist fantastic, as the typical Muslim leader is often portrayed, he surely would not have behaved as he did after this battle." The relatively fragmentary leadership structure and seemingly "lesser" threat helped his successful capitulation without being massacred by the Qing army. Later, Ma Zhan'ao's bloc became the most effective counter-insurgent force and assisted Zuo Zongtang to exterminate a number of Muslim forces. A cultural confrontation framework cannot explain the non-rebellious turn of this bloc and its ruthless attitudes towards other Muslim communities, including those who shared the same Sufi teaching. A further comparison is followed after introducing another Khafiya mobilization.

Ma Guiyuan in West Gansu: Khafiya Mobilization

Muslim mobilization in Xi'ning originated in religious disputes between two Khafiya suborders and ended with the politicization of the Huashi *menhuan*, the one founded by Ma Laichi.[60] The religious disputes first erupted in the late 1850s, but were pacified by Qing authorities, who were still able to control the situation at that point. During this incident, Ma Guiyuan, the sixth leader of the Huashi *menhuan*, was granted an official title for his flexibility. In the third lunar month of 1862, the religious disputes again turned into feuds (*QSL-Muslim*,

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[60] In the official documents, this dispute was also called "the dispute between old and new teachings," but the meaning was different from the aforementioned "Khafiya-Jahriyya" dispute because the two *Menhuans* were both suborders of Khafiya. In this dispute in Xi'ning, the "old teaching" referred to the "Mufuti" Menhuan, which was founded in the late-17th century under the influence of Afaq Khwaja (1626-1694), the leader of the White Mountain Faction in Xinjiang, who had just been defeated by its rivaling Black Mountain Faction and was on his refugee trip in Gansu; the "new teaching" was "Huashi" *Menhuan* founded by Ma Laichi in the middle 18th century. Their teachings were basically the same; the dispute was merely about competition over religious leadership and resources in Xi'ning (Ding 2013:52-55).

vol.3: 210). Given the lack of military deployment, in the middle of 1863 Qinghai authorities (Yutong) granted Ma Guiyuan an even higher formal title, *sub-prefect* of Xunhua sub-prefecture. Later (1868) Ma Guiyuan was appointed as the Prefect of Xi'ning and his brother was appointed as the military commander of this prefecture. Thus the two brothers occupied the highest civilian and military positions in this prefecture. Intending to become a legitimate, rather than rebellious ruler, Ma Guiyuan effectively maintained order in Xi'ning. To garner the endorsement of Chinese elites, Ma Guiyuan even remodeled Confucian temples. During this period there was no basis for saying Ma Guiyuan's force was "rebellious," given that his religious and political status was fully acknowledged by the provincial and even central authorities.

During Zuo Zongtang's war with Ma Zhao'ao in 1872, Ma Guiyuan brothers helped the Qing army, even though they both belonged to the Huashi *Menhuan* of Khafiya. Later, Ma Guiyuan brothers also sought to serve as brokers between the remaining Shaanxi Hui rebels and the Qing. In other words, more likely than Ma Zhan'ao, the Ma Guiyuan brothers could have been coopted by Zuo Zongtang and served as state agents. However, the increasingly assertive Zuo Zongtang eventually decided to use coercive power to recover Xi'ning and identified the Ma Guiyuan brothers as "rebels" despite their request for cooptation. They were later cheated on and killed by Ma Zhan'ao who had already surrendered to the Qing. Again, the religious interpretation is unable to explain the split between Ma Zhan'ao and the Ma Guiyuan brothers, both of whom belonged to the same Sufi suborder (SHMG vol.1). The religious interpretation is also unable to explain why Zuo Zongtang identified Ma Guiyuan as rebellious, even if Zuo Zongtang generally took the Khafiya as the obedient "old teaching."

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The dynamic nature of the politicization of Sufi suborders can be further demonstrated by comparing the two power centers of the Huashi Menhuan of Khafiya, led respectively by Ma Zhan'ao and Ma Guiyuan. First, they could be either subversive or loyal to the state; Second, they actually became rebellious at different time; Third, they betrayed each other at different points; Fourth, they ended in completely opposite ways. In a nutshell, their same and static religious nature explains little, if anything, about their changing political behaviors and identifications (by the imperial authority) over time and the variations between them.

