

STATE-BUILDING  
AND THE POLITICS OF FOOD  
IN JAPAN AND CHINA

by

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ABSTRACT

Charles Tilly, whose work inspired this study, hypothesized that food control was a crucial variable in the state-building process in European history. This study compares the historical cases of Japan and China to see to what extent this hypothesis holds true in the Asian historical context. The analysis is based on three themes: how food relates to the legitimacy of authority, the nature of interest group competition over food resources, and how political authority faced food crises in the form of food shortage, famine, and food protest, as challenges to its legitimacy.

Among the conclusions of the study, it was found that where food was not a traditionally explicit part of the ideology of legitimacy, as in Japan and Europe, food crises successfully challenged the legitimacy of authority and contributed to a dynamic process of state-building. On the other hand, where food was an explicit part of the ideology of legitimacy, as in China, the political system and legitimacy of authority resisted change and withstood many serious food crises.

Other theorists have pointed out the importance of such variables as the control over the means of violence by political authority as important to state-building, and concentrated on the penetration capability of the state. This study makes a contribution to state-building theory by showing that the "power to grant" and hence the state's distribution capability is equally important in shaping the state-building process.

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Lucian W. Pye

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CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

STATE-BUILDING AND THE POLITICS OF FOOD

In the early state-building period of various countries, political authorities learned that the regulation of food production and distribution was central to power and legitimacy. He who controlled food had an ultimate form of power, and the failure to hold adequate control over food resources could strengthen the power of opponents. In cases where political authority made the provision of food an explicit part of its ideology of legitimacy, the failure to insure an adequate supply of food resources would threaten legitimacy.

These simple truths about the relationship of food to power and legitimacy were universally appreciated as long as power was closely associated with the control of land. This control over food was the very essence of feudalism, with the lord in his manor and the peasant or serf in the fields.

With the origin of the modern state, however, supreme power and authority became removed from this direct and essentially personal tie to land and food control. The process of creating a centralized authority obscured the basic connection between power and food. The attention of leaders was all too easily diverted to other sources of power and legitimacy. Yet the basic fact that food control was a fundamental source of power remained. The result was that in country after country, tensions and conflicts over food politics caused profound disturbances during the complex processes of state-building. How extreme these disturbances were depended upon many factors, including the character of

the former ties between power and food, the degree to which legitimacy had been traditionally tied to responsibilities for nurturance, the skill of the state-builders to insure food supplies to the people, and many other considerations which we shall examine in this study. Let us underline the fact that historically, food has been a key to power, and the failure of authorities to provide food has universally been a cause for protest and violence.

The examples of the relationship of food protest to politics are scattered throughout time and space. There is historical evidence of the phenomenon of food protest as early as the Roman Empire during the rule of Commodus. Commodus established a monopoly on corn, which was widely believed to have been responsible for a famine in 189 A.D. Eventually a great popular upheaval occurred and grew to such proportions that the Praetorian cavalry had to be summoned to subdue the mobs. The rebels nearly killed Commodus himself. They were only appeased when the head of Cleander, Commander of the Praetorian guard, was put out for public display.<sup>1</sup>

In France in 1775, the Guerre des Farines (the Flour War) broke out between grain merchants and local market-town consumers just outside Paris. Louis XIV's Finance Minister, Turgot, had made the unwise decision to establish free trade in grain a year after a major crop failure. Prices rose rapidly, causing food rioters to storm the markets all around the capital and eventually in Paris. They forced grain dealers to sell at what the rioters considered the "just price". Similar riots erupted throughout Europe from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup>

The examples are neither limited to the distant past nor to Western societies. In January 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat raised food prices in order to reduce a substantial budget deficit. Thousands of students and workers marched in the cities chanting, "With blood and lives we will bring prices down!". They shouted anti-Sadat and pro-Nassar slogans. Nasser, Sadat's predecessor, was remembered for food-price controls and subsidies, which he established as part of his Arab Socialism program. The next day, Sadat cancelled the price increases.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the commonly-held notions about the "passive Indian", food riots have been common in many parts of India. In the past decade, they have erupted in as diverse areas as Calcutta, Nagpur, Gujarat, Bihar and Mysore.<sup>4</sup>

Food riots have also occurred in Socialist and Communist countries. In December 1971, five thousand Chilean women demonstrated against food shortages, provoking widespread violence in Santiago city in opposition to the Marxist regime. President Allende declared a state of emergency and announced that the government would take control over food production.<sup>5</sup> Although effectively contained, the People's Republic of China has had its problems with hungry demonstrators also. In January 1979, one hundred angry Chinese peasants marched as near they could to the resident compound of Communist Party Chairman Hua Kuo-feng to present their grievances. They had made their way from Kiangsu Province, reputed to be one of China's most fertile provinces, and refused to leave Peking until Chairman Hua himself would address their grievances. They shouted:

We're tired of being hungry! Down with oppression! ... We don't have enough to eat. The influence of the Gang of Four has not been eliminated, and there are still people who oppress us. We only have one gin of rice per person per day, not enough vegetables and sometimes a little pork!<sup>6</sup>

What Poles refer to as "the Golden October" began in the summer of 1956 in Poznan, when transport workers marched up to the central plaza chanting "Bread and Freedom!". After three days of fighting, Wladyslaw Gomulka, the Polish Communist Party leader, was able to restore order. He was not so lucky in 1970, however. The announcement of food price increases in that year provoked an uprising of shipyard workers who marched with chains and pipes on the Party Headquarters in the Baltic city of Gdansk. Rioting soon spread throughout the Baltic ports. Within a week, Gomulka was replaced by Edward Gierek, who was obliged to freeze food prices for five years. The subsidy to maintain food price levels reached \$5 billion per year by 1976, prompting the government to announce food price rises of up to one hundred percent. Immediately, seven hundred factory workers went on strike, refusing to resume work until prices were lowered to their previous levels. They tore up railroad tracks outside the capital and seriously interrupted production. Polish political leaders decided to postpone the increases. Then once again, in the summer of 1980, massive strikes beset Poland after what started as an industrial worker response to meat price increases. By the time the strikes ended, Poland's Prime Minister and other high-ranking political leaders were dismissed and Gierek himself was replaced.<sup>7</sup>

In several countries food issues have precipitated dramatic changes in political leadership. For example, Pakistan had one of its most

severe food deficits in the year 1966. Rising food costs made for an intensifying unrest which contributed to Ayub Khan's decline from power in 1969. Thereafter, food shortage became a part of the symbolism used by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in his stride to gain power. One of the major slogans in Bhutto's campaign against Ayub Khan was the demand for "Roti, Kapra and Makan" ("Bread, Clothing and Housing").<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps the most remarkable recent example illustrating the interplay between food and politics is that of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has a long history of rice subsidization, which grew out of a World War II rationing scheme. Rice was heavily subsidized by colonial governments under the British and conservative governments after independence in the 1930s to 1950s, financed by the country's high export earnings. However, after this period when even half the rice had to be imported at high cost, the policy was continued for political reasons. By 1953, food subsidies approached 30% of government expenditure, so Prime Minister D.S. Senanayake (of the United National Party) decided to eliminate the subsidization program. Widespread public protest resulted forcing him to resign. His successor, Sir John Kotelawala (U.N.P.) reluctantly restored some of the rice subsidy, but the opposition under S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike (United Front) successfully exploited the cutbacks in food support in the 1956 election.

The U.N.P. under Dudley Senanayake, son of the former prime minister, returned briefly to office after Bandaranaike's assassination, only to be voted out of office a few months later on the rice issue. In 1962, Prime Minister Mrs. Bandaranaike (S.L.F.P.) announced she would have to reduce the subsidies by 25% due to a rise in the price of rice on the world

market. Again general public upheaval forced her to retreat and the Minister of Finance had to resign. In the 1970 election campaign, the promise to restore the rice ration to former levels brought the opposition to power. The current President J.R. Jayewardena (U.N.P.) came to power in 1977, on the promise to increase rice rations and so the politics of the rice subsidy seems to continue in Sri Lanka.<sup>9</sup>

From all these cases, one might conclude that food shortages inevitably result in political instability or riots. Yet for much of history this would not hold, for there have been long and frequent periods of food shortages which stimulated no violent responses. One must inquire, for example, why food riots appeared only from the 17th to the 19th centuries in Europe and not in other periods when there were serious food shortages.<sup>10</sup> One must seek an explanation for the different timing of riots from country to country. If one were to pursue these case studies, it would become clear that there is no case for a simple "hunger leads to riot" causality, i.e. food determinism. In fact, the most surprising gaps in the political expression of food demands have been during and immediately after famines. Many of the famines for which we have documentation were not accompanied by uprisings. Tilly says for Europe that no protest occurred at the time of the most severe food scarcities. Very little is known about the relationship between famines and political activism, and one is left with unsatisfactory conjectures attributing the apparent absence of activity to physiological feebleness.



### Food and State-Building

An examination of food protest in historical context reveals its importance to the formation of the kind of modern state that emerged in Europe. The histories of many countries reveal that tendencies towards integration and centralization of food resources were constantly in dynamic tension with those towards disintegration and reintegration in a new form. The turning point from one trend to the other was often war, epidemic, famine, sudden population change, or political usurpation.

Government food policies and food protest were only aspects of a much larger process of what we neatly call "history". In an analysis of the importance of food in state-building, food can be used as a tracer to diagnose underlying social processes in historical perspective. The historical perspective enables one to see that on one level social patterns repeat over time, maintaining their basic functions. On another level they have an evolutionary developmental dimension such that their form changes. There is neither a unidirectional nor a predictable pattern. Social forces have a creative spirit which rises and falls in ultimately unforeseeable waves. Although the evolution of certain patterns might lead in a certain direction, some forces, political, economic or indeed natural cataclysmic, may cause a very great divergence from the assumed course.

It is important to clarify at the outset what we mean by "food" and "control over food". "Food" will be used to refer to a society's dietary staple, which is usually its main source of protein and/or calories. In most cases this is a cereal grain such as wheat or rice, but the staple item varies from region-to-region and economy-to-economy. The task of

"controlling food" may seem simple, but it is only deceptively so. Food can be controlled at many points in the production, distribution and consumption processes. Food control thus entails no less than control over land, cultivators' labor, food crops and food instorage, and some control over market mechanisms and trade. We shall discuss only the most significant means of food control in the particular kind of economy in question and the policy instruments used to implement that control.

The work of Charles Tilly has provided valuable insight into the importance of food protest to the state-building process. Tilly's work on Europe, and to a lesser extent that of E.P. Thompson, provide us with key variables which guide us in our study of a broader study of food-related issues and how to relate them to the state-building process in Japan and China.<sup>11</sup> Our study expands on their ideas and analytic framework and applies them to our Asian case study materials.

### Approaches

Tilly explained how governments from the 16th to the 19th centuries in Europe found that they had to be concerned with food supplies in order to maintain public order and protect their legitimacy. He thus raised the issue of the importance of food control to the maintenance of political legitimacy. We shall explore these dimensions by examining the nature of food control and the ideology of political legitimacy for our case studies.

The studies of Tilly and Thompson on various aspects of state-building indicated certain food-related variables as key to their approaches. Tilly was concerned with how political authority sought to

regulate food supplies in order to maintain public order and protect its legitimacy. He noted that a breakdown in regulation led to the emergence of food riots during a certain period in Europe. Thompson was concerned with the importance of an ideology of a right to food by consumers, which he claims grew out of a government policy to regulate food-marketing practices for the benefit of popular food demands. According to Thompson, government policies in effect created a "moral economy" by their implicit paternalism in food provision matters. He pointed out that the shift from public to private control over food distribution brought about a decline in the "moral economy". The adherence to "moral economy" values persisted, however, and the tension between these traditional expectations and the reality of new market forces caused food riots to occur.

Our study uses the insights of these scholars to test the relevance of their variables in the cases of two Asian countries, namely, Japan and China. However, our study is not limited to an effort to explain food protest, but rather seeks to examine the scope of food-related issues and their relevance to the state-building processes in the particular case studies chosen. The approach we use is based on our synthesis of the variables shown to be important by these authors in the European context. We shall offer a comparative perspective by describing the role of food in shaping the particular kinds of states that emerged in Japan and China. We shall rely upon the above authors, particularly Charles Tilly, to represent the story of how food issues related to state-building for Europe. First we shall describe the food-related variables which have come to light through Tilly's work. Then we shall

proceed to our synthesis of the variables and present them in the form of themes of political analysis. Finally we describe how we shall approach our Asian case studies which form the material for this thesis.

### Variables

Ideologies incorporated norms and values about the responsibilities of political authority in food matters and an expression of political legitimacy. On the one hand, there were the state-supported ideologies which shaped food policies. On the other hand, there were the popular beliefs concerning obligations of authority to provide food and the rights of the masses to demand a certain subsistence level. These popular notions were the grounds on which the masses accepted the legitimacy of political authority. The state and popular level ideologies concerning food matters did not always match and, therefore, as Tilly and Thompson explained, food rioting might occur.

Tilly has pointed out the importance of the level of political control over food or what he refers to as "the locus of food control". Drawing from the examples of several European countries, he demonstrates that as the locus of food control shifted from public to private control tensions occurred between consumers and those perceived as responsible for the change.

In early modern England, E.P. Thompson explained how government policies in Tudor England sought to regulate food marketing to ensure that food flowed directed from producer to consumer. Grain merchants and wholesale dealers were kept under control, permitted to buy and sell only after the interests of the consumer were met. This policy was strictly

adhered to in the Tudor era by local magistrates who directed police supervision of market transactions and made for a consumer-protectionist mode of marketing. These procedures dated from an earlier epoch and were conceived to deal with food distribution in time of famines. They created the consumer expectation of subsistence provision by political authority. As the market economy grew, and policies began to favor a free market ideology of food marketing, the merchants and wholesalers were given the upperhand. The consumer was no longer protected and as a result felt increasingly vulnerable to market forces and food shortages beyond his control. Their only recourse was to mob and riot in an effort to restore the "former rules" protecting their interests in such matters and the quality and price of foods.

A third variable important in understanding how food was important to state-building is food distribution. In Europe, Tilly states that as the government bureaucracy grew, as the military and government staff expanded and settled in the urban areas, the food demand increased and obliged the government to siphon off greater and greater amounts of the food surplus from the rural areas. Due to increased population pressures on the land, more producers became landless labor. A gradual "proletarianization" of the labor force occurred as more producers had to seek wage labor and migrate to the urban areas from the rural areas. The tensions involved in this transition gave rise to a spate of food-rioting in many rural areas all over Europe. In combination with growing unrest in the urban areas, these food riots challenged the legitimacy of political authorities in many countries of Europe.

The size and type of military force and how it was fed is also an important aspect of how food was distributed. Was a military reserve called up from peasant ranks in time of need? Were these peasants as soldiers now adding to the food demanded by the government? Or was the military allowed to billet off the countryside? Was it a regular conscripted military which formed a permanent source of food demand?

The growth of population and urbanization was accompanied by the development of the market economy. Therefore, another important variable related to our subject is how the market or pre-market form of food exchange influenced the nature of food control, distribution, and the occurrence of food protest. In the pre-market economy, one way of gaining power was to gain control over cultivable, productive land. Control was determined by land ownership, inheritance practices and land tenure arrangements. Another way was to harness the labor of the cultivating class. Cultivators might be full-time food producers, but more typically they were made to render other labor services as well, to serve in the military, to participate in local construction projects, or engage in transportation. Some were made primarily to grow food to satisfy the demand of an urban center, or to grow cash crops. These producers were thus obliged to purchase food in order to meet household needs. Besides labor services, taxation on land was the major vehicle by which food was extracted from producers by the government. In addition to land taxes, taxes were also at times levied on households or per capita.

The emergent market economy changed the nature of control over food resources. The monetization of the economy bolstered the position of

commercial interest groups. Pricing, trade, transport levies, and licensing, became relatively more important ways of controlling food by these groups as well as by the government. Governments came to realize that the expansion of commerce and trade were important sources of revenues.

A list of these variables would include the issue of government food control, the ideology of legitimacy and the place of food in that legitimacy, the degree of development of a market system, the importance of the military, population pressures on land resources, and food protest. The other variables of population pressure on land and food protest have already been sufficiently discussed above to demonstrate their importance to the subject of food and state-building. Next we shall discuss our synthesis of the issues as described above.

### The Politics of Food

Food may be seen as a political resource, a quality it shares with all vital and scarce commodities. Food has been at the nexus of conflict between political authority and various groups seeking power as well as conflict among the groups themselves. Newly-formed political authorities sought to control food resources for two basic reasons. They controlled food first to maintain public order and political stability, and second, to protect their legitimacy. In order to ensure this twofold task, they had to be able to distribute food to certain critical groups. However, authority could not control all the channels of food flow directly. It had to rely on certain groups to exercise indirect control over food. These groups were particularly crucial in the authorities' eyes and had to be kept satisfied in order to keep peace in the society at large.

Conflict over food resources also took place among various interest groups. Some tried to control food as a means of gaining power, while others primarily wanted the food itself and had to use political strategies to obtain it. These latter were often groups at the periphery. They lacked effective political leverage and hence often had to be mobilized by members from other more politically powerful groups.

In general, food conflict influenced bargaining strategies and coalition-making among various social groups, including political authority. It is thus important in analyzing historical situations to see who controlled what proportion of the food supply and to what extent competing interest groups were able to engage in coalition-making to further their food demands. Also one must understand how authorities perceived their legitimacy and their hold over food relative to that of other social groups. Finally, as already mentioned, one should consider what ideologies related to food rights and responsibilities and were held by whom.

The problems of food demand were to a great extent foreseeable by political authorities. However, there were also some events affecting food demand and supply which were unforeseeable. These unforeseeable events, which we shall call "food crises", could have been the catalysts of change. We shall define these broadly to include famines, food shortages and collective food protest. Food crises changed authority's perception of the who should obtain how much food, i.e. the relative importance of the demands and interests of various social groups. Food crises also caused change in the social groups themselves. Since they were affected by food crises to varying degrees, they reassessed their old alliances and sought to forge new ones.



As background to our study, we must say a word about what is meant by the "modern state" and its formation in the "state-building process". These definitions have been discussed in quite an extensive literature. For our purposes we have relied on some basic concepts from Max Weber's Economy and Society, from the major thrust of "development" theorists, and from the vast amount of historical scholarship on subjects related to our subject.<sup>12</sup>

Weber identified "ideal types" of authority and bases of legitimacy. He discussed in great detail the characteristics of the patriarchal-patrimonial, feudal and modern-bureaucratic states based on a wealth of knowledge about world history. We rely on his theoretical definitions and insights to guide us in our approach through the historical material in our case studies. The literature on political development enables us to conceptualize issues as a political scientist and to express our analysis of what we call the "politics of food". These issues or "themes" will be:

1. Power, legitimacy and the control over food resources,
2. Interest group conflict over food resources, and
3. Food crises as catalysts of social change.

The historical sources have not only provided the data for this study, but have in many cases pointed out important issues relevant to our study.

## Themes

### Theme One : Power, Legitimacy and the Control over Food Resources

First we shall study the relationship between power and control over food resources. This includes the many ways land was allocated and held, the demands made on cultivators' labor, and the tax system. These were usually important indicators of how government controlled food in the pre-market economy. As the economy became increasingly monetized, the ways of controlling food became more indirect and complex. It is not possible to account for all the ways in which food was controlled in the market economy without virtually describing the interrelated facets of the entire economy. In discussing monetized economies, therefore, we limit ourselves to tax and price policies as they related directly to food. In the case studies, the transition from a predominantly subsistence or pre-market economy to a predominantly monetized market economy will show how food control policies changed.

We shall also examine what were the ideologies promoted by political authority. How did these ideologies conceive of how food should be distributed by authority and by what means did it seek to do so?

### Theme Two : Interest Group Conflict Over Food Resources

We have seen that food is a vital and scarce commodity and that there is a close connection between gaining power and the control over food. Various social groups, therefore, have contended among themselves and with the dominant political authority for direct and indirect control over food resources. All groups may have some control over food, but

those which exercised greater control also exercised greater political power.