Summary of Gansu's Muslim Mobilization

In summarizing the three major cases in Gansu province,[61] we get a clear picture of the balkanized politicization of Sufi solidarities and the further fragmentation in some areas, such as the He-Di area. They were clearly not "holy wars"; they accepted the Qing legitimacy most of the time (Lipman 1997:132). Co-religionist consciousness and inter-Sufism disputes played a role in provoking the mobilization, but the development of the mobilization was the result of major Sufi orders' reactions to the emerging situations when the Qing's power was weakened. Led by Sufi leaders, these militarized *Menhuan* forces nevertheless did not aim to topple the Qing imperial regime or to build a Muslim state, but at most sought to govern their controlled turfs. They seldom united together across regions or dispatched combatants outside of their turfs. Finally, even their coordination or split was not determined by whether they belonged to the same Sufi suborders: Ma Hualong supported Shaanxi Hui rebels who mostly followed Gedimu teachings, while framing up Mu Shenghua who belonged to the same Jahriyya suborder; Ma

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[61] Muslim mobilization in Suzhou in far west Gansu was much later than other areas given its distance to the above three areas.

Guiyuan and Ma Zhan'ao betrayed each other even though they both belonged to the same Khafiya suborder.

Interestingly, despite all having requested cooptation, the three major leaders diverged in terms of their political outcomes. Given Ma Hualong and Ma Guiyuan had well legitimatized their authorities while Ma Zhan'ao had been more subversive, few people could have imagined that Ma Hualong and Ma Guiyuan would be identified as rebels while the apparently most rebellious of the three, Ma Zhan'ao, would be co-opted. To some extent, it is precisely because Ma Rulong and Ma Guiyuan accumulated so much physical power and "legitimate" status that they were seen as higher threats in Zuo Zongtang's perspective; while Ma Zhan'ao's comparatively lower power status made him less dangerous. Their divergent outcomes, therefore, were ironically "reversals" to their early achievement in bargaining with the provincial authority.

Their outcomes thus cast doubt on the popular belief among Qing officials, Muslims, and some modern scholars that the Jahriyya was "intrinsically" rebellious while Khafiya was "intrinsically" obedient, even if there might be certain differences between the two at some specific historical periods (such as the late-18th century). This static dichotomy could be further problematized if we compare the factional division of Naqshbandiyya in Gansu and Xinjiang. In the similar religious dispute between the "White Mountain" and "Black Mountain" factions in Xinjiang, "Black Mountaineers" (the counterpart of the Jahriyya) won the disputes and thus became the power holders, while "White Mountaineers" (the counterpart of the Khafiya) were not acknowledged and thus initiated a series of "religious wars" against the Qing Empire for

several generations (Fletcher 1995; Kim 2004; Kim 2012).[62] In short, under different situations, similar kinds of factional divisions within the same Sufism resulted in opposite political behaviors and identifications. The so-called intrinsic connection between either Jahriyya or the White Mountain and "*Jihad*" was thus at most the situational result of distinct political contexts.

Conclusion

To summarize, in the three regions, the Muslim mobilization led to *unlike* (adj.) uprisings; furthermore, some mobilization was even *unlike* (prep.) uprisings at all. Under the same label of 'Hui Rebellion,' the three cases differed from each other and changed from onset to crystallization. As correctly commented by Dillon (1999:43), "For the nineteenth century in particular, the term rebellion or rising that is usually used is quite misleading as it suggests a concerted and united struggle by the Hui against the Manchu Qing Government." A dynamic perspective and relational analysis helps us unpack the myth of the Hui rebellions.

The monolithic ethnic or religious explanation was problematic since pre-existing ethno-religious identities and institutions can be altered and even reserved within a short term and crystallized in distinct and often unanticipated directions. Taking Hui ethnicity as an example: In Yunnan, Hui ethnicity was provoked by its clashes with Han immigrants before this era but was soon largely suppressed; in Shannxi, the previously latent Han-Hui ethnic cleavage was rapidly intensified in the emerging conflicts that were deflected from the joint, defensive mobilization. This was also the case for their religious nature. During this period, not only did the more "radical" and organizational Sufi orders initiate uprisings in Gansu, the more "orthodox"

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[62] Often supported by the Qing's neighboring Khoqand Khanate, Afaq Khwaja's descendants mobilized their White Mountain followers in a number of wars against the Qing in 1757-1759, 1820, 1824, 1826, 1828, 1830, 1847, 1852, 1857, and 1864-1865.

and "tolerant" *Gedimu* also generated extensive mobilization and conflicts in Shaanxi and Yunnan. Both historically "contentious" or "submissive" Sufi suborders became politicized, identified either as legitimate or rebellious at different time points.[63]

This chapter thus demystifies the "Holy War" and/or "ethnic conflicts" by specifying the exact roles religion and ethnicity played in the "ethno-religious" uprisings over time and across spaces (Kalyvas 2008; Brubaker 2015). Applying a dynamic, relational analysis, it highlights the role of changing organizational actors in shaping the direction of unfolding revolution. For example, the prioritization of threats by the Qing court was crucial. It gave far less attention to the two frontier provinces (Gansu and Yunnan) than to Shaanxi which was perceived as the imperial interior. As a consequence, in contrast to Yunnan or Gansu, Muslim forces had little opportunity to build territorial bases in Shaanxi because they were fiercely suppressed from the very onset. In effect, the relational analysis is important also because major historical actors used relational/ecological thinking themselves regarding the deployment and redeployment of their attentions and resources (Brubaker 2004; Abbott 2005).

Methodologically, this chapter illustrates how the dynamic, relational theory can explain cross-sectional variations in conjunction with a process tracing method. Furthermore, it is not the cross-sectional difference plus a single critical juncture that made the divergent outcomes (Falleti and Mahoney 2015:226). A cross-sectional comparison would simply attribute the divergent outcomes to the initial variations across regions, but these pre-existing variations are frequently

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[63] In effect, while Sufism was considered as more "contentious" in China, it was generally perceived as peaceful and tolerant in the broader Muslim world, such as India. For example, the Naqshbandiyya Sufi order presented us multiple faces in terms of its political orientation across continents (Fletcher 1995; Weismann 2007): "The case of the Naqshbandiyya is a valuable one, since it shows how the same brotherhood became very different in its various settings, pointing to the interactions between a tradition, its participants and its environment" (Green 2012:149).

reconfigured in a short term (Lachmann 2000; Abbott 2001). In short, employing appropriate

comparative methods, a genuinely historicized model (Clemens 2007) can account for not only

commonalities (Chapter 4) but also variations (this chapter).

Chapter 6 Conclusion

It is like the eternal return to visit Hobbes for understanding political order and disorder.

One central Hobbesian theme is that the absence of central political authority would cause a total

war of all against all. "For Rebellion," Hobbes says, "is but warre renewed" (Hobbes

1968:360-361). The Hobbesian approach, however, is often criticized by *sociologists* for its

overall individualistic and under-socialized approach (e.g., Parsons 1965). Moreover, the

Hobbesian approach suffers from another limitation—its over-reliance upon anarchy as a

structural condition for pervasive conflict (e.g., Skocpol 1979; Goldstone 1991; Collins 1997).

I start my exploration by problematizing this pitfall: why do large-scale rebellions appear

even when structural conditions are absent and political order has not yet entirely broken down?

Even if the Leviathan exists, I contend, extensive mobilization can still emerge from a series of

situational conflicts and alignments of local organizational forces. Using mid-19th-century

Chinese rebellions as a configurative case, I apply my dynamic, relational model to unpack

significant, surprising puzzles during this era. In this chapter, I will first summarize my findings,

then discuss my model's scope conditions, and finally address its theoretical contributions.

Summary of Findings

The empirical findings of my dissertation are both negative and positive. On the one hand, I

provide a negative case study for the application of structural explanations to the Taiping

Rebellion and other subsequent rebellions. I examined a number of structural conditions (class

structure, state/elite relations, and state capacity) and long-term structural changes (geopolitical

pressure, geo-economic vulnerability, and demographic conditions), finding that they explained

very little of either the origin or development of the mid-19th century rebellions. In addition, I showed that preexisting religious or ethnic identities are poor predictors for the rise and development of the Christian-inspired Taiping Rebellion and Muslim Rebellions. This examination thus points to the limitations of structural models. First, many structural factors are exaggerated in a teleological logic: everything converges as preparation for a great revolution (the Taiping in this case) because of its final outbreak without careful comparison or counterfactual reasoning. Second, even those tenable structural conditions were mainly national causes and offer poor causal explanations for the emergence of specific rebellions. Finally, structural factors themselves are often altered by emergent events and actors, and thus unfold in interactive social processes rather than remaining unchanged.

On the other hand, my dissertation employs a dynamic, relational model to explain how these large-scale rebellions actually emerged, developed, and crystallized. This model presents the new understanding that revolutions and rebellions emerge from processual interactions among multiple organizational actors rather than being determined by pre-existing conditions. Three central points of this model are: 1) insurgent actions are often produced in reaction to the revolutionary process rather than to pre-existing structures; 2) the emergence of rebellions is the result of dynamic interactions among relational actors; 3) the unfolding of rebellions is thus sensitive to temporalities, albeit in patterned ways. This model is crucial to unpack puzzles of transformations, changes, and divergences by uncovering patterns and causal mechanisms from complicated historical processes. Employing different "subnational" or sequential comparative methods in each chapter, I have raised and resolved a few significant and surprising puzzles.