Furthermore, groups formed alliances to advance their interests. We shall examine the groups which vied for control over food, what were their strategies of coalition-making and how these changed over time. This is a dynamic process both because their interests and strategies changed over time and because new social groups emerged at different periods in history.

### Theme Three : Food Crises, Catalysts of Social Change

There are many types of food crises, which include famines, food shortages and food-related protest. Food crises may have been caused or exacerbated by a number of factors: meteorological factors such as extremes of temperatures, droughts, floods and the like; economic factors including the transformation from a predominantly subsistence economy to a market economy; and political factors, which include the deliberate or negligent handling of a food situation which could lead to or exacerbate food crises. We shall also examine the counterpart of ideologies which uphold the legitimacy of authority by looking at any ideologies legitimizing rebellion. Was there a rationale hidden in the legitimizing ideology itself which would justify rebellion under certain circumstances?.

### The Asian Cases

In this study we examine the politics of food and state-building in Japan and China and compare their experiences with that of Europe. Although many political and cultural institutions were shared by Japan and China, their processes of state-building were quite different. We shall examine food control and political authority in these two countries and inquire whether food provision was an explicit or implicit part of the ideology of legitimacy. We shall see the nature and level of interest group competition over food in both countries. Lastly, we shall see how food crises threatened or failed to threaten the legitimacy of authority. In a concluding chapter we shall then discuss our propositions about the manner in which food needs and provision were handled by these countries and how it shaped their particular state-building experiences.

In early Japanese history, there were many contacts with the outside world. However, from about the 7th century, Japan entered a long feudal period of isolation, which lasted up to the late nineteenth century. During its feudal experience, Japan was in reality a number of autonomous domains ruled by powerful lords. Therefore, the responsibility of food provision rested with these lords at the local level rather than with the central authority. There was a tension between these local power groups and the center, and political legitimacy tended to shift between political authorities at the local and central levels. The provisioning of food for the masses was not an explicit part of the legitimacy of authority in Japan, outside a few examples of benevolent emperors strong enough to enact such measures. Nor was rebellion ever sanctioned. Thus

when riots and rebellions over food issues occurred, they contributed to the breakdown of the existing political system and gave rise to a new form.

In China's state-building experience, despite the political domination of China by many non-Chinese cultures and the divisive influences local power groups exerted, China's imperial system and the values and traditions that were part of it, were remarkably durable. China was for an extended period of its history a crossroads of intermingling cultures. Many of the non-Chinese ethnic populations established kingdoms in various parts of the territory of China, and with the changing tides of history came to gain or lose political viability. A type of feudalism appeared very early in Chinese history in the Chou era, followed by the development of a centralized, highly bureaucratized empire. The empire is said to have lasted from 221 B.C. to 1911. However, the empire was by no means a continuous, homogeneous polity. There were alternating periods of disintegration of central rule, refeudalization, and periods of highly centralized rule. Nevertheless, the durability of many of the basic features of the imperial system and its resistance to modernization trends characterized China's political development.

The legitimacy of authority in China endured many food crises in the form of both famines and protest. Both China and Japan have known serious food shortages. Japan came closer to Europe's experience of having agricultural and industrial sectors of the economy develop so that the dangers of unemployed surplus labor facing long-term famines did not

arise. Nevertheless, there were periods of serious food shortages as well as famines in Japan, and this fact enables us to trace the similarities and contrasts with Europe. However, the scale and scope of famines and food shortages in Japan never reached the proportion they did in China. China, on the other hand, had a longer history of famines from earliest times up into the twentieth century. Despite the severity and frequency of food crises in the form of famines in China, however, the legitimacy of the imperial authority managed to last. We shall argue that this may be attributed to the fact that food provision was an explicit part of its legitimacy.

For both Japan and China, we shall examine the historical material along the lines of the themes we have traced above. We shall find that the development of Japan, as it evolved from feudalism, to become a highly centralized modern state, followed the European pattern. The disruption of local authority and the establishment of a new form of central authority was the occasion for widespread rice riots. The ties between daimyo (lord) and peasant, which had given the daimyo legitimacy and power and the peasant security, was broken and replaced by market forces. The new central authorities were slow to acknowledge that they would have to assume responsibilities for food supplies.

China, on the other hand, followed a different path from Japan and Europe. From the earliest establishment of the empire, imperial authority was explicitly linked to the control of food supplies through its ideology of legitimacy. The legitimacy of local authorities was derived from that of the central authority and was more closely tied to the control of the land. Local authorities were less explicit about

control over local food supplies than was the case for Japan and Europe. In China, the peasant and the landlord, for different reasons, had a common interest in the stability of the highest authorities. Thus, tensions between peasant and landlord were muted. Furthermore, the transition to the modern state did not entail a change in the concepts of the responsibilities and legitimacy of the central authority. Yet, the realities of food politics played a major role in struggles among those who would command the modern Chinese state.

With this hint of the differences we shall be finding in our two case studies, let us now turn to the first of them, the Japanese case.

PART I : JAPAN

Throughout Japanese history aspirants to positions of political power learned that a prerequisite to gaining and maintaining power was the control over food resources. This control meant harnessing cultivable land, peasants' labor and food itself in such a way as to serve desired ends. Effective control also implied an understanding of the entire food chain from production to distribution to consumption, and the selection of the most effective points of intervention. Furthermore, realistic plans of intervention required a strategy of how to deal with groups having independent interests in controlling food supplies. Thus in the area of food regulation as in other areas, the process of seeking political power necessitated compromise and coalition-making.

For those who gained positions of power, the immediate concern was how to attain legitimacy. At each stage in Japanese history, the prevailing concept of legitimacy subsumed some notions about obligations and responsibilities for the supply and control of food, but the nature of the obligations changed. In the early history of Japan, imperial rule rested on a charismatic religious basis of legitimacy, which in part drew inspiration from the Buddhist notion of benevolence. A manifestation of that benevolence was the obligation to nurture the people. In later history, military rulers relied on a traditional basis of legitimacy based on the Neo-Confucian values of reverence towards authority and absolute obedience. Although they had to be responsible for food supply regulation, their values did not entail any comparable sense of obligation to nurture the people. On the contrary, the masses were



expected to labor for political authority and derive a sense of moral goodness from the performance of that duty.

As political authority's perception of how to maintain legitimacy changed over time, so did its perception of food obligations and food priorities. In addition to many environmental factors, these perceptions were influenced by the contention amongst various interest groups for control over food resources and the occurrence of food crises. These crises were sometimes in the form of supply scarcities or in the form of popular protest over access to food. All crises generated pressures on authority to order its priorities in such a way as to ensure its legitimacy.

In this study we shall note the high points of Japanese history up to the modern era, which illuminate the relationship between food control and the political processes thematized in the Introduction. To facilitate this task, we have organized the material into three separate chapters corresponding to each theme. Restating them, the themes describe how food control relates to : 1) the establishment of political power and the maintenance of the legitimacy of authority, 2) the making of coalitions and of opposition groups, and 3) the handling of food crises. What should emerge is an understanding of food politics as a dynamic process contributing to the evolution of new forms of state. Below we shall briefly sketch the outlines of this history for Japan. The time chart below is based on conventional historical periodization for Japan and will serve as guide to our use of such terms as "pre-feudal," "feudal," and "modern".

Time Chart for Japan

Yama to	_____	ca. 300 - 710	(pre-feudal)
Nara	_____	710 - 784	
Heian	_____	794 - 1185	
Kamakura	_____	1185 - 1333	(feudal)
Nambokucho	_____	1334 - 1392	
Ashikaga	_____	1338 - 1573	
		(Muromachi)	
		(Sengoku)	
Tokugawa	_____	1600 - 1867	
Meiji	_____	1868 - 1912	(modern)
Taisho	_____	1912 - 1926	

The pre-feudal period in Japan is characterized by a pattern of predominantly localized forms of food control where clan chiefs held positions of authority. Their power stemmed from superior military force, legitimized through the sanctions provided by clan gods. The essence of this sanctioning of legitimacy was closely related to problems of food. In the early feudal period, these patterns of food control continued, at times becoming more centralized. By the late feudal period of the Tokugawa Shogunate, food control became much more centralized than previously. The control of the Tokugawa Shogunate was indirect and reliant upon a class of lords (daimyō), who exercised nearly full autonomy in their fiefs.

Within this historical context, the concept of the Shogun's legitimacy and its relationship to food was new and involved obligations of a more indirect and subtle kind. The lords were still responsible for their retainers, but in addition, had to fulfill obligations to the Shogun by extracting food resources from the peasantry. In order to build a notion of legitimacy consistent with a more elaborate hierarchy of power relations, the Japanese had to turn to the more absolutist concepts of obligation and duty found in Neo-Confucianism.<sup>1</sup> Some concept of "nurturance" remained a part of the legitimacy of the Shogunate as political authority, but "nurturance" took on a more symbolic character in the relation between the Shogun and daimyō. However, the daimyō maintained their traditional legitimacy in relation to the peasantry, which was more directly tied to the concept of "nurturance". Thus the development of new bases of legitimacy at the

level of central authority created strains between the daimyō and the peasantry at the lower level.

In the first chapter of this Part I, we shall see how the legitimacy of central rule was weakened by the tensions between the peasants and daimyō, on the one hand, and the daimyō and central rule, on the other. The significant role of the developing commercial economy will also be discussed. These political and economic pressures gave impetus to the formation of a new state, the Meiji regime, which was established as a rationalized, bureaucratic state of an absolutist kind. Food was still managed primarily for government needs, but the class of lords and outward signs of feudalism were eliminated. Thus each form of rule had its own way of dealing with control over food supplies. As the pattern of rule changed, so did the nature of that control in the production, distribution and consumption of food.

In the second chapter, we shall examine the ways in which contending interest groups used various political strategies involving food to gain power and challenge the legitimacy of authority. During early history, conflicts were largely among the elite. Later, conflict expanded to become a confrontation between merchantile interests and aristocrats. Finally, this conflict led to the formation of a coalition among anti-Tokugawa interest groups, which eventually brought down the Tokugawa Shogunate and brought about the creation of the modern Japanese state.

The last chapter of this section devoted to Japan reviews the history of food crises and the challenges they posed to the legitimacy of authority. In early Japanese history, food crises, as defined above, were largely handled locally without much interference from central

authority. Food riots, as defined by Tilly, did not occur yet.

Most protest took the form of flight from the land. In the early feudal period when groups began to express their grievances, their efforts were directed against the local authorities, because their understanding of authority did not extend to a central authority. The nature of protest and demands for a share of food resources were not clear.

For much of Japan's early history, most people were concerned with basic survival. The notion of protest for one's subsistence was not apparent in any formal ideology nor in people's behavior. When incidences of popular rebellion began to occur, the masses of rebels were often mobilized by a small group of leaders. These leaders were often persons of higher social status who had a different concept of authority from that of the masses. This was the character of protest in the pre-feudal and much of the early feudal era in Japan.

Starting in the later feudal period, the nature of protest and demands for a share in food resources became clearly articulated as the institutions of state developed, and as the ideologies came to embody a notion of a right to food resources. Ironically, the ideologies used for legitimizing rule in earlier periods became the driving force behind groups challenging that legitimacy in this period.

There were a number of famines and food shortages which led to serious monetary and fiscal problems, and increasingly violent food riots. As food crises became more serious, higher levels of political authority became involved in handling them. The government's inability to cope with a heightened degree of crises caused it to give way to a new form of state in the Meiji period.

In the Meiji era, the central government had greater authority over food resources but still had to deal with problems generated by the break-up of the old social order. The increase in landlord-tenant conflict and the land distribution problem were features telling that concern over the control over food resources was still very much alive.

CHAPTER TWO : FOOD NOT EXPLICIT TO LEGITIMACY OF AUTHORITY

In this chapter, we shall be primarily concerned with the relationship of food to the legitimacy of authority, and the ways in which political authority sought to further its power and enhance its legitimacy by manipulating food resources.

Political authorities were concerned about food matters since earliest times in Japanese history. Whether clan chieftains, lords, emperors, empresses or Shoguns, the staple food of rice had to be of concern to them because of its central in the Japanese diet and Japanese culture. A shrine to the food goddess, Ukemochi-no-kami, was built at Ise near that of the founding sun goddess, Amaterasu. The rice god, Inari, has a long tradition of veneration throughout Japan. Rice holds an intimate place in the most important Shinto ceremonies and festivals. The ceremony which bestows religious blessings on the emperor at the time of his enthronement and gives a sacred quality to his legitimacy is called the "Great Food Offering" or Daijoe.<sup>1</sup>

However, although food continued to hold an important place in Japanese religious and cultural life, a central thesis in our study will be that the concern for food by political authorities in Japan changed with historical circumstance. More specifically, the importance of the relation between food and legitimacy changed due to a complex of reasons. First, the relationship depended on authority's perception of the importance of a stable food supply. Once perceived to be important, political authority had to ensure stable supplies by implementing

effective measures. Finally, political authority itself changed--the leadership as well as the regime--and thus so did its exigencies and aspirations.

### The Imperial Legitimacy and Food Distribution

The legitimacy of the Japanese emperor had a charismatic quality that existed from earliest times.<sup>2</sup> Although the emperor had authority based on a strong charismatic legitimacy, he was rarely the political ruler. De facto authority usually rested in various military leaders. Nevertheless, whether they consisted of several powerful clans or merged under a single leadership, they never undermined the charismatic authority of the emperor so seriously as to destroy the imperial system. On the contrary, the de facto rulers always had to have the tacit approval of the emperor, however formalistic. On the one hand, symbolic authority of the emperor provided a strong sense of cultural continuity and unified identity to the Japanese. On the other hand, the superior military leadership held effective rule and handled administration based on its monopoly over the means of physical coercion. The two sources of authority had long-standing traditions: the emperor by commonly-shared ideology in the myth of creation, and the military leader by the military-clan political organization, which existed since the earliest times of Japanese history. The two thus coexisted, drawing from each other the ingredients of rulership it lacked by itself.

However, effectiveness of rule is a crucial factor in explaining why certain ideals took root or not. Emperors in Japan may have made efforts to relieve the victims of food shortage and famine, but they rarely



exerted enough control over resources and the polity to implement these policies. For much of Japanese history, they could not establish authority over the power of the military clan rulers.

### Ideology Without Specific Norms about Food Provisioning

In Japan as in Europe, there was no explicit long-term ideology which held food provisioning to be an important responsibility of central authority. This is another important thesis which our case study of Japan brings to light. It provides another reason--in addition to the weakness of imperial authority--for the shifting ground of the relationship of food to legitimacy in Japan.

There were certainly traces of public welfare ideals in both Japan and Europe. In Europe such ideas became widespread among those educated in Canon and Roman law during the Renaissance.<sup>3</sup> England in particular, but also other European countries, had a tradition of food provisioning regulations which sought to protect the consumer, dating from as early as the 8th century.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the ideology was not unified in its sources nor forthright in its tenets and hence its imprint was not as strong as what we shall see was the case for China.

Similarly, Japan had no clearly-stated ideology regarding food provisioning and public welfare. Although there were acts of charity on the part of certain emperors, usually inspired by Buddhist notions of benevolence, these acts were not long-term efforts sustained by central authority. Sporadically, imperial authority in Japan organized rice for relief purposes in a system called gisō (public or charity granaries), which imitated the Chinese granary system.<sup>5</sup> However, in Japan, unlike

in China, there was no long-standing institution of food distribution. To understand why, we shall first describe the possible Buddhist sources of inspiration for performing such charitable acts, and then explain why these notions were unsustainable in the Japanese context.

The Buddhist concept of ōn (obligation) has been said to be one of the most important ideological bases giving legitimacy to authority in Japanese history.<sup>6</sup> It may have come to Japan as early as the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century. The Soga rule put through the Constitution of the Seventeen Articles (645 A.D.) largely inspired by these notions.

On ideology is associated with the mutual obligations between political authority and the people. Accordingly, authority should bestow blessings upon the people, including assurance of adequate food. In return, according to the concept of hō'on (the return of ōn), the people owed their absolute obedience to authority.

The idea may originally date to the idea of a deity granting blessings upon the people and evoking a reciprocal sense of religious obligation and homage on the part of the recipients. Later the concept was applied to the idea of the "benevolent emperor" after the model of the Chinese sage-king.<sup>7</sup> The notion of benevolent authority, as well as other ideas and institutions, were consciously sought as models by Japan from China. The Chinese influence bolstered the idea that food should be provided for the people. The long-standing concern with granaries in China, which served a social welfare as well as an economic regulatory function, became likewise important to some Japanese emperors. Apparently granaries were also even continued by some of the powerful

ruling clan leaders when they held the position of central authority. This was true when imperial power was on the wane, for example during the Fujiwara and Hojo rulerships. Whether implemented by imperial authority or by clan authority, this concept or principle of ōn gained strength only when a particular ruler was able to effectively implement policies inspired by it.

Although the Shogunate promoted the notions of ōn explained earlier, it cast this ideology into a Neo-Confucian mold rather than a Buddhist one. It stressed respect and obedience to authority, rather than the need for authority to practice benevolence towards the people and the mutual obligations to be upheld between them. Neo-Confucianism, which dates from late T'ang China, heavily influenced the ideology of legitimacy and policies of the political authority in Japan.

Neo-Confucianism in Japan, unlike in the Chinese context, gave primary concern to social control. The difference may be attributed to the historical development of ideas in China and Japan, and to the differences in political system. In China, Confucianism in the pre-Sung period was influenced by Taoist concepts, emphasizing popular welfare over the political power of authority. Although later modified by the influence of Legalism in China, which stressed the authority of rule over the well-being of the people, Taoism's influence remained part of the philosophic synthesis that became state orthodoxy in the Chinese context.

In contrast to China, Taoism did not have much influence on Japanese thinking. In Japan, the military-feudal rule emphasized that aspect of Neo-Confucianism which stressed social control based on reverence and obedience to elders and authority. This Neo-Confucian ideology was

applied with particular vigor during the Tokugawa rule. It was combined with Shintoism to give it the indigenous roots which it lacked.

Therefore, the concept of ōn as promoted by the Tokugawa Shogunate, was heavily influenced by the Neo-Confucian emphasis on obedience and respect to authority.

### Legitimacy of Authority under Tokugawa

When Tokugawa Ieyasu consolidated the country under his rule, he established the highest degree of effective centralized rule and control over food resources up to that point. He completed the process of unification begun by his predecessors, Oda Nobunaga and Hideyoshi Toyotomi. All previous regimes had had to vie with strong local factions, the clan leaders, the powerful families with armed retainers, and the provincial constables. No former regime was able to last through the struggle, and fragmentation was the inevitable result. The Tokugawa dynasty not only completed the difficult task, but also was able to sustain itself for nearly three hundred years.

The Tokugawa Shogunate had a historical parallel and antecedent in the Kamakura Shogunate (1192-1333), which also came after a period of great warring amongst clans. This precedent, together with the welcome due any rule which can bring a modicum of peace and order after years of reigning disorder, enhanced the legitimacy of the Tokugawa Shogunate and gave it firm ground.

The unusual character and much of Tokugawa's success in establishing legitimacy and long-lasting central rule rose out of historical circumstance. The preceding years were marked by turbulent civil war. A

"weeding-out" process took place, whereby the strongest clans survived and mobilized the weaker. This process continued and made for an unobvious push towards integration, an integration which climaxed under Tokugawa Ieyasu. The Shogun achieved political supremacy after terminating the long civil war prior to the Tokugawa period. The battles fought among the many feuding families led to an increasing concentration of power through the process of eliminating the weaker families. Thus the Shogunate drew its legitimacy from control over superior military forces and economic resources. Furthermore, it was an earned legitimacy, involving the participation by the lords and masses. As the numerous weaker clans were conquered by the stronger ones, they then entered battle on the side of their conqueror and former foes. This is the background to the authority of the daimyō, who derived legitimacy from that of the Bakufu. Gradually over long years of fighting, the whole population was in a sense organized under one of the few most powerful families, until finally Tokugawa conquered all of them at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. It is important to understand this process by which integration was furthered with each successive battle, rather than writing off the pre-Tokugawa years as a period of futile warring and instability. For if we understand that an integrative process operated within the disintegrative one, we can understand how the Shogunate did not rest simply on coercion. There were strongly felt and remembered experiences which underlay the legitimacy it earned.