Chapter 3 shows that the Taiping Rebellion—the master and initiator movement—was not born automatically as a product of the preexisting structural conditions; nor did its ideological and organizational strengths play a significant role on the incipient stage. It was rather "initiated" by regional-scale movements and conflicts. Specifically, it was the situational result of interactions among multiple regional militarized forces operating under inadequate Qing military force since the late 1840s. The Taiping's transformation to a rebellion—militarization, concentration, and politicization—was a series of willy-nilly reactions as a new, heterodox religion to emergent hostile and violent circumstances rather than predetermined by any of the macro-structural conditions or its "internal" religious characteristics.

The failure of the "intrinsic" cultural confrontation or "monolithic" ethnic tension as a predictor to explain ethno-religious mobilization is even more evident in the comparative case study of large-scale Muslim uprisings across three provinces during this period. I examined how rebellions emerged and evolved out of different ethno-religious identities and institutions. Under the surface of the seemingly homogenous Muslim Rebellion were three disparate uprisings: de-ethnicization and the divergence of a Muslim ethnic coalition in Yunnan Province, ethnicized conflicts of initially defensive militarization in Shaanxi Province, and balkanized politicization of Sufi solidarities in Gansu Province. None of these were the outcomes of pre-existing ethno-religious conditions, but were the unexpected and unplanned results of major regional actors' reactions to the external Taiping rebels and their iterative interactions with each other. The crystallization of the mobilization was the progressive unfolding of their recursive

reception and reaction to each other's responses. Thus, the initial Muslim mobilizations were crystallized to three unlike uprisings yet contributed to the unprecedented conflicts altogether.

The dynamic, relational model also helps unpack the puzzle of extensive elite insurrection during this period: why did initially counter-rebellion elite-led militias turn into rebellions? I argue that it was not because of pre-existing structural contradictions between the state and elite but rather the unintended consequences of the counter-mobilization by the state and elite in reaction to the rising Taiping rebels. The counter-mobilization caused intensified inter-elite and intra-state cleavages that further drove the formation of rival elite-led blocs and polarizing state patrons. During these intertwined processes, the inter-elite and intra-state cleavages were transposed by state/elite opposition, and initially similar (counter-insurgent) elites progressively diverged as rebels and repressors. Whether militia groups turned into rebels or repressors was a situational result, contingent upon the power and positioning of their major competitor and state patron. Sometimes the same elite reoriented his identity from loyalist to insurgent in the changing political cleavages.

In a nutshell, the dynamic, relational model explains not only the early riser but also latecomers, not only religious and ethnic mobilization but also secular militia rebellions, not only the emergence of rebellions but also their transformations. My model thus uncovers and explains a number of underlying patterns that, while mentioned, have not been sufficiently addressed in extant studies. In doing so, my dissertation enriches our understanding of the largest insurgent civil war in human history.

Scope Conditions

My analysis not only enhances our understanding of these Chinese rebellions that are perhaps unique in scope, duration, and level of violence, but also provides a new theoretical approach that can be used to examine consequential political movements in general. My approach can above all be applied to the analysis of "peripheral revolutions" where insurgent activities simultaneously appear across multiple regions rather than merely the metropolitan city (Kalyvas 2003; Goldstone 2014). Specifically, in historical or contemporary societies where the state has not yet monopolized the legitimate use of collective violence and whose infrastructural power is largely contributed by societal elites (Mann 1986; Tilly 1990; Migdal 2001; Kalyvas 2006; Zhao 2015), insurgent wars display similar patterns and processes of spontaneous mobilization, continuous divide and defection, and prolonged conflicts.

To give an example, let's make a comparison between the 23-year rebellious wave (1850-1873) and the 22-year communist revolution (1927-1949) in China. It is true that the latter was more like a revolution than the former, yet some episodes were strikingly similar during the two periods. Parallel with the Taiping rebels, during the early stage of the communist revolution in the Jingangshan base area in the late 1920s, communists competed with local militias and bandits rather than merely fighting against the nationalist government (Averill 2006). During the Japanese occupation (1937-1945), "many of the battles fought among Chinese had little to do with collaboration or resistance. They were struggles for power and economic spoils that pit central authorities against local authorities; local authorities against each other, bandits against merchants and landlords, secret societies against bandits, Guomindang members against

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Communists, and so on" (Seybolt 2001: 202; also see: Benton 1999:168). The seemingly Japan-China war in Shaoxing county in reality showed "no strong demarcation between the 'sides': united fronts formed and disintegrated and formed again between forces that were presumably antagonistic" (Schoppa 2001:175). In short, under the grand history hides nuanced processes.

My story is also echoed in contemporary cases. Although the modern state largely strengthened its military power and monopolized the legitimate use of coercive power in the second half of the 20th century (Weber 1978; Tilly 1990), similar patterns appeared in a few contemporary developing countries where the state's monopoly of collective violence "remains ongoing and unsolved" (Ahram 2011:8). In Colombia, for example, while the state encouraged self-defense forces to help fight leftist insurgents, some militant groups, "originally formed to assist the army against leftist insurgents, were in alliance with drug cartels" (Ahram 2011:9). Far from the typical description of internal conflict "as dyadic engagements between the state and rebel groups, two-player games of incumbent versus challenger", combats and coalitions are usually across boundaries and complicated (Ahram 2011:8-9; Kalyvas 2006; Mukhopadhyay 2014). Specifically, in a number of contemporary "ethnic" or "religious" rebellions, the actual conflicting line was not necessarily congruent with "ethnic" or "religious" tensions among categorical groups, but triggered more by concrete and shifting cleavages and alliances among elite-led organizations across spatial scopes and scales (Kalyvas 2008; Brubaker 2015).

It is then legitimate to ask whether the dynamic model can also be applied to the "central revolutions" whose main scene remains in a single area—often the metropolitan city (Goldstone

2014). While specific mechanisms are different, in a general sense the dynamic model is applicable given that the central revolution is also comprised of multiple events over time (though not over space) (Zhao 2001; Kurzman 2009). Moreover, the distinction between central and peripheral revolutions is never clear-cut—many central revolutions also have regional dynamics that are parallel with my case, such as the French Revolution (Lefebvre 1947; Tilly 1964; Markoff 1996) and the Cultural Revolution (Walder 2009a; Su 2011). A dynamic model can help us find previously unnoticed patterns and reveal their underlying mechanisms.

Yet the dynamic model does have limitations: it is more suitable for examining long and consequential movements, rather than short and local protests with a clear oppositional structure. Short and small-scale uprisings change little of the overarching structures or relational patterns of major actors, so a parsimonious explanation might be more desirable to these cases. Nevertheless, most consequential movements are indeed complicated enough to require a more sophisticated theoretical model so as to both make the story right and explain certain regularities.

Theoretical Contributions

My dissertation echoes and further contributes to the relational and processual turn in contentious politics (e.g., McAdam *et al*. 2001; Kalyvas 2006; Walder 2009b; Fligstein and McAdam 2012), historical sociology (e.g., Brubaker 1996; Lachmann 2000), and social theory (Emirbayer 1997; Abbott 2001; Sewell 2005). In line with these pioneer works, my dissertation builds a general, dynamic model by: 1) further elaborating the evolving relationship between structures and actions; 2) conceiving this dynamic process in *interactional* more than *institutional* terms; and 3) paying particular attention to the temporalities of revolutionary

unfoldings. These efforts help specify the causalities, relationalities, and temporalities of the dynamic model and thus offer a solid foundation for analyzing consequential movements.

The dynamic model can reveal the very strengths and limitations of each of the other three models. The structural model, if build solidly, is powerful in explaining the onset of a revolutionary wave and thus the major cross-nation variations, yet it misses many nuanced details that make the actual revolutionary happening possible, and proves poor in explaining subsequent revolutionary processes. An eventful model will fill in some gaps left by the structural model by adding contingency and agency, yet it is unable to explain recurring patterns in seemingly peculiar and irrelevant occurrences. An endogenous model identifies the critical juncture and certain internal, sequential mechanisms among subsequent events, but it loses sight of how (nevertheless changing) structural conditions not only affect the critical juncture but also subsequent sequences as open-ended processes. It is true that the dynamic model has more complex explanations than the structure model while being not sufficiently eventful. However, it can explain far more than other models without losing sensitivity in historical contingency. After all, given social actors are relational and reflexive, consequential movements often emerge and unfold via a sequence of unintended consequences, and are crystallized as the results of these relational actors' recursive reception and reaction to each other's response.