Finally, credit must also be given to the astute political and ideological policies of Tokugawa Ieyasu. He built the careful order of society called the Baku-Han system that ensured control over land through

an indirect but strong hand over the two hundred-odd daimyo. The system of social control will be discussed more fully later.

### System of Social Control

Successful control over food resources required successful control over the populace. Although other regimes had made attempts, none achieved the degree of social control that existed in the Tokugawa era. The growth and extension of education in Tokugawa times probably had much to do with the relatively high degree of social control in this period. The lack of a strong notion of rights among the populace also contributed to this trend.

Tokugawa Ieyasu's policy was characterized by the general principle to divide and rule by placing barriers and distinctions between the social classes and fixing a rigid class structure. This was, from top to bottom: samurai-peasants-artisans-merchants. Social mobility was forbidden. Hideyoshi's ban on the possession of any weapon by the peasantry reinforced the fundamental distinction between the samurai and the peasants. From 1587 on, only samurai were permitted to bear swords and there was a sword hunt to enforce this policy. These measures clearly established a non-cultivating military class separated from the agricultural community and had far-reaching consequences on the society at large.

Additional lines of social distinctions were drawn such that a person was immediately identifiable in terms of his class affiliation. Such signs were whether one had a surname or not, whether one bore or even possessed a sword, how one dressed, wore one's hair, how one spoke, what

one ate. There developed what one might call a strong "class introversion", which spelled out a preoccupation with what was right for a member of one's class and station to do, and these bolstered the legal mechanisms aimed at the same end.

There were also policies specifically designed to control the peasantry. Such policies were administered by officials of the government, but were upheld by the feudal system and the successful inculcation of Confucian values at the local level. Policies affecting peasants and land were largely aimed at ensuring the tax inflow, which was of obvious critical importance to the Shogunate. In order to ensure production, peasants were legally prohibited from leaving the land. Moreover, they could not buy, sell, or in any way divide their land below a certain limit judged inefficient (i.e. 1 chō or 0.5 acre) and which would mean foregoing taxes to the government. It was no easy task for families of small land-holdings to conform to these policies, since younger sons could no longer break away from the main family to form independent branch families if their land plot was deemed too small. Confucian ideals, which carried families through such hardships instilled filial piety, reverence towards elders and the absolute correctness of the social hierarchy.

The indoctrinated view of the "good peasant" was of one who led a regimented life with continual work and only prescribed forms and times for leisure; who grew only certain crops; ate only certain foods--and certainly not rice; who could wear only cotton, not silk, who tied their hair with straw, not ribbons; who could drink neither tea nor liquor, said to make them indolent; who could neither learn to read nor write,

who never left his land; who bore no name nor title; and who was best conceived of as a beast of burden.<sup>8</sup>

In Tokugawa times, it was crucial for the Shogunate to be able to control the daimyō. Political power of the Shogunate banked much on the ensured loyalty of the daimyō, since control of peasant labor, surplus product and the land itself were ultimately under the hand of the daimyō. Hence policies controlling the daimyō were designed with special astuteness.

First the fudai daimyō, or those who had fought on Tokugawa's side at the decisive battle of Sekigahara, were given fiefs at close proximity to the Shogun in Edo. The tozama daimyō, or those who fought against him and were hence regarded with suspicion, held far-away fiefs to keep any potential threat at a distance. There was also interspersal of fudai and tozama to diminish the likelihood of conspiracies and a continual rotation of daimyō to impede the formation of local ties stronger than loyalty to the Shogun. A second major policy to control the daimyō was that called sankin-kotai.<sup>9</sup> The Shogun obliged the daimyō to spend every other year in Edo in his service and during periods away from Edo, the daimyō were obliged to leave their wives and children in Edo.<sup>10</sup> This policy also ensured minimal wealth accumulation by the daimyō, since a great deal had to be spent on travel and for an expensive life-style while in Edo. The daimyō's powers were further curtailed by the uprooting of the samurai from the land and by placing them on permanent stipend in the cities.



### Food Control as Part of the Feudal System

The Kamakura Shogunate (1192-1333) is considered the beginning of the feudal period. The pattern of the emperor delegating authority to powerful families dates back to the 7th century, but the hereditary de facto rule by military figures dates from the Kamakura period. The Shogunate, in turn, relied upon its control over the daimyō to rule. These daimyō actually controlled most of the food resources, since they collected taxes and corvee duties from the peasants on 4/5 of all domains, while the Shogun controlled only 1/5 of his domains.<sup>11</sup>

The feudal systems of Europe and Japan grew up in response to conditions of social instability, mostly external in origin in the case of Europe and mostly internal in the case of Japan. Given relatively unstable conditions, and the lack of a developed bureaucracy, the central rule did not exercise authority over its vassals automatically. In Europe, one scholar has pointed out two directions. One was towards the development of a strong enough monarchical authority to control the vassals (e.g. England, France), the other was where many autonomous kingdoms formed which could not be subdued by central rule (e.g. Germany). Japan had elements of both directions with unified rule in the Shogun and the autonomous fiefs of the daimyō.<sup>12</sup> The nature of food control was directly related to the relative power exerted by central and local authorities.

Theoretically, the legitimacy of the central government gave it the right to be the ultimate claimant and recipient of taxes. However, in Japan, the daimyō controlled food resources. The daimyō in his castle-town stood in between the peasant cultivator and the government,

with all the tax-collecting and land-managing officials beneath him. The peasants under the feudal system were dependent on the daimyō, unlike in times of strong central rule, when their obligations were tied to central rule. Therefore, if willing, the daimyō could cushion the tax levies required by the central authority.

However, in the Tokugawa period, a relatively strong central rule was established and began to place demands on the daimyō. During the earlier half of Tokugawa, unlike the latter half, it is likely that the daimyō felt responsible for their domains and the welfare of cultivators to ensure adequate production. However, in the later Tokugawa period, circumstances forced the central government to demand harsh levies and the daimyō felt compelled to extract more. The daimyō had interest in collecting as near full measure of the rice tax as possible, because ultimately their stipends derived from it. Once the tax rice was transported to Edo and accounted for, it was distributed among the government, salaries of daimyō and samurai, and the rest put on the market. Peasants could and did find ways of hiding some land or underreporting yields, and were pressed to more desperate means of evasion as exactions grew harsher. Peasants often sought to have their lands registered in the name of a lord, temple or shrine in order to escape taxation. There was a mutual dependency, or perhaps more accurately, of mutual expectations, between the peasants and the landlord-daimyō. The daimyō depended only indirectly on the peasants, for produce. The daimyō were more directly dependent on the Shogunate which distributed their salaries and stipends. The tensions within the

daimyo were directly related to the nature of food control under the Tokugawa feudal rule.

In the early Tokugawa period, the Shogunate exercised control in the countryside through a limited bureaucratic arm, which apparently worked quite well. The system of local village control revolved around three key figures (sanyaku), who were elected or appointed by the lord. These included the nanushi, who was the village head in charge of tax collection, resources for production and maintenance of public order; the kumigashira, who was the neighborhood leader who helped the nanushi; and the hyakushodai, who represented the farmers and organized their activities. Above them on the fief grounds stood the daikan (district magistrate), who was left quite alone to perform his awesome duties of tax collection, maintenance of public order, and execution of official laws amongst thousands of families with no arm of enforcement. The military stayed in the castle town and could be called upon for help when unrest might warrant. Ordinarily, however, the daikan was on his own. There was also a second type of official who manned the central bureau within the castle. Finally, there was the lord himself, who lived in his castle-town surrounded by his retainers.<sup>13</sup>

Families in a given village were organized into five-family units called gōnin-gumi. This was an outgrowth of the gōko system, which existed in the Nara period, and probably earlier, and is comparable in function to the Chinese li-chia (an administrative grouping of households for tax purposes), to be described in the next Part. This grouping was a form of ensuring tax payments, since tax obligations fell upon the unit and defaulting families had to be covered by the other families in the

group. The gōnin-gumi also saw to the community's protection and work needs. The system worked because it provided the key to economic survival in cooperation and because of the strong Confucian roots which held ostracism as a threat to non-compliance.

### Transition to the Meiji State and New Basis of Legitimacy

The tensions existing within the feudal system and manifested in the nature of conflict over food, produced a dynamic historical development towards a modern state, much as in Europe. The details of that conflict will be spelled out in the following chapter. We shall see that not only the nature of legitimacy changed, but also, so did the nature of control over food. Here we shall briefly mention the new kind of legitimacy that emerged for the new Meiji state, and the manner in which it related to control over food resources.

The feudal basis of legitimacy was challenged by greater and more humiliating blows until it was finally swept away. What formed the new basis of legitimacy of the new regime? The anti-Bakufu forces rallied around cries of "Honor the emperor, expel the barbarians!", and thus the emperor's restoration to power was a reemergence of the traditional-symbolic source of legitimacy of the new rulers. One might have predicted this renewed basis of legitimacy by recalling the two alternating levels of legitimate authority in Japanese history--the traditional-symbolic and the de facto political based on superior military forces.

The policies of the Meiji government aimed at eliminating the feudal system and establishing a rationalized bureaucracy and central

government. From 1868, when the general policy was set forth in the Five Articles Oath of the emperor, various measures were taken to abolish feudal distinctions between classes and enhance state control over food resources, especially land. First of all, in a major land reform, the daimyō were forced to return their lands to the government (1869), a policy called "the return of the han registers". A state administrative system was set up dividing land into prefectures. Thus 260 han were transformed into 45 prefectures. This measure dismantled the power base of the daimyō in land and their control over the labor and taxes of the peasants. The land returned to the state was then redistributed to farmers as their private property.<sup>14</sup>

Supporting this effort was a push to equalize society. The formal class hierarchy was abolished (1870-1873): clans were officially abolished in 1871, class restrictions in professions were forbidden, samurai were not allowed to wear their swords nor to keep special titles from 1876, and class-exclusive names were forbidden. In addition, universal conscription and universal compulsory education were instituted.

The land measure was not as revolutionary as it seemed, however, because the powerful daimyō had to be cajoled into supporting the regime to ensure stability and centralization of rule. Their cooptation was arranged by appointing them as governors of the prefectures and promising to pay them one half their normal income. This policy was generally seen as "a good deal," since it gave them more security than before when they were subject to the fluctuation of income tax. The government also assumed all debts of the daimyō and samurai.

A new tax system was established which had far-reaching consequences. First, the base of the tax was no longer in kind, but in money. Second, the assessment of the tax was to be based on the land value at a rate of 3% originally, then changed to 2.5%.<sup>15</sup> Third, the rate was to be fixed. This measure, called the Land Tax Revision (1873), gave the government a steady reliable flow of taxes, but created hardship on many peasants, who could not afford to pay at the same fixed rate especially in poor crop years. As a result there was a drastic increase in landless tenants, a situation we shall describe later.

Trade and a general opening towards the West were also laid out in the Five Articles Oath (1868). This opened a new channel for future supplies. Trade restriction on rice was lifted and the government maintained a high price on rice. Both policies stimulated production. Opening trade with the West had detrimental effects as well, especially on the domestic production of cotton yarn and cotton textiles, which was crushed by foreign competition. Affected households managed to withstand the setback, despite its severity, and hit upon sericulture as a viable and eventually successful alternate domestic industry.<sup>16</sup>

### Summary

In this chapter we have explored the nature of the legitimacy of authority in Japan's pre-modern to early modern history and how it related to food. Japan, like Europe but unlike China, never had an explicit and lasting ideology of food provisioning to guide its food policies. Political authority in Japan never developed long-term institutions of famine relief nor policies of consumer protection. The

reasons are complex, but basically reduce to Japan's long feudal rule and prevalent ideologies. The feudal system left the task of food provision or "nurturance" to the daimyō. When strong centralized feudalism formed under Tokugawa's rule, however, new demands were placed on the daimyō, who now were asked to also provide for the central authority. Therefore, pressures formed around the daimyō, both from the side of the peasants on their domains and the side of central authority in the capital.

Added to these pressures within the social system, were those from the emergent national, commercialized economy. The carrier of this trend was the merchant class, which despite its low social status, managed to dominate the central authority and traditional elite by means of its economic strength. Control over food distribution, therefore, shifted from the manor, controlled by the clan chiefs or lords, to the central authority and the traditional elite, to the merchant class. Therefore, the dynamic pattern of state-building shown by the Japanese case resembles the European experience as described by Tilly. In the modern state formation of Japan, the merchants played a key role. In the next chapter we shall analyze in greater detail the shared and conflicting food interests of the various social groups, which led to the formation of particular alliances among them.

CHAPTER THREE : FOOD CRITICAL TO INTEREST GROUP COMPETITION

In the last chapter we explored the role of food in relationship to the legitimacy of authority. The present chapter deals with how conflict over food played a vital role in social change and the state-building process of Japan. Like in Europe, in Japan there was a strong regional force competing with the central authority for control over food for much of its pre-modern history. More specifically, below we shall examine how the different status groups and classes contended amongst themselves and with political authority over food.

First we shall define the groups which constituted the forces opposing centralization of food control. Then we shall explore the nature of the competition over food resources among these groups. Our study will analyze the role of the central government, the lords (daimyō) and their retainers (samurai), the merchants and the peasants.

The conflicting interests among these groups were very pronounced in the European context, as they were in Japan, and shaped the formation of the modern state. In England, where there was a strong aristocracy, the government tended to ally its interests with those of the peasantry. This was also true in France, although French governments also squeezed the peasant. Likewise in Germany, where there were princes ruling over semi-autonomous states, the central rule tried to favor peasant interests. In contrast to these European examples, the Japanese Shogunate in Tokugawa co-opted the landed elite and used it to extract food resources from the peasantry.



### Pre-Feudal Attempts to Centralize Food Control

Since very early times in Japanese history as in Europe, there was a tension between regional and centralizing forces, and these were manifested in the conflict over controlling food resources. The dynamic process created by these opposing forces resulted in the particular state-building process that emerged in Japan, which in many respects, resembles what Tilly has told us about the state-building processes of European countries. In our case study of Japan, we shall describe how different levels of political authority sought to gain power and exercise authority through the control over food from early times. We shall also describe how the imperial authority and Shogunate governments struggled with the powerful clans, and how political authorities made alliances with various social groups to further their food interests.

#### Attempt by Imperial Authority to Control Food

In theory, land belonged to the emperor and regulations concerning rice and land were drawn up in a very early legal document, the Taihō Ryō (Codes of the Taihō era) of 702 A.D. These Codes take on importance because they are the earliest expression of the imperial authority to regulate food and land. The increased administrative efficiency reflected through censuses and land registrations enhanced the ability by government to control the distribution of food resources among people. For the first time, rationalized functions of rule were established and codified, such as a central officialdom and provincial governors. Capital towns (kokufu) were established in each province to take responsibility for implementing the Codes. The new system also changed

the familial type of rule (kuni-no-miyatsuko) in some areas. In addition, the Taihō Ryō was said to have reached to very local levels of administration, to the district and to the administrative household (ko), whose authorities were given specified functions covering population census, land distribution and taxation.<sup>1</sup>

The bureaucratic organization as envisioned by the Codes was most enthusiastically applied in Japan during the Nara and Heian periods ( 12th century )<sup>2</sup> During the Nara period, the Chinese "five family group" (hō) administrative system of taxation was introduced into Japan. Transportation networks, roads and water routes, were developed and carefully maintained through the improved corvee and tax payments and helped in the regular flow of taxes to the center. Perhaps as a result of these changes, food resources were received more regularly by the capital from the provinces.

The Codes also applied directly to food resources through the organization of paddy land in a systematic manner, according to the so-called the jōri system.<sup>3</sup> This system created land divisions which became the basis for a more rationalized distribution system. According to this system, the handen rice field division was created for public land use, which was about a half a mile square. The handen field was further divided into 36 equal squares called tsubō (equal to 1 chō). Each tsubō was then divided into 10 equal strips called kunbunden (equal to 1 tan). The cultivators received their land based on the tan unit according to the notion that 1 tan was sufficient to produce enough rice for one man to live for a year. The cultivator was expected to keep up with taxes and full production.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, despite these efforts to create a rational bureaucracy and more systematic land regulations in order to regulate food resources more efficiently, patrimonial elements still persisted. The officialdom was appointed from the court aristocracy, and changes in the familial type of rule were only effective in areas ruled by imperial authority. Moreover, the status of persons came to be elaborately defined in Japan which gave rise to rigid class divisions. The basic division was between free (titled or untitled) and unfree, with finer distinctions (rank, office, merit) made among these. Titled persons were officials of the government and received land, products and labor services, while untitled persons had the right of use to the land for payment of taxes and labor.

For these and other similar reasons, we maintain this period was still essentially a period of localized rather than of centralized food control. Despite gains made in the establishment of precedents for a rationalized imperial bureaucracy, the Taiho Codes failed to accomplish what they envisioned in the "short" term. J.W. Hall summarizes succinctly why this was so:

Probably the most significant contribution of the Taiho Code had been the establishment of the concept of the imperial state as having an existence of its own over and above the body of court nobility which comprised the bureaucracy. The ultimate failure of the Taiho system of government resulted from an abandonment of this concept of state.<sup>5</sup>

Japan never abandoned the essentially patrimonial style of authority. And the government of the Heian period provides a particularly clear example of fusion between a highly aristocratic conception of society and certain bureaucratic techniques imported from China.<sup>6</sup>

### Attempt by the Soga Clan to Centralize Food Control

In the Yamato-Nara period, society was organized under the shizōku system, which was a familial hierarchy of clans with the most powerful of these clans on top.<sup>7</sup> The uji was based on a traditional legitimacy deriving from religious and familial values. Such values had remarkable resilience throughout Japanese history.

From very early times, religious and political authorities coexisted rather than competed with each other in Japan. All the households of an uji worshipped the same god (uji-gami) and yet also accepted a separate secular authority, the clan chief (uji-no-kami). Various ranks along the lines of kinship and lineages organized society from the household up to the level of the clan, and finally to the clan's leadership. The uji, in turn, reflected the patriarchal rule above it of the emperor and the powerful military families.

Access to food was tightly guarded by the system of religious norms set down by the ancestor-god who gave legitimacy to the hereditary leadership of the uji. Subsistence matters were handled by each clan which managed its own lands, levied taxes and organized the production and distribution of food within its own realm. When food crises occurred, they were faced by local authorities reliant upon locally-derived means of coping with the crises.

The uji of the Yamato people, inhabiting a region by that name, created a hegemony during this time with the Soga clan the strongest. This clan came to control the imperial lands which were only nominally ruled by the emperor.<sup>8</sup> The Soga made an effort to centralize control over food resources through the creation of a more rationalized

bureaucracy inspired by the T'ang Chinese model.<sup>9</sup> Some of the features of this effort were the establishment of a grain tribute, corvee and military conscription to serve central authority's needs. Very important emphasis was put on public domain. The Soga established state ownership over all the land and made estates subject to their direct governance. Before this time, there was no legal definition of rights of governance nor of proprietorship.<sup>10</sup>

The Soga clan introduced the Taika Reforms in 645 A.D. as a vital effort to make land distribution more equitable. The Reforms were introduced at a time when the following trend had begun:

a gradual shift from a society organized primarily along familial lines towards one in which the various aspects of society were becoming increasingly differentiated on functional grounds and in which secular operations of government tended to separate out from the traditional uji and be communal practices.<sup>11</sup>

These reforms divided the country into administrative units called gun or ken, supervised by loyal chieftains (kuni-no-miyatsuko), and no longer recognized the uji divisions. By removing the clans from their land base, the Soga broke up clan power. (However, in order to avoid antagonizing the clans too much, concessions were made which eventually revived clan power). Public fields (handen) were created and distributed amongst the peasants.<sup>12</sup> The cultivators did not own the land, which belonged to the government, but had usufruct, i.e. they could work it for their subsistence as long as they paid taxes to the provincial administration. Taxes were of three kinds: rice tax on government distributed land (sō), corvée (yō), and local produce (chō).