To make imperfect metaphors, the four models characterize the social processes of revolutions as four distinct natural phenomena: earthquake, forest fire, extreme weather, and complications of illness. The structural model implies rebellions as earthquakes—the first shock might make the largest ruptures, but the shock itself and its many aftershocks, are still results of

long-term crustal movement (Goldstone 1991: 35-36; Pierson 2004). The endogenous model takes the metaphor of a forest fire—the first, accidental fire is the critical juncture, while the latter is endogenous process of fire spread (Biggs 2005). The eventful model could be said to find similarity between revolution and extreme weather as both are embedded in chaotic systems—like the eventful understanding of the revolution, small changes to one part of the weather system can grow to have larger effects on the system as a whole. It is thus difficult, if not impossible, to accurately predict weather or revolutionary unfolding, more than a few days in advance (Abbott 2016). Finally, the dynamic model theorizes rebellions as complications of illnesses due to the declining immune system. Instead of the preexisting poor physiological condition and the first syndrome alone, it is the increasingly weakening body that continually reproduces more serious complications. Later illnesses are not necessarily diffused from the first one, but are formed as the result of the changing physical conditions.[1]

My dissertation thus makes a second contribution by raising a new approach to understanding temporality and turning points in consequential movements. In contrast to the conventional dichotomy of order/disorder or settled/unsettled periods (e.g., Huntington 1968; McAdam 1982; Swidler 1986; Goldstone 1991), I conceive the emergence of major movements as a trilogy comprised of political order, endemic rebellions, and the groundbreaking revolution. The actual rise of the revolution is the first successful attempt among many preceding "endemic rebellions" that continually tried to disrupt the "political order." We thus need to carefully examine and compare certain local relational structures and emergent situations in order to build

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[1] To be noted, the metaphor of illness by no means implies any negative judgment on revolutions or rebellions. It is just used as a way to characterize the similar social process.

a non-teleological explanation. Furthermore, the effects of early turning points are reinforced and articulated by subsequent turning points that appear in similar open-ended processes, so turning points make more sense when viewed retrospectively rather than prospectively. Overall, this theorization of temporality sheds new lights on how to explain the "unthinkable," "surprising," and "impossible" origin of great revolutions (Kuran 1991; Beissinger 2003; Kurzman 2009).

My thesis makes another minor contribution by bringing military power back into the center of studies on the state and revolutions (e.g., Mann 2012; Tarrow 2015). In studying armed struggles, we need to treat political and military power as two overlapping aspects that are contested by multiple state and non-state actors. It is particularly crucial to examine the coercive power of these actors from a dynamic perspective and in relational terms, when the internal division of political/military and state-society boundaries are continually unmade and remade during an insurgent war.

Finally, given that studies of revolution often provide great opportunities for developing new ontological and epistemological thinking (Abrams 1982: chapter 7; Sewell 1996b; Paige 1999), my dissertation is also about a general model of social change: social change is less patterned or deterministic than the structural model implies, but also less accidental or contingent than the eventful model suggests. Wherever collective action alters the structure which then affects subsequent processes, the dynamic model could be applied, as shown in studies on the making of nationalist mobilization (Brubaker 1996), the rise of Christian democratic parties (Kalyvas 1996), the decline of great empires (Lachmann 2009), the relentless emergence of industrial capitalism (Goldstone 2001), the formation of early modern international order (Nexon

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2009), and the devolution and eventual birth of human civilization (Mann 1986). In line with these works, my dissertation contends that structures should be examined within processes of interactions among multiple forces, rather than taken as fixed preexisting entities.

Weber once said that politics is an art of the possible: "that man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible" (Weber 1946:128). Channeling the unthinkable into the inevitable, revolution is perhaps the finest of this kind. Thinking from the standpoint of revolutionaries: the awful, old system would not automatically generate a "brave new world" (as assumed by the structural model); there is also no such magic domino effect that once started, successive actions will automatically follow up (as assumed by the endogenous model); finally, revolutionaries "make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please" (Marx 1978:595) (in contrast to the eventful model). The trick of this "possible art" is that revolutionaries analyze rapidly shifting situations, especially at certain historical turns, and more importantly, make next moves to further change the situation to their benefit. However, for many reasons, especially because of unexpected reactions from other purposive actors, the situation seldom changes exactly as revolutionaries plan, and thus they have to reanalyze and react to the new situations until realizing the final mission. Revolutionaries make the continuing dialogue between structures and actions indispensible; we scholars make the representation of this dynamic dialogue possible.

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