### Local Elites Dominate Food Control

#### The Rise of Shōen (Manors)<sup>13</sup>

In the pre-Nara, Nara and Heian periods, most contention amongst social groups was within the elite: between dynasties, dynasties and emperors, and the powerful families. By the end of the Nara period, the power of local elites was rising and their control over lands increasing. They tried to gain control over food resources as the means to bolster their power. It is not surprising that most of the conflict of the early period was played out within the aristocracy.

The rest of society was within the traditional mold of social structure with its wide divide between the aristocracy and the rural cultivators. Intellectual circles, which came to be influenced by Chinese learning and Confucian ideology, reinforced values of obedience to authority, filial piety, and maintaining the static orderly society.<sup>14</sup> This ideological bind was not weakened nor challenged by Buddhism, which had also been introduced in this period from China and Korea. Buddhism in the Nara period was an elite religion, as was education in general.

The nature of subsistence tended to reinforce these traditional values. Riziculture placed a premium on cooperation and hard work. Survival outside one's assigned place within the be and within the uji was not possible.

By late Nara, the rise of shōen or large manors undermined the control over food resources by the central authority. Among these elites were the Buddhist temples and monasteries, which flourished in the Nara period and received tax-free gifts of land from the government or private

individuals. By the end of Nara, their holdings equalled and even surpassed those of the powerful lords who had substantial holdings. The lords had accumulated shōen by various means and exerted their influence to keep them tax exempt, or they simply kept the taxes levied. Not only the lords resorted to such subversive activities, but anyone who could afford to buy title and rank. There were others who were simply able to confiscate unclaimed land. Thus private proprietorship came to be widely practiced to the diminution of public domain.

Effective control over the countryside remained in the hands of the shōen lords, even when the powerful Fujiwara family in the Heian period attempted to strengthen the weaknesses of central rule. Land concentration continued to be quite pronounced. Some monastery lands ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 acres were tax exempt.<sup>15</sup> Laws concerning periodic land redistribution were completely ignored. Under the influence of a strong aristocratic system where offices were hereditary and clan power resilient, the bureaucratic Chinese system on Japanese soil took on increasingly patrimonial characteristics. Thus by the mid-Heian period, the Taika Reform innovations were all but wiped out.

#### Formation of the Samurai Class and Implications for Food Supply

The rise of a class of samurai, who acted as retainers for their lords, was associated with an upsurge of peasant unrest by the mid-Heian period. Powerful families and temples began buttressing themselves by hiring retainers for protection against the increasing numbers of discontented and, at times, destructive peasants. The aid of samurai was felt necessary due to the weakness of central rule and its inability to

maintain order. The rise of the samurai (warrior) class marked an important phenomenon. They became a strong arm of the provincial families. Looking ahead, it was the samurai (or bushi, as they were also called) who eventually formed a strong enough political organization to establish a centralized government (a Shogunate) in 1192 at Kamakura . Their rise to power was accompanied by a decline in power by the aristocracy in Heian.

What was the effect of the rise of the samurai on the peasant class? Warring, corruption and land greed had already caused great stress on the peasantry. The fact that large numbers were made to serve as retainers added to the strain on the remaining peasants. Although one could speculate that the movement away from the farms could free up more land for the remaining peasants and thereby ease the plight, this is unlikely. The diminished labor came at especially high cost in this rice-based economy dependent on intensive labor. There are many accounts of peasants families lamenting the departure of their sons for military service even during the time when these services were a temporary part of corvee obligations. When men became samurai, their return to the soil was unlikely. Furthermore, the samurai were sustained in food and military provisions by the local peasantry, hence cultivators faced a double subtraction of food and labor. Lastly, if surplus lands were "freed up", it would have meant that an entire family would have had to abandon it implying great hardship. Otherwise, given the strictly assigned nature of land, departed sons would have meant the remaining family would have to make up for the lost labor, again implying hardship. Abandoned lands would simply be confiscated by local elites,



given the pattern of land domination at the time. We shall return to the peasants condition later.

### The Peasants

Although there is no quantitative evidence available, one can hypothesize that during the pre-feudal era, the tax burden on the peasantry was quite substantial, and their control over their food supplies very limited. Land distribution was very unequal. Since 743, when the government allowed private ownership of reclaimed land, the big families began to increase their already sizeable holdings, all of which had tax exemptions from the government. As the amount of land held as shōen by the big families increased, a greater proportion of the taxes had to be paid by peasants. Moreover, plots available to peasants became smaller and of inferior quality, and yet tax demands on them continued to increase.

As we have seen, the rise of the samurai class in the Heian period added further strain on the peasantry, which had to sustain the newly-created non-cultivating class as well as compensate for the diminution in labor incurred. Although the policies of central authority could have had a beneficial effect on the well-being of the peasants in view of the redistribution of land and the removal of arbitrary local power envisioned, the ineffectiveness of its rule stemming from a permissive view towards privileges prevented it. Corruption and the trend towards land concentration weakened the central authority and these trends were in some sense encouraged by its own policies.

One could be deceived about the situation of the peasantry by looking at the production levels in the late Heian period, which indicate a general rise attributable to improved fertilizer, crop diversification and land reclamation. One might argue that if production levels were rising, what did it matter if larger numbers were entering the non-cultivating class? Furthermore, in this line of thought, since farm surpluses were readily available for sale in the Heian period, which was known to have been a thriving city with lively markets, would this not have indicated that peasant cultivators were doing well? This line of argument can be countered by the fact that those areas which knew agricultural improved techniques were limited, since their diffusion was geographically uneven. Knowledge of these techniques did not become very widespread until the national market system became developed much later. Only some better-off landholders could afford these improvements, since inputs of fertilizers, implements and seeds were required. The vast majority of peasants did not benefit from these improvements. They were in a social system dominated by their lords, temples and other elites. These elites, not the peasants nor the government, were in control of the marketing of the surplus. Furthermore, the power alignments among warring factions were continually changing and had direct repercussions on the distribution of the food available. As one writer stated:

...Although a brilliant civilization existed among a section of the upperclass people in the Heian period, as in the preceding Nara period, there was a lack of communication and contact between the upper and lower classes and between the capital and the provinces...

The civilization of the central parts of the country did not extend to the provinces. On the whole, the civilization of Japan in the Heian period was the civilization of Kyoto, the then capital, and nothing more than that.<sup>16</sup>

Not only were taxes in the form of food increasing, but so were taxes in the form of labor. It has even been estimated that taxes in labor for the period up to Kamakura were far greater than taxes in other forms. With the establishment of the first fixed capital at Nara (710), a great amount of labor and revenues were required to build the enormous construction project that was involved and the labor was taken out of agriculture.

Although agricultural production is said to have expanded during the Sengoku period, the situation for the peasants certainly worsened since the preceding era, because so many resources were required to sustain the fighting and so many simply destroyed. Famines occurred in the fact of the severe neglect of food distribution.

### Feudal Attempts to Centralize Food Control

#### Clan Competition over Food Control

Clan factionalism rather than strong central rule characterized the Heian period. The strongest clan was the Fujiwara clan, which maintained its position by manipulation of the weak imperial family. Contending clan leaders had hold over most of the rural masses on their lands. By the 12th century, the hundreds of clans converged into powerful military families, the greatest being the Genji (Minamoto) and the Heike (Taira).

At first the Heike established a dictatorship supporting the emperor and came to control more than 550 shōen or land equivalent to half of Japan. Their rule is considered to have been intolerably despotic and oppressive. As if signaled by the heavens, a serious famine struck Kyoto in 1181-1182. Then immediately after, forces opposing the Heike struck. After a five-year struggle, the Heike were overthrown and power fell in the hands of Minamoto-no-Yoritomo of the Genji clan. Yoritomo declared himself Shogun, the head of the new Bakufu military regime.

#### The Kamakura Shogunate and Early Feudal Food Control

The Kamakura Shogunate was set up in Kamakura in order to keep at safe distance from the imperial court, from which he gained indirect legitimacy to rule over all the land. In a manner presaging the rise to power and centralization of rule of the Tokugawa period, Yoritomo used land policy as his key to rule. He gave conquered lands to his allies and those willing to become his allies, and made them his vassals.<sup>17</sup> Of course, his rule was relatively more effective in some regions than in others where local elites still held control.

Yoritomo initiated new administrative features in an effort to establish firmer rule in the countryside. One was the creation of the military governor (shugo), who was in charge of military and police affairs in the province, keeping order, and supervising public works. The other was the creation of the military land steward (jitō), who likewise, was to remain in a vassal relationship to Yoritomo. The jitō were in charge of collection of taxes from the public lands and the no-longer tax exempt shōen, supervision of land use, settlement of

disputes, and police surveillance. They came to govern as effective lords of the estates and stored the tribute taxes in warehouses near their residences. A body of soldiers was given to aid them in their tasks and this contributed to their growth of power. The warrior leaders, the jitō, and ultimately the Shogun, took control of the food supply by means of tribute, taxes and labor. The new regime concentrated this control over food, previously in the hands of shōen and clan leaders, but mostly stored it to feed its members for military purposes. Thus there were no redistributive measures equivalent to those initiated by the Soga clan leaders centuries ago.

The Kamakura government made strides towards unified rule, but after Yoritomo's death, de facto rule rested with the Hojo clan, which acted as regent ruling through the Shogun. The rule established by the regency was able to withstand many attacks against the Shogunate by alliances between the court and some lords. The regency distributed the lands won from these battles to loyal warriors and made them jitō. In this way, the Shogunate, which held only half the lands of Japan at the beginning of Kamakura, substantially increased its holdings at the expense of the imperial dynasty.

### The Landed Elite Reasserts Power and Control over Food Resources

Although successful in establishing hegemony, the Kamakura Shogunate did not last long. The jitō (land stewards) who were created as a new administrative arm of the Shogunate to help manage the lands, gradually came to exercise increasing prerogatives. The original jitō had been samurai already acting in the role of officials and hence did not raise

objection. However, when the Shogun appointed new jitō, a struggle ensued between the Shogunate and the emperor since the measure implied a change in the distribution of income from land. In addition to contention with the court and religious interests, the Shogun had to deal with the growing numbers of warrior vassals who wanted to control land. Control over half the lands was not enough. The situation was temporarily relieved when the ex-emperor made an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Hojo Regency controlling the Shogunate. The emperor was then coerced into granting them the right to manage the imperial manors in 1223. The restive warriors were then made jitō with a right to one acre of land for every 11 they managed, and they could levy taxes on 10 of these. The jitō kept pressing for more rights over the land until finally, the Shogunate split the rights and responsibilities equally between jitō and shōen officials, i.e. between military and civil officials. The jitō were soon able to mobilize military forces to assert their interests, and did so increasingly.

The struggle between civil and military officials over land control grew more serious and reached a climax when the emperor of one line mobilized an attack on the Shogunate in an effort to prevent the emperor in power from maintaining his line. This was called the Kemmu Restoration of 1331. The Ashikaga line won and did away with most of the civil administration, giving the jitō full power. The shugo were given powers of the civil provincial governors. The Ashikaga Shogunate, however, was also too weak and lacking in resources to maintain its authority and soon the shugo gained great power.

In administrative terms, the shugo of Ashikaga times can best be thought of as combining the powers of civil governors (kokushu), the military governor (shugo) and the military stewards (jitō), although this was never made explicit.<sup>18</sup>

They thus took over all the jitō's powers as well. The shugo could distribute lands, recruit labor and levy taxes as loyal vassals of the Shogun.

### The Warring Periods and Mature Feudal Control of Food

The next years up until the Tokugawa era were full of strife, warring and confusion. During the Nambokucho period following Kamakura, there were two factions claiming imperial rulership. The Ashikaga family supported one emperor at Kyoto (the so-called Northern Kingdom), and other big families opened a rival imperial court with the former emperor near Nara at Yoshino (the so-called Southern Kingdom). The latter eventually lost out to the Ashikaga in 1392, who established the Muromachi Bakufu in Kyoto.

Their rule rested on the tenuous balance among various warrior factions and hence they did not control resources to the extent to enable them to actually rule. Instead they were obliged to create an alliance with the powerful families. These later disregarded laws governing the shōen and began to exert their own personalized rule. This led to the final breakdown of the shōen system by the end of the 15th century.

The importance of local power, now residing in the shugo has been described below:

From the mid-14th century on, the government of Japan should be thought of in its simplest terms as a central administration (bakufu) under the Shogun placed over numerous local administrations under the shugo. Legitimacy was still provided by the emperor, whose delegate the Shogun was. But it was largely on the basis of feudal loyalty between Shogun and vassal shugo that the exercise of authority in the Ashikaga system was made effective.<sup>19</sup>

### Rise of the Daimyo and the Tokugawa Bakufu

During the Sengoku period (1467-1573) called the Age of Strife, the emperor and Shogun became "as shadowy repositories of legitimacy", as the imperial structure finally gave way to a new structure, that of mature feudalism.<sup>20</sup> The daimyō, who rose to power at this time, sought to manipulate the court. Their power rested in their strongholds, the fiefs. The Shogun granted the daimyō the right to land and all profits from it in return for their service. The administrative hierarchy of managers--the defined functions as well as the various forms and levels of ownership--was now eliminated. The daimyō now established themselves in castles, surrounded by grain storages and military supplies, temples and shrines, the samurai residences, and the peasant dwellings in remoter rice fields.

During the Sengoku period, the daimyō grew strong enough to keep many of the taxes due the provincial authorities. This forced the Bakufu to rely on taxes on warehouses, the sakaya (sake houses) and money-lenders in the cities to supplement its heavy rice taxes. Taxes collected by the daimyō were said to have reached as high as 70% of produce in some places.<sup>21</sup>

In the previous chapter we have already discussed the gradual centralizing efforts of a few outstanding military leaders and the



culmination of their effort in the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate. We shall not repeat the details of Tokugawa's policies and accomplishments, with one exception. The sankin-kōtai policy was an important step in the direction of strengthening central rule. By requiring the daimyō and samurai to spend every alternate year in the capital in service of the Shogun, the elite was cut off from the land, its potential source of power. The elite thus became urbanized and identified its interests more with those of the central authority. Elite members maintained status but no political authority.<sup>22</sup>

#### The Merchants' Ascendance in the Struggle over Food Control

Although we can hardly speak of the merchant class as an elite in the social sense of the word, its amassing of considerable wealth through profit-making commercial and money-lending activities certainly marked it as the economic elite from the mid-Tokugawa period. The rise of the merchant class was an inconspicuous but developing process since long before Tokugawa. Given their important role in the state-building process in Japan, we shall briefly give some background on their interests as a class and how they exerted control over food distribution.

At first merchants were attached to localized areas, for example, in the castle-towns, where they enjoyed commercial privileges granted to them by the lords in exchange for a fixed fee. As in feudal Europe, the lords set limits on merchants, regulating who could engage in trade on castle grounds, when markets could open, and for how long. However, exclusivity of privilege was not attractive enough to make merchants willingly limit their activities indefinitely. Soon some merchants began

selling outside castle-towns. They established their own links between rural areas and suburban shops, and some retailers established direct links with rural producers. Gradually, commercial centers grew up which were unsuccessfully checked by the lords.<sup>23</sup>

In the early Tokugawa period, the traditional elite had interests quite different from those of the rising economic elite. The daimyō and samurai had interest in maintaining order in the fief, collecting tax rice and sending it to their warehouse in Osaka or Edo, so that they could receive their stipends with which to buy necessities as well as maintain the luxurious lifestyle of their class. The merchants, in contrast, saw themselves as frugal, hard-working, and attentive to keeping their businesses solvent. They saw their job as one to make and provide money. Profit was their just compensation for their contribution to society. The boost of rising production levels and increased population in early Tokugawa was, as they saw it, their legitimate reward.

During the reigns of the first two Shoguns, taxes flowed into the treasury and the elite was not frantic for money. However, the underlying contradictions in apparent and real status and power were present already. The samurai had developed a sense of pride in not dealing with "lowly" mercantile matters, to the extent of ignoring the accounting involved in tax rice transactions from which their own salaries were derived. The merchant money-lenders handled all transactions dealing with tax rice, including often the supervision of building rice warehouses, the accounting of tax rice, the nominal registration of the warehouse, and the issuing of loans for which they

could charge very high interest. Rice warehouses were even registered in the name of a merchant, since it was considered unbecoming for a daimyō. Money-lending was seen as usurious because "borrowing was mainly for the purpose of essential consumption. The feudal classes, the daimyō and the peasants, were forced to borrow, even at high interest, because of their impoverished conditions".<sup>24</sup>

These social attitudes proved to be the undoing of the traditional elite. The wheels of fortune turned, and as the growing national market economy developed, the merchants were the only ones who had liquid money. From the time of the third Shogun, state revenues were carelessly handled. The extravagant tastes and life-styles of the daimyō, samurai and their families escalated, and they used up their stipends faster than their next ones could come. The practice of borrowing money from wealthy merchants came to be widespread, and created great concern to the government.

### Merchant Monopolies

Much of the merchants' growing power was attributable to their formation in monopolies. The formation of monopolies was a continuous tendency amongst merchants, and they sprung up despite the occasional set-backs of restrictive measures imposed by authority. In the cities, there were the za, in existence since the 12th century, which were merchant monopolies operating through the patronage of the court, noble families, temples and shrines. These za were organizations of traders and were similar to guilds. Their formation followed a pattern very similar to that of the European guilds.

Indeed the za in Japan and the hansa in Europe show a parallel growth, and the relationships substituting between za have been described as a kind of Hanseatic League. No doubt a close study would reveal contrasts as well as likenesses, but it is clear that a privileged urban mercantile class developed under the decentralized feudalism of Ashikaga times.<sup>25</sup>

The za were to play a critical role in the following Tokugawa era as well. They were finally eliminated by Oda Nobunaga and Hideyoshi Toyotomi, but during the Tokugawa period, privileges to new groups and new guilds were permitted in Osaka and Edo.<sup>26</sup> These were the kabu nakama (guilds or federations), which protected the interests of those engaged in the same occupation. Members paid for a share, usually determined by the level of profits current members made. The government's approval was necessary in the form of a license which gave monopolistic rights to the named shareholders in return for "thank offerings" (myoga-kin).<sup>27</sup> There was no real protection for merchants in belonging to a guild, for the nakama could appeal to authorities if violations occurred and they were usually supported.

#### The Dilemma of Government Policies Towards the Merchant Class

The social attitudes towards merchants were degrading, as we have described above. However, this is only half the story. The government was, on the whole, conciliatory towards merchants, allowing them to pursue their activities without much restraint. The government's policies towards merchants can be traced to the time when they began to gain a noticeable profile in the form of merchant guilds or monopolies dealing in specific products. Prior to this time, peasants were still

largely self-sufficient as late as 1600, although some form of town life and market network existed very early in Japan's history. By 1800, however, peasants "typically grew what soil and price favored", in place of or in addition to what was needed for subsistence.<sup>28</sup> The intervening years saw the burgeoning of the merchant class, which from mid-Tokugawa on, came to wield considerable power despite their socially-degraded status.

The mercantile growth and expansion towards a national market economy which began during this period was a fairly new phenomenon, and the government was not prepared to formulate policies which totally discriminated against merchants. Moreover, since social discrimination was against the merchant class, the government was perhaps more lenient in formulating policies to control the economic power of the merchants. The system hence bore within it the seeds of its own destruction. An ironic situation was created whereby the government and ruling class made efforts to remain blissfully ignorant of the market economy, which would eventually overturn them.

The government finally realized it had to take drastic measures. Yoshimune, the eighth Tokugawa Shogun, initiated a frugality drive that pushed samurai even further into debt. The Shogunate had to take emergency measures to bale them out by making tokusei orders, which cancelled samurai debts to merchants. The fact that tokusei were ordered only twice during the Tokugawa period, however, indicated the strength of the merchants.

The Shogunate combined this policy with one of extracting forced loans from rich merchants, which it eventually came to rely on for its

own financial survival.<sup>29</sup> Tanuma, the twelfth Shogun, levied forced loans from merchants for the first time. The measure then had to be repeated fifteen more times before the end of Tokugawa due to the worsening economic condition of the traditional elite.

Finally, Tadakuni (1794-1851) initiated the Tempō Reforms (1841-1843), which attempted to reintroduce frugality measures and abolished the kabu nakama (guilds). This meant that all goods could be bought and sold directly from producers and retailers to consumers. The merchants could no longer hoard supplies to create artificial shortages that would raise prices; wholesalers could not limit the amounts sold to retailers. Confusion followed the abolition of the kabu nakama, which, despite corrupt practices, had served to organize large numbers of people with the same outlook. Production declined, distribution deteriorated, and prices climbed even higher than previously. Finally in 1851, the Bakufu was forced to restore the kabu nakama. These developments led to a transformation in the elite interests of the early Tokugawa period.

The Shogunate found itself in a dilemma. On the one hand, it had interest in preserving the social hierarchy and hence in ensuring the status of the samurai, but on the other hand, it could not afford to anger the merchants by issuing frequent debt cancellations or forcing loans, since it was the merchants who supported the economic survival of the elite. The daimyō and samurai had to depend quite heavily on merchants and became heavily indebted to them in order to survive. Therefore, despite the shared interests between the Shogunate and the samurai and the competitive interests between the Shogunate and the merchants with respect to control over food, the Shogunate often ceded to the merchants' interests.

There was no clear route out of this dilemma and so the government followed inconsistent policies which now favored the samurai, now the urban consumers, then the merchants. More than policies, they were stop-gap measures pasted onto an increasingly desperate social reality. Meanwhile, the daimyō and samurai became the unwilling allies of the merchant class and pressed more and more firmly on the peasantry to yield the essential tax revenues.

#### Period of New Alliances and the New State

As mentioned earlier, the legitimacy of the imperial dynasty had always existed in Japan's history. Even though the emperor and his court existed in the shadows during the long Tokugawa Shogunate, in the later Tokugawa years, they began to emerge. Strong daimyō and samurai, especially from the southern provinces of Choshu, began to seek a foreign policy which differed from that of the Shogunate (Bakufu), and turned to the imperial dynasty for approval. Their difference was over making treaty concessions with the Western powers which, among other things, would have opened up trade with the West. The Bakufu, led by the "great elder", Ii Naosuke, favored allowing concessions to the Western powers, whereas Choshu opposed it. It was no surprise, therefore, when anti-Tokugawa forces gained momentum and mobilized around the figure of the emperor to restore his legitimate rule. The most alienated groups of the traditional elite, the daimyō and samurai of the outlying provinces, especially in the south and southwest, together with the lower-ranking samurai and rōnin (the masterless samurai) carried out the Meiji Restoration, commonly referred to as "the revolution from above."

Thus the Meiji government was born of an alliance of the disaffected anti-Bakufu elements: the lower class samurai, the rōnin, the merchants, and those strong daimyō and samurai of tozama provinces (those provinces which were ruled by lords which had fought against Tokugawa before the establishment of the Shogunate). Especially prominent were the military-bureaucrat clan leaders of Choshu, Satsuma, Hizen and Tosa. Without the financial support of the merchants, and especially the big merchant houses of Kyoto and Osaka, the outcome of even such military and political maneuvers would have been uncertain.

Herein lies the key to the peasant revolts of the Tokugawa period. As they grew more frequent and intense towards the end of the Tokugawa period, the feudal elite (daimyō and samurai) made an alliance with the chōnin against the peasants. This was a dramatic shift of significant consequence for the peasants, for it not only cast the actors who would play out the revolution, i.e. excluding the peasants, but also, affected the outcome which did not bring any benefits to peasants.

In the Meiji era, we find a new elite made up of contenders brought together by an alliance of interests to destroy the old feudal system. They shared an interest in establishing a very new social order, and the one they created was reflective of the diversity within the government. Their thinking was turned outward towards the Western powers, technology and trade which they saw as fostering the growth and expansion of commercialization in agriculture and industrialization. Government staff positions were filled by the daimyō and higher samurai who favored the new regime, since the chōnin lacked the experience that the so-called



military clan bureaucrats had. These daimyō were now well-off and began to invest in banking and industry.

However, the lower samurai, for the most part, were not well-off. They were given some financial compensation, but not nearly as much as the daimyō and many had to turn to such pursuits as small business, retail, crafts, and even farming. Most of the peasantry was even in a worse economic situation and turned to revolt. The feudal structure had been eliminated, the alliance between the old order elite and the new elite (chōnin-merchants, moneylenders) effected, and the position of the peasant worsened. Now the peasant faced a fixed tax, levied directly by the state with no buffer in between which might make allowances for him in bad crop years. Many had to abandon their land and become landless tenants. Their entire economic base, which had been withering away in the Tokugawa era, was now being swept away by an increasingly monetized, commercialized and nationalized economy. The stability of old values and norms, solidified during the long peace of the Tokugawa period, was shaken.

### Summary

In the pre-Tokugawa period, conflict over food resources was mostly within the elite, amongst the court, military chiefs, temples and monasteries. The peasants, despite their being the class with the lowest standard of living, were not yet a political force at this time. In the following Tokugawa period, the superior military group relied on the daimyō and samurai to extract food resources from the peasants and maintain public order. This feudal arrangement worked until the merchant

class, through its growing economic power, began to undermine the stake of these status groups in the elite by making them indebted. The elite then faced the dilemma of including the merchant class in the elite, too, against the peasants and urban lower class. However, the elite was prevented from mixing with merchants by a rigid social identity which viewed the merchants as the lowest rung of the social hierarchy. Pressures of an increasing tax burden and the developing market economy compelled the peasants and urban lower classes to turn to violent acts of food rioting. Tension mounted between the peasants and daimyō on the one hand, and the urban poor and the urban elite on the other, which eventually broke down the Tokugawa rule and the traditional feudal system.

The merchants made an alliance with the disaffected elite to overthrow the Shogunate and create a new regime, that of the Meiji state. Then yet another phase of contention over food began with the peasants and urban lower class and the new central rulers in a stronger position.

CHAPTER FOUR : FOOD CRISES CHALLENGE THE LEGITIMACY OF AUTHORITY

In this chapter we shall examine how food crises affected the legitimacy of authority and how authority responded to them. We have seen how the process of gaining control over food in Japan and Europe involved conflict among some groups and coalition-making among others. The resulting tensions led to a very dynamic state-building process.

Food crises, defined here as food shortages and popular protest over food resources, were another source of tensions in the political system. The responses to food crises on the part of the masses changed over time, from forms which did not challenge the legitimacy of authority to forms which did. In turn, political authorities had to respond to the food crises as well as to the varying responses by the masses. Although food crises were not necessarily the main causes of the dynamic state-building process in Japan, in certain periods, they did play an important role in shaping that process.

First we shall consider whether there was any recognition of rebellion as a legitimate force of social change, and what ideological support there was for any such legitimation. We shall also give attention to the development of a notion of "rights" of the masses, which was of crucial importance in the case of Europe as Tilly and Thompson pointed out. As we saw previously, the merchant class played an important role in bringing Japan to the threshold of the modern state. Therefore, we shall also consider what kinds of changes came about in social attitudes as the market economy developed. Then, we turn to food riots and how they were a manifestation of a new and more violent form of

protest by the masses over their "right to food", and how they challenged political authority. Finally, we describe how the nature of food crises and the responses to them by political authority changed in the early stages of the modern state of Meiji.

### Evolution of Ideology of Rebellion

The traditional norms and values supporting the legitimacy of authority left little room for an ideology legitimating rebellion during Japan's pre-feudal period. In early Japan, the right to rule was a matter of lineage embodied in Shinto beliefs. One had to be in the line of the sun goddess to qualify for rule. When Confucianism was introduced in Japan by Buddhist monks in the sixth to the seventh centuries, it did little to challenge Shintoism. The importance of ancestor worship and the familial concept of imperial rule and society remained. The Chinese theory of the Mandate of Heaven was also introduced, but the fullness of expression it had developed in China over many centuries had no equivalent on Japanese soil. There was hence no source of legitimacy for rebellion nor of a "right to rebel" in this period.

Notions of rebellion probably did not emerge until the feudal period beginning in Kamakura. When they did finally become widespread among the masses, it was Buddhism rather than Confucianism which served as their vehicle of expression. Religion in Japan was characterized by a variety of interpretations. Whereas in China there were certainly varying beliefs, they were mainly of two types, either orthodox Confucian or heterodox cults, and the former were clearly predominant. In Japan,

religion started as very particular interpretations for very elite circles, but gradually rival thinkers started their own interpretations and gathered their own followers. Eventually, teachers began to spread their teachings beyond the elite to the masses.

Buddhism was promoted largely for political reasons by Prince Shotoku of the Soga clan during the 8th century. Under his rule, it flourished and eventually climaxed in the Nara period. Buddhism emphasized change, the mistrust of the illusory world, and obtaining merit based on deeds. These tenets stood in contrast to Confucianism's concern with ancestry, and maintaining correct social relations and social order.

One might have expected that in this period of Buddhism's ascendancy, popular protest would have run high. However, Buddhism was a state religion and was still confined to the aristocracy up until the Heian period. In that period, a priest of Chinese background named Saicho, gained favor from the Japanese emperor. Saicho had begun a new sect, "One Vehicle Mahayana", based on oneness and universality. He was also politically astute and incorporated in his belief a strong loyalty to the emperor, who was his patron.

Another sect which flourished wove into its religious doctrine a justification of the political authority. This was the Kegon sect, which had special patronage by the emperor and his court.

This doctrine... holds that the Buddha Sakya is a manifestation of the supreme, universal and omnipresent Buddha Locana (in Japanese, Roshana). The object of worship of adherents of the Kegon sect is therefore the Roshana Buddha, who... is portrayed as dwelling upon a Totus flower of a thousand petals. Each petal represents a universe, and in each universe there are a myriad worlds. On each petal is a Shaka, who is a manifestation of Roshana, and in each of the myriad worlds is a small Buddha, who is, in turn, a manifestation of Shaka. The Court or the priesthood seem to have perceived some analogy between this hierarchy and the hierarchy of the State, comparing Roshana to the emperor, the great Shaka to his high officers, the small Buddha to the people. [underlining not in original]

Typical of the schools of religion which maintained their interpretations for the elite was the Shingon sect. It was founded by Kukai, a prominent Buddhist scholar at this time. Shingon was a form of esoteric Buddhism, or Buddhism "for the initiated" elite. His teachings centered around the figure of Vairochana or the Cosmic Buddha. It was a bridge to the more revolutionary interpretation that was to come in Kamakura.

Religion changed drastically in the 12th century, when the Kyoto court collapsed and the feudal era began. At this time, Buddhism became a mass movement under the influence of the Pure Land Sect. Their beliefs centered around Amida, the Buddha of Boundless Light, who claimed that all would be saved who simply called on his name (the original vow: Namu Amida Butsu). Many of the leaders of this sect were strong outspoken critics of political authority in Japan and thus suffered great persecution, e.g. Rennyō, Nichiren, Nisshin.<sup>2</sup>

### The Development of the Market Economy

Next we turn to the development of the market economy to assess its role in influencing food crises. In the pre-feudal period, the economy remained largely self-sufficient, with the family as the basic economic unit engaged in farming as a family enterprise. The head of the extended family (gōko) controlled the land and was responsible for gathering and paying taxes from its unit. There was no surplus for free exchange, and bartering was only in luxury goods.

Although markets, and even fixed markets, existed as early as 310 A.D., the influence of markets was quite limited up until Kamakura. How did trade begin? At some point, peasants who were self-styled itinerant peddlars began to market goods between provinces quite far apart and were quite successful because of the popularity of unusual foods and products obtainable in this manner.

When the shōen (manors) became prevalent, markets were set up on shōen grounds. In the beginning stages, their influence was limited to irregular market days, which amounted to little more than three days a month. However, due to lack of government control, they soon grew, according to consumer demand and the entrepreneurial spirit of merchants. The developing trade was controlled by za, the monopoly guilds we have mentioned previously. The za paid a patron lord or temple a fixed fee and in return received protection and monopolistic privileges. Eventually, markets formed in provincial capitals and administrative towns. As trade developed and as the za grew stronger, the self-sufficiency of the shoen was considerably weakened. This

signaled the eventual downfall of Kamakura. The scenario towards the end of Kamakura presaged the events at the end of the Tokugawa period:

The military class was beginning to feel the pressures of the rising money economy. The samurai had fallen under the influence of the more elegant life of the court aristocracy and were no longer satisfied with leading simple and frugal lives...

Many of the landholding samurai were forced to sell or mortgage their estates in order to meet rising expenses. They also fell into debt to the emergent moneylenders. In order to cope with this situation, the Bakufu issued in 1297 an edict (Tokusei, or act of grace) cancelling all debts and calling for a return to the samurai of all lands they had lost or sold...<sup>3</sup>

#### Development of the Notion of Rights and Self-Government

Above we have traced the religious and cultural sources of rebellion in Japan. The notion of rights to food relate to the development of political rights more generally, and can also be traced to legal, economic and political sources. Some of these will be discussed below.

Although the modern bureaucratic state is usually considered to have emerged only in the Meiji era in Japan, one of its features, a legal system, existed in early form way back in the seventh century.<sup>4</sup> The Taihō Ryō (702), which we have mentioned previously, was mostly concerned with the structure and duties of the central administration and not with popular rights. In addition, Japan, unlike China of this period, maintained a hereditary aristocracy. China had already acquired an important aspect of a more rationalized bureaucracy, which was based on merit and education.

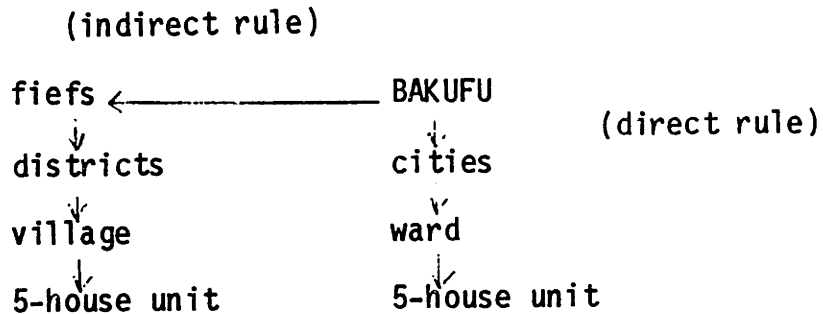


Under the shōen system of feudalism there was a complex of rights and duties called shiki attached to the shōen. These shiki ranged from the level of the patron, the owner, and the manager, all the way down to the shiki of the cultivator, whose rights were quite limited. Despite the fact that at the bottom, rights were limited, the system of shiki represented an early form of rational standards by which reciprocal rights and duties could be defined. The shōen also entailed more detailed record-keeping than before, another rational development. However, on the whole, "the relation between lord and vassal partook more of the nature of family loyalty than of a contractual obligation".<sup>5</sup>

Another code of law, which was to be "the taproot of the whole subsequent growth of Japanese feudal law", came into use in 1232 under the Kamakura Shogunate.<sup>6</sup> It was called the Joel Shikimoku, based on the law of the Minamoto family.<sup>7</sup> Military clans had ruled their fiefs by their own clan laws in the pre-Tokugawa period. Since the Minamoto came to prominence in this period, it was natural for them to rely on their clan laws. Although these laws showed a bias in favor of the large feudal landlords, there was a concern for the well-being of the cultivating class.<sup>8</sup> However, the notion of justice was still defined by feudal principles and remained a personalized concept. Nevertheless, the Joel Code (1232) and the Ashikaga Code of a hundred years later (1334), both applied under military regencies, are said to have been the most just systems of law up to this period.

In the Tokugawa period, the Shogun ruled by the buke hatto (laws of the military houses), which engaged the personalized loyalty and obedience of the daimyō based on Confucian values. These laws only

applied to the upper elite. The lowest level of effective rule was the district magistrate, which could reach down to the rural village and urban ward for the important tasks of collecting taxes and maintaining order. The administration may be depicted as follows:



The fact that the central authority did not concern itself much with the lower classes did not imply that they were self-governing, however. Rather, there was a "vacuum of government, a vacuum that grew larger the lower the position of the group..."<sup>9</sup> Steiner claims that this lack of self-governing at the lower levels of the political order was due to the lack of a concept of rights.

Japanese feudal culture did not incorporate a value system that placed emphasis on 'rights'. The ideal of harmony, not that of justice, stood in the foreground. To be harmonious one had to forego insistence on one's interests, and peace in society was seen as the absence of strife between interests. The ideal of harmony was in accordance with the belief in the desirability of diffuseness in interpersonal relations, as indicated by the emphasis on such virtues as piety, loyalty, benevolence, and obedience; it was hostile to the development of any moral or political theory based on the notion of rights.<sup>10</sup>

Steiner contrasts the Japanese case with that of Europe, where such a notion of rights did develop early:

For centuries in the West, 'rights' \_\_\_ abstract norms which safeguard the interests of individuals and groups \_\_\_ have been used in the ordering of human affairs. The system of Roman law is an illustration of this fact. It is significant that parts of this system were borrowed by the Germanic conquerors of Rome, who played such an important role in the coming of feudalism, and that the revival of Roman law shaped the character of later feudalism. As a result, diffuse elements, inherent in a hierarchical structure in which those of lower status owe loyalty to those above, existed side by side with specific, contractual elements... The emphasis on the contractual element made it possible to obtain piecemeal concessions of right from those to whom loyalty was due. Changes in power relations could be articulated \_\_\_ systematized in a change of the system of rights. It was an aspect of this general process that the immunities and privileges, pressed for and obtained by manors and towns, became the basis on which the rights of local self-government developed.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, he suggests that the relative peacefulness of the feudal era in Japan was a hindrance to rights assertion. European feudalism, in contrast, was a time of strife when lower classes felt they

could assert their rights. However, why did the notion not develop in the many centuries before Tokugawa when there was continuous warring?

Clearly there are other factors which must be taken into consideration, such as the ideological bind of society, the inner cohesiveness of groups, and the nature of the economic organization of subsistence at this level. As we have seen, the Mandate of Heaven theory with its implicit if subtle legitimation of rebellion, had not taken firm root in Japan. The form of political rule and social organization which existed in Japan created conditions for Confucianism to have precedence over most other ideological influences. Moreover, in Japan, the rice culture and the tightly-woven interdependencies between families of a village made the Confucian ideology all the more effective and kept people from diverging from the norm at too high social-psychological cost. If there were a different type of economic basis which had encouraged an independence from surrounding areas, e.g., a more differentiated economy, the situation might have been closer to Europe.

Steiner explains the rise of self-government in European cities by the prevalence of a notion of rights derived from their economic strength. The latter enabled them to win self-government charter agreements from the king. He denies any parallel phenomenon in Japan's political development.

However, free cities did develop in Japan as well. About the same time as in Europe, free cities formed in reaction to the monopoly guilds, the za.<sup>12</sup> Merchant houses formed from the Kamakura period under the Hojos, and as early as 1251, were given exclusive privileges to market in the commercial quarters of the city established for them. Some merchants

of a particular trade managed to gain certain privileges from authority and became a group called the za. The za became very powerful monopolies protected by temples, lords and officials and certainly embodied the sense of their rights vis-a-vis political authority and other social groups.

In the 15th to 16th centuries, the za began to take over barriers along roads which had been controlled by powerful local families for tax-levying purposes. Soon these za formed a well-organized trade monopoly similar to the European Hanseatic League.

The Hanseatic League that had extended commercial power over the European countries from the 14th to 16th centuries and formed a definite state regardless of the national boundaries; having such an influence as to dispatch its own ministers, was merely an alliance of the guilds in London, Hamburg, Lubeck, Bremen, etc. The league of our za merchants, that gradually gained influence after the middle period of the Ashikaga epoch, and finally occupied the barriers in various districts, having the exclusive use of the highways and monopolizing commercial privileges, was no other than the Hanseatic League inside the state.<sup>13</sup>

Cities grew up out of different kinds of activities, and those which developed out of a thriving market were freer from the domination of lords and religious interests. Thus Muro, Sakai and Hakata were trading ports which gained special privileges.

The za remained until Oda Nobunaga came to power in 1577, replacing Ashikaga hegemony. He destroyed road barriers, eliminated monopolies and heralded the entrance of free trade. However, some markets had existed outside the za system and after the demise of the za, carried on a free market trade. They paid no dues to authority, goods were distributed

freely and they were not subject to the regulations of authority.<sup>14</sup> The lords and temples began to favor the free markets, which benefitted them by bringing in products.

Many cities and many important ports then were made free and the process resembles that of Europe. With the progress of commerce and industry, a part of the city had many privileges as a market, and, as the market grew, not only a part but the whole city became the market. To keep order in the market, self-government was allowed to the market first, but when this peace or order became that of the whole city, the whole city or village became a self-governing community.<sup>15</sup>

However, they were not as free as the European cities.

### Food and Popular Protest

#### Pre-Tokugawa Period

There were conflicts between the poor peasantry, the nobles, and the richer peasants during the early period of Yamato-Nara. However, the predominant pattern is what has been labelled "negative protest", whereby peasants abandoned their lands and fled.<sup>16</sup> This pattern is probably attributable to a lack of alternatives for the peasants. It was certainly not a protest tactic to coerce the lord to better terms. It was not organized, there was no sense of a "right to subsistence", nor a welfare responsibility to be borne by the state. Such a sense may have been absent because of the strength of charismatic clan leadership and imperial rule, and the firm divisions between clans which tended to enforce vertical rather than horizontal cohesiveness.

In the Heian period, the peasants were fixed to the estates to

cultivate. They were unable to negotiate prices for their farm surpluses. They faced the increasing instability of local rule and the flight of their neighbors and family members abandoning the land in desperation, joining the military or going into banditry. Peasant uprisings then began to occur. Peasants lashed out against unjust taxation and corrupt officials by destruction, looting, and sometimes by appeals to the lord. The uprisings were spontaneous, sporadic and destructive incidences rather than sustained, organized protest. The only consequences of the increasing unrest was, therefore, that the elites created their own armies, which only exacerbated the burdens on the peasants.

Peasant unrest of the late Heian period is not considered by historians as major in scale and seems to be confined to outbreaks of banditry. The nature of these outbursts was, therefore, quite different from the later Tokugawa riots. The earlier riots were overshadowed by fighting amongst the big clans, forcing peasants to seek the protection of powerful monasteries and big families, who gained their allegiance.

Protest in Kamakura, although still not of significant proportion, was about double that of the preceding Heian period. The main causes continued to be heavy taxes and corrupt practices on the part of officials. However, food shortages and famines were added to the list of contributory factors. Furthermore, the nature of protest changed from more appeals to authority and abandoning of fields and less destruction and looting.

During the following Muromachi period and as early as 1428, tsuchi-ikki (popular riots) became noticeable in various provinces. The events of the previous periods loosened the social fabric and values considerably, giving rise to a "spirit of insubordination", which characterized this period.<sup>17</sup> The perpetual state of civil war amongst clans and the sudden rise to power of insignificant clans could not help but shake the consciousness of peasants. Historical events had brought about the rise to power of a single clan, the Genji, who declared themselves the first Shogunate, separate from the emperor and the court. There was also the defiant move of the Southern Kingdom which claimed itself the true imperial rulership, challenging the Northern rule. Thus history injected into the awareness of ordinary people who might never dream of such possibilities, a great brazen spirit to rise up against authority.

... The low class people, who were condemned to an insecure existence under the pressure constantly brought to bear upon them by this disparity between the rich and the poor, gradually nursed a spirit of insubordination against the high class people, and this discontent found violent expression in a sort of social movement called tsuchi-ikki (riots). These riots reflect the prevalent spirit of insubordination in those days.<sup>18</sup>

#### Tokugawa Period : Uchikowashi and Hyakusho-ikki (Destructive Riots and Peasants' Protest

Food-related protest increased in the latter half of the Tokugawa period. Urban unrest increased as a result of several factors: the development of cities into large commercial centers, the increasing control over food distribution by the market economy, periodic food



shortages and famines, and unstable monetary and fiscal policies. Below we shall turn to some of these causes to discuss them more fully. The highest rate of riot incidence in Tokugawa occurred in the South Tosando area, and next highest in the North Tosando area and Wokurikudo .

### Monetary and Fiscal Crises

Lack of sound monetary and fiscal policies contributed to confusion during the Tokugawa period. The first five Shogun were careful about spending state revenues. However, subsequent governments were extravagant and became embroiled in expensive military expenditures. The only exception was Yoshimune, who tightened the reins during his rule. The period was also characterized by vacillations between currency debasements and currency reevaluations, sporadic fiscal attacks on merchants and fleeting palliatives for indebted samurai. Government policies were not consistent. Instead they were like rebounding moves to the onslaught of political and economic pressures rising up unpredictably.

Usually government interests sided with the samurai, who benefitted from high rice prices. However, the increasing number of food riots forced the government to make occasional concessions to the ordinary urban consumers. These concessions were usually to force the lowering of prices. However, since the merchant guilds held firm control of the money economy and provided the government with needed revenues, the government could not move decisively against merchant interests. Faced with decreasing state revenues, the Shogunate resorted to intermittent currency debasements from 1695. This policy succeeded in creating revenues for only a short period and these were soon absorbed by the

escalating cost of living. Soon too many debasements caused prices to rise rapidly.<sup>19</sup>

### Taxes

Unreasonable tax exactions were another major cause of food riots. Tax levies were "unreasonable" when they did not respond to fluctuations in food supplies and production, especially when crops failed. Popular outbreaks occurred under such circumstances when taxes were about to be raised or an increase was announced and the populace wished to restore the old rate.

Demands of rioters often focussed on the reduction of taxes, either to the former rate or to a level between the old and new rates, but rarely for the elimination of tax levies altogether. Tax remissions were demanded only in the case of famine. In 1720, in Shirakawa, there was an uprising of 1,000 peasants caused by oppressive taxes. They attacked the lord's castle, took the commissioner hostage and actually forced the lord to reduce the tax and imprison the commissioner. In Iwaki Daira, 1739, oppressive taxes over a period of seven years culminated in a large uprising of farmers who numbered about 84,000 at its peak. Despite its size, it was rather orderly. Rebels organized into units of 500-1,000.

They marched out to the eight directions flourishing the ensigns of their villages, blowing shell horns and howling their battle cry.<sup>20</sup>

Although the long-term cause of an uprising may have been crop failure, the catalyst which actually set off the rioting was often the

levying of a tax. A head tax levied to pay for a lord's trip to Edo set off the Kyushu uprising of 1757, involving more than 50,000 farmers. An enormous uprising broke out in Kozuke, Musashi, and Shimozuke provinces over taxes levied to pay for a Korean envoy and an additional tax for court members to visit Tokugawa Ieyasu's tomb. This riot began with a mob of 70,000 and swelled to 200,000.

There had been a serious famine, the Tenmei famine of 1783, in Izumo province, when a new tax on rice was levied. In addition, a surtax was levied to cover costs for the lord's mansion in the city. Rioting broke out.

Sometimes just the mention of a new land survey for the purpose of tax reassessment was sufficient to set off a riot. The peasants were keenly aware that any reassessment meant an automatic rise in tax. Hence in Mino in 1758, when the lord ordered new inspections to be made, farmers rose up in protest. In Takayama city in Hida, a new tax was about to be collected without informing the farmers beforehand. Four thousand demonstrators encircled the town in order to prevent anyone from entering. In the same place in 1773, a survey to assess new lands for taxes was to be made very soon after one had been made. The farmers made an attempt to request the daikan (local official) to suspend the survey, but it failed. They then asked that surveying and reassessment be made only on new lands, but this request was also rejected. Despite the fact that this area had only one crop a year and only one decent crop every three years due to poor resources, taxes had been continually increased from 30%-50% since 1730, and the time of collection had been advanced two months earlier than previously. After the failure of an attempted appeal to Edo, thousands of farmers broke out in rebellion.

The desperation for revenues on the part of the government was at odds with the desperation on the part of the peasantry. In 1811, in Bingo province, Kyushu, farmers requested a decrease in taxes, but instead the official in charge doubled the rates. In 1822, Miyaza in Tango province, wealthy merchants and rich farmers bribed officials to collect two years of advanced taxes and levied a head tax in order to collect debts from the daimyō. Thus we see that closely related to the fiscal crisis was the problem of official corruption.

There were many stories of the corruption of officials, who even in times of famine, stored rice for profit and increased taxes. Such a case occurred in 1823, on a domain of Tokugawa in Kii province. Land taxes were increased and, in addition, new taxes were ordered on new lands as well as waste lands. On the domain of a Buddhist temple in Kyasan, 1776, priests who were desperate for finances, offered a reward for anyone who would carry out a false survey upon which a tax increase could be justified. Taxes in this agriculturally-poor mountainous region increased from 69% to 80%, and then to 93%.

Another type of bribing took place by farmers, often solicited by officials. In 1842, in Omi province, a survey was ordered to increase the income of the province using a false measuring stick. The officials extracted favors out of farmers and if bribed sufficiently, the officials permitted the farmers to pay lower taxes.

### Rice Price Crisis

An important cause of popular uprisings was fluctuating rice prices. The urban lower class was hit hardest by a sharp rise in rice prices.

However, due to the monopolies held over rice in certain regions by the strong guilds, peasants and rural dwellers also suffered despite the rise in prices. Peasants had to deliver their produce right after the harvest in order to receive the necessary cash with which to buy necessities and to pay part or all of the land tax. Peasants were in an unfavorable position in market transactions since they had to sell when demand was relatively low. Wholesalers and middlemen would pay them low prices for the produce and then store the rice themselves to sell it at high prices when demand was high. The wholesaler guilds sanctioned by government often held grain off the market to raise prices. This caused great suffering to retain shopowners and wage-earners.

Rioting due to fluctuating rice prices occurred at times of famine in Edo towards the end of 1732, in Osaka, Edo, Nagasaki and other cities in 1787, and in Kai province in 1837, after five years of famine conditions. In Aomori, the price of rice shot up after fire broke out.

Rising rice prices were also occasioned by the Bakufu's war with Choshu. Within one week the price of rice went from 447 momme/koku of rice to 1,129 momme/koku (equivalents= ).<sup>21</sup>

In the famine of 1736-1737, the price of rice in Edo went from 120 ryō/hyō to 160 and then to 182 ryō/hyō (1 hyo = 3.5 koku). Within a few days mobs gathered and tore through the city. About 5,000 people destroyed homes of the wealthy, especially the rice merchants. In Osaka, an estimated 200 homes were destroyed in only two days of May, 1787.

## Famines

There are numerous examples of how famine led to rioting. Famine triggered the 1717 uprising in Fukuyama (Bingo province), which was an aggressive response from peasants. Armed with spears, several thousands marched to the lord's castle to present their demands. Famines were associated with the major periods of uprisings in Tokugawa: the Kyoyo (1732), the Tenmei (1787), the Tempo (1830), and the Keio (1866). Borton claims that 9% of all Tokugawa uprisings occurred at time of famines.<sup>22</sup> We shall briefly sketch examples of such riots below.

In 1732, after repeated crop failures, a swarm of locusts came and ate what little crop there was. This led to a serious famine and the price of rice soared by the end of 1732. There was intense rioting in Edo. Borton pointed out that the participation of chōnin in this riot, several thousand in number, signaled an urban-based awareness and hostility against rich merchants and officials.

In 1747, there was a poor crop due to two years of flooding in Kaminoya, Deva. Peasants from 33 villages gathered to present demands against officials of the lord. A large uprising of 52,000 farmers took place in Kurume, Kyushu, after two years of famine in 1755-1757. Hardship was exacerbated by the normal levying of taxes. Such was also the case in 1761, in Ueda (N.W. Kanto) when, despite crop failure, heavy taxes were collected. This uprising involved far fewer peasants (only 5,000-6,000), but they used violence and destroyed the homes of some 50 merchants. This time, they gained the support of village officials and townsmen and the government conceded release of 100 bales of rice.

From 1783-1786, famine conditions prevailed over much of the country. In 1783, in the north, the situation was aggravated by the eruption of a volcano, resulting in starvation for nearly half the population. About 27 uprisings took place.<sup>23</sup> In the same year in Izumo, in the south, crops also failed, and people from all ranks of society\_\_\_ doctors, priests, chōnin, as well as peasants\_\_\_ joined forces and rebelled. They aggressively presented their demands to officials after destroying the home of a wealthy rice merchant and redistributed over 500 bales of rice found in his possession. In the nearby area of Fukuyama (Bingo province), despite famine, not only was the usual tax levied, but a special surtax as well, thus provoking about 20,000 farmers to march on the castle and present their demands.

In certain areas around Nagasaki, Wakayama and Kamiyama, drought in 1785 was followed by heavy rain in 1786. As a result, prices rose steeply and triggered severe rioting in Edo and Osaka. The Edo riot reached large proportions, involving thousands. It became considerably more destructive than all previous riots. Within three days, as the riot spread from neighborhood to neighborhood in Edo, some 1,000 rice dealers witnessed the destruction of their 5,000-odd shops by the mobs. Following this riot, improved harvests warded off further rioting until another famine hit in 1830, again inducing riots.

Famine in 1866, which affected many parts of Japan in addition to Osaka and Edo, caused rioting which cut across social classes. They destroyed many homes and shops of those symbolic rich persons of the local area, e.g. rice dealers, tofu (bean curd) and sake (rice wine) dealers.

Even the thought that crop failure might be somehow brought about by the evil desire of people stirred up rioting. In 1831, in Mitajiri (Suwo), some officials plotted to defile the dragon goddess at Ise shrine, who was the sacred spiritual protector of crops. They hoped to bring about a poor crop, cause a food shortage and thus reap a profit from the food stores they held. Their plot was discovered and provoked a tremendous reaction of fear and indignation on the part of farmers who believed the Ise goddess ensured good crops. Some 100,000 rose up and threatened to wreck the officials' homes.

#### Lack of Food Redistribution System

Among other administrative failures which played an important part in creating the conditions for food rioting, one should mention the lack of a food reserve system or other redistributive mechanism by which food could have been distributed free or at low cost in time of shortages. Such a system could only have come about if the government was bent to some degree on serving social needs, which was not the case for the Tokugawa Shogunate. There were urban food warehouses belonging to daimyō in which rice taxes from rural areas were kept. This rice was to be distributed to the elite for salaries and other government expenditures, and the surplus then sold. The warehouses were controlled by merchants to a great extent. However, despite this control, the government could and did order the release of rice on the market from stored supplies or even the release of free rice to those who needed it.

However, the government was neither strong nor efficient enough to force compliance or assure distribution to those who needed it. It may



have been a different situation had the government owned and controlled the storehouses, as was the case of the granaries in China.

In the rural areas, there were storehouses near the residence of the jito, who managed the lord's land, where the tax rice was temporarily stored. Since the central authority's rule did not really extend into the provinces, however, and much was left to the discretion of the lords and provincial authorities, there was no efficient mechanism by which relief to the poor rural masses could be administered.

### Transition to Meiji

#### Kōkutai Ideology

When the many economic and social dislocations began to occur in the latter half of the Tokugawa period, popular protest broke out. Thinkers strongly influenced by the Mito school spread the idea of "kokutai" (a national polity) and its utopian ideology. This ideology helped create the fervor which led to the Meiji Restoration. One writer has described the ideology as follows:

It is a concept of the state in which religious, political and familistic ideas are indissolubly merged... it approximates to a description of the first type of relation between man and the divine and consequently action is governed by the concept of ōn. The emperor becomes the center of the national religion and the obligation to make return for his benevolence takes precedence over all other obligations...

...kōkutai is conceived also in terms of [a] second type of the relation of man to the divine... In this case the emperor and the kami are identified and the people are identified with both. The emperor's will is the kami's will, and the people's will is the emperor's will...

Kōkutai then is an identification of the religious entity and the political entity. It has the dual aspect so characteristic of Japanese religious thought, and both of the major forms of religious action are involved in such a way that they are identical with political action.

...The desire to make kōkutai a living reality tends to put the goal-attainment dimension foremost. It acts to motivate a strong drive toward certain ends, at first the Restoration, then as it became a large part of the modern nationalistic ideology of Japan, toward building a strong country and finally toward imperialism.<sup>24</sup>

Thus from late Tokugawa, the concept of ōn came to be invoked from the point of view of the charismatic authority of Japan, the emperor. The recipients of ōn were to overthrow the traditional authority which had neglected its obligations to the people. The Shogunate had promoted the idea of ōn in a Confucian mold enforcing compliance rather than in the earlier spirit of benevolence of Buddhism. Furthermore, the Shogunate had single-mindedly pursued policies based on the use of rice as a political resource in the first half of Tokugawa, and only due to increasing pressures made concessions over food distribution policies in the latter half. The peasants had hoped that the Restoration of the emperor to power would bring about a benevolent polity. The sharp increase in peasant protest following the Meiji Restoration may be indicative of the crushed expectations of the peasants, since the emergent state did not bring about a marked improvement in their well-being.

### Meiji Riots

The latter half of Tokugawa and early Meiji periods were the peak of popular protest activity. The causes of riots tended to expand from the

basic subsistence issues of the late Tokugawa to broader social and political issues, where the riots called for a new social order (these latter riots were called "yonaoshi").

There are different estimates of the number and timing of uprisings. Aoki Koji, a Japanese scholar and expert on the subject of peasant uprisings, has analyzed approximately                    riots. Another scholar, Kokusho Kenji (?) has written extensively on the subject as well. Relying on their work, as the most comprehensive in the field, the following generalizations can be made. There were approximately 400 ikki for the Heian period to Sengoku, 1,635 ikki for Tokugawa, and 2,671 for Meiji.<sup>25</sup> In the earlier periods, riots were mostly in rural areas, small towns and villages, with only 8 urban uprisings as late as the Kyoho period (from 1716). After that time, the number of urban uprisings rose to 332, with uprisings in the rural areas still in the hundreds.<sup>26</sup> Rural uprisings occurred all over Japan from Kyushu in the south to Akita in the north.<sup>27</sup> However, the largest uprisings of late Tokugawa and early Meiji tended to concentrate in Osaka and Edo.

After the Restoration, riots increased in frequency. There were nearly 200 urban uprisings in just the first decade of Meiji (1868-1878).<sup>28</sup> A key explanation for this rise in frequency is the frustration in peasants' expectations. Specifically, by means of the redistribution of state lands and the drastic lowering of taxes, peasants thought their condition would markedly improve after the Restoration. In fact, the oppressive rates of the preceding regime were not only legalized, but made more binding by rigid reinforcement.

The peasantry accordingly had to bear a double burden in the first transitional period, the burden of the old system which the government could not yet afford to destroy, and the burden of the new centralized regime which was being built upon the ground floor of the old.<sup>29</sup>

Another important contributing factor was the new regime's fiscal policies. It sought to ensure constant revenues to the state through the Land Tax Revision of 1873, which created a based the tax on land value rather than on produce. Taxes were to be in money. The tax rate was fixed at 3% of land value, with no changes allowed for food availability or bad harvest years. In addition, local governments also levied a tax, which made the actual tax 4%. Certificates of landownership were required to establish clear ownership and owners, rather than cultivators, were made responsible for the payment of taxes. The social system of cooperative responsibility for tax payments was eliminated.

The consequences of these fiscal measures on the small peasant were very harsh. He had no security faced with nature's fluctuations and price fluctuations, yet he had to provide the government with a secure and regular source of taxes. Since he could not afford to store his rice as could the larger landholders, he had to sell it right after harvest when prices were lowest. As a result of such hardship, many had to sell their land or else go into debt. There was a rapid dispossession and rapid rise in tenancy among this group of peasants between 1880-1890, which has been said to be greater than that during the French Revolution.<sup>30</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no work in English on the Meiji riots comparable to that undertaken by Aoki Koji, nor even to the Western studies on the Tokugawa period. Nevertheless, some generalizations can be made. The nature of the conflict changed from pre-Restoration times to post-Restoration. In the Tokugawa period, rebels attacked merchants, wealthy wholesalers and officials, and petitioned the government in extreme cases. In Meiji, during the first decade, riots were against the government, mostly over the taxation issue, but thereafter switched towards a tenant-landlord conflict that lasted throughout the remainder of Meiji.

A systematic study of riots from three years before and after the Restoration showed that anti-Tokugawa political protest was quite independent of the popular uprisings during these periods. Popular uprisings tended to be in those domains that were pro-Tokugawa and who were, therefore, concerned about maintaining legitimacy of the old feudal regime. The economic characteristics of those areas with peasant popular protest were those with high agricultural productivity but weak han governments, and those areas without protest were those domains that were quite autonomous of the central government, since they managed to have a strong financial base, but whose production level was below that of the other areas.

#### Summary

In Japan, there was no long-standing ideology which legitimized rebellion or popular rights, equivalent to China's Mandate of Heaven theory. Society remained in the mold of Confucian patterns of social

order and did not break out of it until Buddhism developed a sect whose doctrines were strongly appealing to the masses (Pure Land Sect). The notion of rights probably grew up out of the ideology of ōn. On was a Buddhist concept which held that the people were heavily indebted to their benevolent superior, who bestowed blessings upon them. It is possible that ōn ideology was spread as Buddhism reached the masses.

There were further legal influences promoting the notion of rights. By customary law even under feudalism there was a complex set of rights and duties attached to the shōen (manors). As in the case of Europe, feudal norms of reciprocity did much towards building a groundwork for the notion of rights. The rationalized legal notions associated with a modern bureaucratic state took longer to form, but these had a base on which to build in these feudal norms.

The developing market economy played an important role in the rise of uprisings by eroding the feudal system. In particular, the za or guilds which formed strong organizations of monopolistic privileges from the central rule, was able to weaken the shōen self-sufficiency. Hence there were similarities in the development of a concept of rights and local autonomy in Japan and Europe, which in turn gave rise to similarities in their respective processes of state-building.

The nature, frequency and timing of food protest in Tokugawa Japan resembled that in Europe as described by Tilly. We have traced a background to the particular Tokugawa forms of rioting, which indicate they occurred under similar economic circumstances as in Europe. However the political circumstances were peculiar to Japan. There was no "paternalist model" of consumer protection from the central rule in

Japan, as existed in Tudor England. Instead the daimyō served as buffer for the peasants against too high exactions, but there was not too much the central rule did for urban consumers other than occasional palliative measures. When the Shogunate began to feel the pressure of increasing urban food and financial demands, it pressed down on the peasants for revenues and the daimyō as their agents. Critical years of famine added to the stress lines in the political system, which eventually gave way to a new form of state in the Meiji period.

PART II: CHINA

Introduction

In China political authority's concern with food matters has an exceptionally long history. In contrast to Europe and Japan, in China the provision of food for the masses was an explicit part of the legitimacy of imperial authority. The sustained ideal of "nurturing the people" was in keeping with the empire's familial form of rule and the Confucian philosophy which came to influence it so profoundly. When the Chinese empire was strong, it upheld its explicit obligations for food regulation by means of various decrees. These touched upon many areas of economic and social activity and included various forms of state intervention in the food production, distribution and consumption processes. Some of these forms, which we shall describe briefly below, included a granary system, land redistribution, a salt monopoly, and famine relief.

China had begun to establish a grain reserve system as early as the Han dynasty in the third century B.C. (See Time Chart for China below). Over the centuries these granaries were greatly extended throughout the empire and served the purposes of stabilizing food supplies and providing food relief in times of famine and food shortages. The equal-fields system (chün-t'ien), in its ideal conception, was a type of land redistribution scheme which would ensure each family a fixed land grant according to the number and sex of adults and children. It is said to have existed from 485-750 A.D., when the Turkic Toba empire predominated in the north, although the reality of this system is the subject of



controversy among Sinologists. The government salt monopoly, established in the Ch'in period (3rd century B.C.), was intended to harness a valued consumption item for state revenues. It not only brought lucrative revenues to the government, but also probably ensured more stable supplies and denied exclusive profits to private merchants at the expense of average consumers. Furthermore, the salt monopoly provided means for insuring political control, for the state could threaten to deny a troublesome area an essential nutrient for survival. Finally, the imperial authority was sensitive to the needs of victims of famines and other natural disasters, which were of frequent occurrence in China. It sought to bring relief to victims by many measures, including the redirection of food surplus to the stricken areas and the reduction of taxes and loan payments.

Control over food and food resources was also basic to the functioning of the imperial system. This control was partly exercised by a land tax, labor tax, and grain tribute. Grain obtained directly or indirectly by these levies went towards feeding the emperor's household, the nobility, the army, and the officials. The vastness of the empire necessitated a reliance on officials at the lower levels of administration (provincial and district levels) for most of the actual implementation of its food-related policies. Therefore, strong administrative control over the dispersed officialdom was essential. This requisite was fulfilled by what was then a unique form of recruitment based on an examination system, the early creation of the Chinese bureaucracy, and systematic evaluations for promotions. Qualification for any high political rank or any position of importance

in the bureaucracy required successful performance in a series of examinations. The preparation for these exams could engage a lifetime of learning. No matter how long it took, the exams required a deep understanding of the Confucian classics in a version which upheld the legitimacy of the impersonal authority and the traditional social and political order.

From the perspective of the imperial authority, the general population, as well as the officialdom, had to be controlled to minimize the threat of rebellion. In part, a system of local public lectures served this purpose. In addition, administrative divisions were superimposed over the natural divisions of villages, in a system designed to encourage mutual responsibility for tax payments and keeping public order. Specific positions of local leadership were created to ensure the practice of horizontal responsibility between households. Vertical responsibility was ensured by the existence of (1) a magistrate, who supervised these local leaders, (2) a governor, who stood above the magistrate at the provincial level, and (3) in certain provinces, a governor-general, who was above the governor.

The imperial system was remarkably pervasive and tenacious, and withstood many severe threats to its legitimacy. The Chinese people experience the same food problems which threatened authority in Europe and Japan. Food protests, which led at times to rebellions and famines in China, posed mainly a threat to the power of local authorities, and only gradually reached the point of threatening the power of central authority. Moreover, even though particular political authorities might eventually lose power because of mounting discontent, the legitimacy of the imperial system itself managed to survive.

Interest group competition over food resources was not as important in the Chinese case as in either the European or Japanese cases. The Chinese merchants never formed powerful merchant guilds which could exact substantial privileges from the central authority as in Europe and Japan. Many of them aspired to move up in the imperial bureaucracy. When they could not pass the examinations, they bought titles and ranks with their wealth and connections.

There were groups which were against the established rule. Some of the poor peasants and disaffected gentry belonged to so-called secret-societies, which were clearly anti-Confucian. These societies played an important part in the mobilization of social protest against the central authority. Their organizations were at times strong and pervasive. Nevertheless, they were never completely purged by the central authority and, to a large extent, they were informally tolerated while officially banned.

On the whole, however, the peasantry was not likely to rebel, except under extreme circumstances. To a great extent, they were as imbued with the Confucian ethic as the bureaucracy. Certainly there were times when peasants rose to rebel, and food issues were often among the many factors that led to rebellion. The Chinese concept of legitimacy, however, provided an escape value in the form of justifying rebellion under certain conditions. Thus rebellion was paradoxically legitimate yet basically unacceptable. The Confucian ethic frowned upon any form of disobedience of authority, yet the Mandate of Heaven theory recognized that there were times when rebellions might signal a change in the Will of Heaven. Although the Mandate did not justify rebellions explicitly,

it recognized their symbolic meaning as a harbinger of illegitimate rule. In this indirect way, therefore, rebellions were "legitimate" in an ad hoc sense.

This somewhat ambiguous legitimation of rebellion explains why food-related protest did not threaten the legitimacy of authority, even if it did at times lead to the removal of political leadership. The presumption in China was that the central authority was basically concerned about the people's well-being as evidenced by its food-related policies. Central authority deserved to rule except when conditions became unbearable. In contrast, in pre-modern Europe and Japan, the highest authorities did not derive their authority from food-related concerns, but rather it was local authorities who alone faced food problems. In China, despite a long history of famines, food crises failed to destroy the legitimacy of imperial authority.

CHAPTER FIVE : FOOD AND LEGITIMACY IN IMPERIAL CHINA

Nurturance as an Explicit Part of the Legitimacy of Authority

The notion of nurturing the people by political authority came to the forefront in those periods of the empire which were strongly influenced by Confucian ideals. However, even before the empire was established, and indeed, before Confucius, there was an important link between food and the legitimacy of authority. Such a link can be found in the early state of Chou (12th century B.C.-3rd century A.D.).

The Chou people claimed ancestry from Hou Chi, the god of millet. It is interesting to note that while the Japanese revered their food goddess and rice god, they did not claim to be descendants of these gods. Instead, the Japanese say themselves in the line of the sun goddess, who held the most sacred shrine. In China the most important ancestor-gods were Hou Chi (god of millet) and Hou T'u (god of the earth), whose shrines were widespread. These ancestor deities gave a charismatic quality to the ruling dynasties. The deities were beseeched at certain ritually prescribed moments, such as before and after a battle, and appropriate sacrifices were made at the altar of the gods. Strong importance was given to the agrarian basis of society and to food and fertility and these were very early features of what came to be the Chinese state and its underlying legitimacy.

A thesis of this study is that the prominence of food provisioning in the ideologies of legitimacy explains in part the differences in the durability of the Japanese and Chinese political systems. Perhaps the two most important theoretical sources of political legitimacy relied

upon by the Chinese imperial authority were Confucianism and the Mandate of Heaven theory. The obverse of the thesis just mentioned was also true: the durability of the imperial system in China gave these sources of legitimacy a chance to take deep root, despite modifications over the centuries.

Confucianism and the Mandate theory were in some ways in striking contrast to each other. Confucianism stressed obedience and respect of authority and the importance of social order, whereas the Mandate of Heaven theory gave ad hoc legitimacy to rebellion. Although the Mandate theory was primarily a justification of rule, it contained a contradictory element, which was there to be used. Confucianism and the Mandate theory together provided the complementary and mutually-reinforcing ideas which enabled the legitimacy of political authority to absorb the many food crises it had to face. On the other hand, in Japan, the bifurcated nature of legitimate authority, reduced the sustainability of the Buddhist notions associated with on from which food provisioning sentiments were derived. Neo-Confucianism influenced Japanese culture profoundly, but did not have sustained impact until the Tokugawa period.

### The Mandate of Heaven theory

The ideology of the Mandate of Heaven is said to have been developed largely in the Chou period.<sup>1</sup> This theory enabled the Chou to justify their rule over their predecessors, the Shang. The Shang, being of a more developed culture than the Chou, regarded the latter as mere barbarians. The Chou themselves felt culturally inferior to the Shang

and, therefore, made the Mandate of Heaven the pillar of Chou legitimacy. According to the Mandate of Heaven theory, heaven bestowed its blessing upon the ruler as long as he furthered the Will of Heaven. If the ruler became negligent of the requirements of his Mandate, it was believed, disasters would strike. At the first signs of disaster, the good ruler would return to the proper course by first making sacrifices and performing expiatory rituals. However, the truly wicked ruler would continue in his evil ways and disaster would follow disaster. Events of social and natural disaster were understood to be signs that Heaven had removed its Mandate. They also were signals for the good forces to remove the evil ruler from office. The new ruler was thus doubly justified, for having destroyed an evil ruler on the one hand, and for finding a new ruler who deserved Heaven's Mandate on the other. The Chou claimed that the Shang once had the Mandate of Heaven, but turned to wicked ways and thus lost it to the Chou.

This theory changed the Chou conquest from a looting raid by a band of barbarians to a holy crusade carried on, somewhat reluctantly, at the express command of the highest deity. It made the Chous not the conquering oppressors of a subjected populace, but the champions of the people, liberating them from the tyrannical sway of a degenerate king rejected by men and gods alike. And it made them and their allies not a band of uncouth barbarians who threatened in their rude military strength, to destroy the bright flower of Chinese culture, but rather the champions of that culture, coming with knightly devotion and sacred wrath to cleanse the seats of the mighty and allow pure flame of former days. This theory represented the Chou kings and feudal lords, not as hateful tyrants gorging themselves on the spoils of war and the sweat of an enslaved population, but as benevolent monarchs sent by Heaven for the one purpose of restoring to the people the blessings of justice, peace and prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

The Mandate of Heaven theory was more an ad hoc justification for political usurpation and the maintenance of legitimacy than a prescriptive norm about who should rule and how to select the best ruler. At the same time, the theory brought a charismatic quality to rulership, which other philosophies, such as Confucianism and Taoism, did not. This charisma held by the ruler enhanced his legitimacy and in theory, would increase his efforts to provide for the people's subsistence. The Mandate theory thus underlay many of the ideal notions about doing for the public good and nurturing the masses.

### The Confucian Ideology

The Spring and Autumn period of the Later Chou (770-403 B.C.) was one of the richest philosophical, intellectual, and creative times of China's history. It produced thinkers such as Confucius, Mencius, Mo Tzu, Hsun Tzu and Lao Tzu, who formulated ideas which had an immeasurable influence on Chinese thought and institutions. Confucius is attributed most acclaim for having laid the foundation of the philosophic tradition which bears his name, but certainly many other thinkers contributed to and modified his original ideas. Confucius' ideas were not successfully implemented in government policies during the Chou period, but they had a great and recurring impact on future policies of the empire.

The Confucian ideology held that a sound and productive peasantry assured the stability and wealth of a strong state. It is comparable to a limited extent to the Physiocratic doctrines of 18th century Europe, where agriculture was seen as the key area of the economy and should be protected. However, unlike the Physiocratic notions, which were



basically economic doctrines, Confucianism was basically an ethical system of thought. We shall return to this aspect later.

Confucianism esteemed social order as good in itself. Seen from this perspective, food crises were obvious forms of social disorder, which had to be dealt with to enable the innate harmony and goodness in people to manifest themselves. Famines threatened the foundation of the state by contributing to increased mortality of the cultivating class, the disintegration of the family due to destitution and migration, and the decline of food production. The effects of famines could be mitigated by ensuring people's welfare. Confucius supported policies in favor of low, equitable taxes and the remission of taxes in years of bad harvest. His notion of the benevolent government opposed exploiting the masses. Sound agriculture would contribute to the "natural order" of society.

Confucius had strong opponents as well as supporters. His opponents, such the Taoists, Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, objected to government interference in public welfare and favored laissez-faire policies. This dicotomy of opinion had analogies in both Europe and Japan. In Europe, particularly in England, public welfare thinking was predominant for a while, establishing consumer-protection policies, and was then replaced by laissez-faire policies. This shift was a crucial cause of food riots.<sup>3</sup> In China, in contrast, the public welfare ideal favoring state intervention to assure food supplies, prevailed over the other schools of thought.

Kuan Tzu, Li K'uei, and Chi Jan were deeply inspired by Confucius. Kuan Tzu favored government monopolies in grain, salt, and iron, to

permit low taxes and controlled prices. He advocated the maintenance of high grain prices to prevent peasants' becoming victimized by merchants. He also upheld strict government control of money-lenders. The need for government to keep its own granaries to distribute to peasants in case of shortage and to establish relief needs was emphasized by this thinking. Li K'uei encouraged the use of granaries to regulate prices by government purchase of grain when prices were low and selling when prices were high. Chi Jan felt that famine prevention was the key to the maintenance of state wealth and government power, and he supported granaries for the stabilization of prices as well.

However, the essential Confucian ideology was primarily ethical. In addition to the economic and philosophic reasons for preventing food crises, there were ethical reasons, which were the essence of Confucianism. Acts of generosity and kindness which would enhance the well-being of others were ways of practicing virtue and were enjoined as attitudes which would lead to "correct" actions. Those emperors, scholars and officials who considered themselves true to the doctrines, sought to ensure subsistence for the people because to do so was to act correctly. The Confucianist ideas were quite instrumental in helping the government through the difficulties of food shortages. Governments relied heavily on the gentry in time of famines to make large contributions to the food supplies. Since rewards were usually more symbolic than concrete, governments were essentially counting on the ethical motivations of gentry members. Gentry members were generally not compelled to make contributions, but usually did so voluntarily under psychological compulsion to display such outward signs of virtue.

However, some did receive material rewards and those who contributed generously were at times given rank.

The Confucian ideas combined with the Mandate of Heaven notions to enhance the ethical dimension of the political legitimacy of authority. In the theory of divine right rulership in Europe, heaven gave sanction to the office. Anyone occupying the throne was endowed with the divine right to rule. In contrast, in the Chinese notions of legitimacy, heaven's sanction was attached to the person who acted correctly, in harmony with certain moral principles (li). Holding office in China did not ensure the ruler the Mandate of Heaven. Nevertheless, when a ruler gained power after a period of strife and disasters, he generally did secure the heavenly mandate in the eyes of the public. The ethical component of Confucianism was, therefore, an important underpinning of the legitimacy of authority, and this legitimacy was closely tied to nurturing the people.

The intellectual imprint of Confucius and other great thinkers of the Chou period brought an early and lasting moral conscience to the Chinese mentality, which underlay the legitimacy of the political authority. Confucian philosophy was oriented towards the social well-being of the lower classes as the foundation of the good and desirable social order. This social order was to be guided by the enlightened and cultivated moral rulers. The pervasiveness and persistence of a concern for the basic subsistence of the masses had no equivalent in either European nor Japanese history.

### System of Social Control

As in Japan, the imperial government of China sought to exercise social control over the bureaucracy and the population by ideological means in addition to the fiscal means we have just discussed. The ideology was that based on Neo-Confucianism.

Neo-Confucianism has been labelled as such because it was a body of thinking which was basically Confucian, but over time elements of Buddhism and Taoism were added to the Confucian metaphysics.<sup>4</sup> The Ch'ing government sought to instill the Chu Hsi interpretation of Confucianism.

Chu Hsi (1130-1200) was a thinker of the Sung period who synthesized many of the concepts developed by earlier thinkers into a unified philosophy.<sup>5</sup> Chu Hsi, unlike Confucius, was concerned about man's nature. His philosophy was rational and optimistic. He stressed that man was essentially good, perfectible, and could understand human affairs and even reach a state of enlightenment. Like Confucius, Chu Hsi pointed to the means to attain these ends as twofold: one, to study the Classics, literature and history in order to understand the "ultimate principle", which he believed was universal and unchangeable, and second, to devote oneself to moral discipline by developing what was called jen, humanity or benevolence.

Chu Hsi Confucianism became the state ideology during the Ming dynasty, and it was inculcated into the officialdom and public since then.<sup>6</sup> The Neo-Confucian ideology was advanced to support the traditional values and social hierarchy of the Ch'ing state. Its influence permeated all social institutions from the family up to the

official bureaucracy. It was instilled in the official bureaucracy through the examination system, and amongst the rest of the population by means of compulsory public morality lectures.

### The Examination System

The civil service examination was an elaborate system which filtered out those who could become government officials from the masses of people who were desirous of an official position and all the prestige it brought. China developed this element of a modern bureaucratic state of advancement based on merit very early relative to Japan and continental Europe which had strong aristocracies. The ranking of people into categories by merit dates back to the early empire in the Han period. An examination system was instituted in the later Sui dynasty in 589 A.D., and developed in the following T'ang period. The Confucian form of education came to be closest to its ideal in Ming-Ch'ing times with the establishment of many schools devoted to such training.<sup>7</sup>

The route to the highest position, that of an official in the government, was extremely demanding and entailed long preparation and taking a progressive series of examinations. First, at the lowest level, one had to take a highly competitive selective exam (t'ung-shih), which permitted one to enter a government district school (sheng-yuan). Successful performance in this exam made one an official member of the gentry. The second level likewise required one to pass qualifying exams at the provincial level (k'o-shih), which if passed, entitled one to take the provincial exams (hsiang-shih). Once these were passed, one obtained the highly prestigious chu-jen degree (provincial graduate). Finally,

one could work towards the metropolitan exam (hui-shih), and the palace exam (tien-shih), which if successfully completed, would lead to an appointment to office. Successful candidates then became chin-shih. The process took an average of ten years from the sheng-yuan to the chin-shih. However, it is misleading to speak about averages, since it was not uncommon for people to spend their entire adult life of thirty years or more studying for these exams, taking and retaking them, with many, many failures.<sup>8</sup>

The life devoted to scholarship was, of course, in keeping with the Confucian ideal. Moreover, as the quote below indicates, the material studied reinforced this effort, since it was based on the Confucian classics.<sup>9</sup>:

The constant drilling in traditional Confucian moral principles and the writing of formalized essays kept the minds of the gentry so occupied that they had little time for independent thought and study... the Ch'ing government tried to control them by making them read the classics. Their thought was channelled into the lives of official ideology in which the aspects of authority and discipline in the Confucian tradition was emphasized. The principles of loyalty and service, which were fundamental parts of this doctrine, were stressed not only in the examinations themselves, but also in the schools, which were related to the examination system.<sup>10</sup>

The government school students were exhorted to obey various officially declared "principles" and "maxims", e.g. the Eight Principles drawn up especially for them by the emperor, and the Sixteen Maxims of the Sacred Edict (1670). All these emphasized absolute obedience to authority. These will be described more fully below.

It is interesting to note that the breakdown of the system's

effectiveness was related to a trend towards overformalization to the detriment of content. In the early Ch'ing period, the creative aspects of essay questions and poems were stressed was an important part of the exam and an indication of merit, but these elements gave way to a preoccupation with form.

The overformalization of essay writing and the overemphasis on calligraphy and poetical composition led the students to neglect the study of the Confucian classics. The trend was more and more toward empty forms without content or meaning. This change in the examination system affected the nature of the gentry.<sup>11</sup>

#### The Public Lectures (hsiang-yueh)

Confucian values were inculcated among the commoners by means of public lectures given by appointed elder scholars or other elderly persons of good character from the local area. They were called hsiang-yueh. Twice a month appointed elders were "to expound on the imperial maxims and to record all good and evil deeds performed by inhabitants of his neighborhood".<sup>12</sup> This system is thought to have been initiated by the Shun-Chih emperor in the beginning of the Ch'ing period.

The lectures were based on a set of maxims promulgated by the emperor. The number of maxims increased from six (called the Liu Yu, 1652) by the Shun-Chih emperor, to sixteen by the K'ang-Hsi emperor (called the Sheng Yu). Their content is said to have changed over time as well, moving in the direction of negative prescriptions, i.e. what is unlawful. These maxims emphasized filial piety and respect of elders, fostering of harmonious relationships, the importance of correct

education, discipline in work, frugality, paying full taxes, cooperation to maintain the social order. Frugality was stressed as a way to insure against famine. Respect of elders and filial piety enforced the sense of moral obligation to pay taxes, because not to pay taxes would reflect ingratitude. Such exhortations as that which follows were apparently common.

If you realize that what the court worries over and concerns itself with day and night is nothing but the affairs of the people that dikes are built when there is a flood, prayers are offered when there is drought, and when locusts appear efforts are made to extirpate them; that you enjoy the benefits of ? for calamities are thus warded off, and your taxes are exempted or you are given relief by your government if calamities ensue do you then have the heart to allow your taxes to remain unpaid, thus delaying the fulfillment of your government's needs?<sup>13</sup>

The authorities tried to extend the lecture system all over the empire. The requirement to attend lectures was extended to the military, various ethnic minorities and even young scholars (pre-chu-jen), in addition to Chinese commoners and peasants.<sup>14</sup>

Pao-chia (local militia) and li-chia (local tax collection)<sup>15</sup>

The bureaucratic arm of the government could not reach below the level of the magistrate. The magistrate himself was regularly rotated, and thus his familiarity with a given locale was limited. This situation might have left a gap wide enough for local groups to form bases of anti-imperial power which could undermine the political system of the empire. A good measure of the imperial government's ability to survive so long was due to its practical foresight in trying to prevent such a



situation from ever developing. The idea to create administrative divisions in the local areas for policing and mutual-tax sharing and to make these tasks a responsibility felt by local people, was the essence of its success. The idea was a very old one in Chinese history. Archetypes of the local systems were said to exist in the classic texts of the Chou-li or the Kuan-tzu, and the idea persisted into the early dynasties of the empire (Ch'in and Han, etc.). However, it was under Wang An-Shih (1070) of the Sung dynasty that the system adopted the role of policing as its main purpose, and the term pao-chia was applied. The system did not spread throughout the empire, however, until Ch'ing times. Hsiao describes the system as follows:

...every 10 hu (households) were arranged into one p'ai, for which a p'ai-t'ou (head of p'ai sometimes called p'ai-chang) was set up; every 10 p'ai constituted a chia, a head of which was known as chia-chang or chia-t'ou; and every 10 chia formed a pao, which was placed under the care of a pao-chang or pao-cheng.<sup>16</sup>

An edict in 1708 described further details about the pao-chia which concerned each household.

Each household is given a placard on which the official seal is affixed. The names and number of adult males are written on it. In case any of them go away, their destination is recorded; in case any come into the households, the places from which they come are ascertained. It is forbidden to take in strangers and suspicious characters, unless a thorough questioning of them has been made. Every ten households set up a p'ai-t'ou (placard-head), every ten p'ai a chia-t'ou, and every ten chia a pao-chang... Hostels keep registers for the purpose of checking (the guests) and paper placards are also given to temples and shrines. At the end of each month, the pao-chang submits a kan-chieh (willing bond),

giving assurance that everything has been well in the neighborhoods, which (kan-chieh) is sent to the official concerned for inspection. Whoever fails to comply will be punished.<sup>17</sup>

The pao-chia served as a census as well as a means of controlling crime and maintaining public order. It combined and defined local and official responsibilities in such a way to produce maximum central control. That is, local people were to run the system and take active roles at every step, while officials were to supervise them. The pao-chia has been diversely evaluated as simply "an organization of census-taking" and a system run by "a tyrannical administration that maintains its power by fear and distrust".<sup>18</sup> The reality was probably some combination of these.

The reality also fluctuated with time. The system was upheld rather carefully during the Ch'ien-lung emperor's rule. He made special efforts to recover the waning effectiveness of the system in the mid-18th century, including a reexamination of pao-chia registers. The effort and concern continued throughout the reign of emperor Chia-ch'ing into the 19th century. The government counted on the pao-chia to suppress bandits and rebels during the early 19th century.

An important aspect of the pao-chia control was that it did not exempt the gentry, a fact which probably went a long ways towards preventing the gentry from building private bases of power.

...since the gentry already dominated the local scene, it would also have been unwise to give them the power that pertained to the offices of the pao-chia heads. By reserving the posts of pao-chang and chia-chang to commoners, a kind of balance of power between two segments of the population might be maintained.<sup>19</sup>

The li-chia system of the Ch'ing period was established to facilitate tax collection. It was similar to the Japanese gonin-gumi system, which grouped families into five household units for sharing the obligations of tax payments. The system had an antecedent in the Yuan dynasty (1234/79-1368) called the li-she, and a direct forerunner in the Ming dynasty called the li-chia. Its original purpose was to register the number of adult males, aged 16 to 60, for tax purposes.

The organization of the li-chia divisions was supposed to make this task easier. According to the li-chia system, the li was the basic division, made up of 110 households (hu). The li was divided into 10 chia of 11 households each. Heads of li (li-chang) were chosen from the 10 largest households. The other 100 households were grouped into 10 households each (chia) and also had a head (chia-chang).

Ideally, the li-chia system was supposed to make the compilation of population registers more efficient and complete. These registers were then to serve as a basis for tax assessment. In addition, the li-chia were to serve in the important tasks of reminding taxpayers of their taxes due and in the actual collection of the taxes.

Apparently this system was never very effective, however. It was hampered by all the problems of tax collecting, including corrupt officials who practiced extortion in order to supplement their incomes. Furthermore, the li-chia lost its usefulness for taxation purposes when

the taxes were fixed in 1712 by the K'ang-Hsi emperor, when labor (ting) taxes were made part of land taxes in 1723, and especially after 1775 when the ting registers were abolished by the emperor Ch'ien-lung.<sup>20</sup>

### Food Policies

Two key areas of statecraft sought to deal with assuring this subsistence, namely, a concern for the provision of water, and a concern for the provision of food. Although these concerns are closely related, we shall not deal with the problems of provision of water since this will carry us too far afield.<sup>21</sup>

The central authority's concern to provide food for the people is evidenced in its effort to manage (1) a granary system, (2) a salt monopoly, (3) famine relief, and (4) land distribution measures. In Japan and Europe, the central authority gave monopoly licenses to merchants to engage in food distribution and lost control over much of the profits accruing from trade and commerce in foods. In contrast, in China, these areas of policy concern represented forms of state intervention in the food production, distribution and consumption processes. Each of these will be considered in turn. Our material pertains primarily to the Ch'ing period, however, it will be supplemented with materials from other periods.

### The Granary System<sup>22</sup>

The granary system of China was an institution without parallel in either Japan or Europe in scale, purpose, and historical continuity. we have previously mentioned the sporadic appearance of giso, or charity

granaries, in early imperial Japanese history. Granaries also existed in Europe, but much later than in Asia. England's first granary for the purpose of relief in time of food scarcity, was built in 1514. They were largely supplied by the guilds rather than the government, and the guilds took them over 1578-1678. By the time of Elizabeth, the granaries in England declined, until a scarcity in 1630-31 forced the government to have them replenished. They declined from 1636.<sup>23</sup> Hence in the English case at least, granaries were upheld only in times of extreme food shortage. In China, perhaps because of the relative frequency of food shortages, granaries were an archetype of provisioning by the government, continually appearing and disappearing and reappearing.

Granaries were supported by the Confucianist thinkers Kuan Tzu, Li K'uei and Chi Jan as early as the Eastern Chou period (770-249 B.C.) for the purpose of providing grain loans to needy peasants. The extent of their reality and use is not well documented. A predecessor to the ch'ang-p'ing ts'ang (the ever-normal granary) called the ch'ang-p'ing existed from the Han dynasty (54 B.C.). Through government purchase of grain, the ch'ang-p'ing served to counter the bad effects of low grain prices for producers at times of grain surplus. This function continued on up to the Chin period (3rd-5th centuries B.C.).

The first emperor of the Sui dynasty (581-618 A.D.), Emperor Wen-ti, established i-ts'ang (righteous granaries) in 585 A.D. for relief during food shortage. These were maintained by contributions from local members of the wealthier class and were managed by the she (an administrative division of households) headman. Hence the granaries were also referred to as she-ts'ang. The granaries were also set up for the purpose of

countering usurious practices by local officials. In addition, during this period, about a dozen ch'ang-p'ing ts'ang (ever-normal granaries) were set up at strategically important locations. These were used for disaster relief, maintaining stable prices and loaning grain in bad crop years. In subsequent dynasties, the ch'ang-p'ing ts'ang were greatly extended throughout the empire.

Supplies for the granaries in the T'ang period (618-906 A.D.) were no longer dependent on mere contributions, but were provided for by taxing landowners. This practice was continued into the Sung period (960-1279 A.D.). In both periods, the management of granaries was put in the hands of local officials rather than left to the rural she headman. This feature of supervision by officials was an important development of the Sung period. Chu Hsi, an influential and outstanding thinker of the Sung period, encouraged the Shun-Hsi emperor to extend the she-ts'ang. They were maintained by contributions, managed locally and supervised by officials.

Under the Ming (1368-1644), granaries were established at the hsien (district) level, the furthest they reached into the rural areas. Chu Yuan-chang, the first emperor of Ming, set up "preparation granaries" (possibly i-ts'ang) in the major towns. Ch'ang-p'ing ts'ang were distributed in key areas approximately one per every twenty to thirty families. They were maintained by contributions.

By the Ch'ing period, the ch'ang-p'ing ts'ang had evolved the dual purposes of stabilizing grain prices and providing relief during food shortages and famines. The Ch'ing distinguished between the she-ts'ang for rural areas and the i-ts'ang for the towns.

The granaries did not always serve their ideal functions, nor could they be maintained at constant standards. The pre-Ch'ing granaries were often subject to devastation whenever serious public disorder prevailed or when central authority fell from power. This was the case during the An Lu-shan rebellion, for example, which caused irreversible damage to the T'ang economy.

Moreover, even when the central government was stable and relied on the granaries to stabilize prices, some officials diverged from the central policies. In one example, the governor of Western Chekiang, Fan Chung-yen (989-1052), raised grain prices to prompt merchants to import large amounts of grain. Once the supplies were available, he lowered prices again. The masses obviously suffered while the prices were high and grain was scarce. The trade-off benefit derived from the imported supplies was probably low. Fan was known for his unusual acumen for economic policies. He also enthusiastically supported work projects. He is said to have told the Buddhist temples: "In a year of famine, labor is extremely cheap. You may have much constructive work done."<sup>24</sup>

### Ch'ing granaries

There were three types of granaries by the Ch'ing period: the ch'ang-p'ing ts'ang (ever-normal granaries), the i-ts'ang (charity or town granaries) and the she-ts'ang (community or rural granaries).

The ch'ang-p'ing ts'ang were grain stocks available for sale or loan. They were located in the cities of chou or hsien (district level administrative units). Most of their grain supplies were bought with government funds, supplemented by voluntary contributions. They were the

only fully public granaries. They were managed by the magistrate, who had to keep careful track of amounts sold and loaned, and seek approval from his superiors for each transaction. It was the magistrate's responsibility to replenish the granary after sales or loans within six months on penalty of salary decrease or demotion. Grain sales took place in the spring when prices were high. Grain was sold at about 30% below market prices and loaned at low interest rates. With the money obtained, new supplies were purchased in the fall. The granary was intended not only to stabilize prices and provide staple food for local inhabitants, but also to keep grain from rotting in storage. Wheat, in particular, had a rather short storage life. During famines, more grain could be sold or loaned at no interest if the crop were more than 30% below average.

The i-ts'ang were established in 1654, also in the chou or hsien. These reserves were kept up by contributions made by officials, gentry, scholars as well as commoners, and were managed by local people.<sup>25</sup>

The she-ts'ang were established at the same time as the i-ts'ang in 1654. Their purpose was to supplement the ch'ang-p'ing ts'ang. Like the i-ts'ang, they were supplied by contributions and managed by local gentry.

Hence the Chinese governments had a sense of responsibility towards the people in food matters and exerted its influence on the gentry in support of the people.

### The Salt Monopoly

A government monopoly on salt was instituted at various times during the empire. Since salt is necessary for human nutritional needs and a



consumption item in high demand, government efforts to control salt for fiscal purposes were generally quite lucrative.

The salt monopoly was established by the Ch'in dynasty in the early formative phase of the empire. Emperor Wu-Ti of the Early Han dynasty restored the salt monopoly in 119 B.C. as a measure to generate government revenues when the empire was in great fiscal need. Government control was exercised by issuing licenses to certain persons to engage in salt production and distribution. The T'ang dynasty managed to survive for a century after the devastating An Lu-shan rebellion partly by a fiscal strengthening provided by the salt monopoly.

The administration of the salt monopoly changed over time. It was concentrated in the hands of a single high official in the Han and T'ang periods. Later in Sung times, authority over the salt monopoly became more diffuse and relied upon a system of administrative checks. By Ch'ing, an administrative triangle developed, made up of the emperor, the Board of Revenue, and the Liang-huai Salt Administration.

The Liang-huai Salt Administration headquarters was located at the important juncture of two waterways: the Grand Canal and the Yellow River at Yang-chou. The administration was headed by a chief salt commissioner, who was drawn from the Imperial Household Department. Below him was a salt commissioner, salt intendant, various assistants, inspectors, treasurers, salt receivers, examiners, watchers and clerks. "Liang-huai" referred to "the area in the vicinity of the Huai river", which was the most productive of all salt-producing regions in China. It covered most of Kiangsu, Anhui, Kiangsi, Southeast Honan, Hupei and Hunan

provinces. "This huge area was densely populated in most parts and possessed a network of rivers, lakes and canals unrivalled elsewhere in the empire."<sup>26</sup>

Salt was produced at approximately thirty large production sites called ch'ang ("factories"). On each chang (factory site) there were many smaller salt-producing units called "salterns". These units were made up of salt-yielding fields, ponds, and marshes, which were owned by a "salt-master" (salt-producers or tsao-hu). The tsao-hu had to pay taxes to the government and his position was hereditary.

In addition to the salt-masters, there were salt merchants ("factory merchants") who were responsible for bringing salt from the salt-producers (tsao-hu) and selling it to salt distributors. In time, however, a trend developed whereby salt merchants bought the property of bankrupt tsao-hu and began to produce salt themselves with the help of hired labor. They soon became very wealthy and powerful. By the early nineteenth century, salt merchants owned roughly half the salt production property. The salt merchants, who normally paid cash to the tsao-hu for salt produced, were soon able to set the prices they were willing to pay. Thus the greater percentage of the profits from salt production accrued to the salt merchants.

In the early Ming period, the government held the upper-hand over the salt-merchants. Merchants were only allowed to engage in salt trade if they transported grain to the frontier posts for the military stationed there. Once the grain was delivered, the merchants were issued salt tickets which entitled them to access to government-controlled salt in the interior regions. Rather than transport the salt themselves, the

merchants established colonization posts where poor labor was hired to do the work of producing grain. However, by late Ming, the government changed its policies and demanded taxes from the merchants in silver instead of grain. This change brought about a steady migration of merchants from the frontier areas to the Liang-huai area where the salt trade was more lucrative. The central government then initiated the so-called kang system, by which it farmed out the right to sell salt (ken-wo) to those merchants who could pay the salt tax in advance. (f.n. kang referred to a salt-carrying vessel) Some merchants were able to lease the right to sell salt. The kang system was established in 1614-17 in the Liang-huai region and lasted until the salt administration reforms in 1831.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the fact that wealthy merchants were able to amass great wealth through the appropriation of salterns and to control the smaller merchants to a considerable extent, a strong capitalist trend never developed in China. If such a trend had occurred, it might well have led to the kinds of social and political changes which occurred in the European and Japanese cases we have examined.

In salt production, for example, however able and ruthless a factory merchant might be, he could not limitlessly expand his sphere of business at the expense of others, for each of them owed his position to government recognition. In salt distribution, the system of designated ports and fixed ratios for salt destined to the 'free-trading' area made it difficult for the most enterprising merchants to expand their volume of trade substantially, at least under normal circumstances. The organization of the salt trade allowed little room for competition and rationalization. In fact, one may ask whether such ideas of competition and rationalization ever occurred to the merchants. For, in theory at least, the

interventionist state always upheld tradition and protected the vested interests of all salt merchants. Individual fortunes might rise and fall owing to individual luck or folly, but the law ruled out the possibilities of ruthless competition among them.<sup>28</sup>

Ho has outlined several reasons why this trend did not occur. First, there was a strong central government which protected the merchants. Second, many simply squandered their wealth in the style of extravagant nouveau riche. Third, many sought upward social mobility and became educated or purchased a degree in order to obtain a position in the imperial bureaucracy.

The average merchant family, in two or three generations, ceased to be a socially homogeneous body. In fact, almost as soon as the family became well-to-do, its youthful members were encouraged to embark upon a scholarly, and ultimately an official career, with the result that the merchant element in the family became less and less predominant.<sup>29</sup>

In the Ch'ing period, the government still reaped the larger part of profit from the salt trade by taxing merchants heavily. In the mid-nineteenth century, approximately five million taels per year were collected, equal to 1/7 of the total annual revenue.<sup>30</sup>

### Famine Relief

The capability of the central governments to deal with famine relief effectively improved over time. Will cites a case of drought in Honan in 1594, which was an example of extremely ineffective delivery of relief. Despite Honan's close proximity to the capital, the government response to the disaster was very slow. The initial evidence of famine was

deliberated at high government levels for a very long time before a provincial authority was assigned to deal with the disaster. In an example from Hupen in 1691, relief efforts could be seen to have been still ineffective. These efforts were seriously hindered by the great amount of time wasted in the red tape of reporting the famine. In this example, a middle level official had to seek approval from the governor-general, his provincial superior, before releasing grain from the ch'ang-p'ing ts'ang. An inordinate amount of time was taken to write a detailed technical report to the emperor.<sup>31</sup>

By 1740, however, the government was fairly effective in its handling of famine relief as evidenced in the Chili famine relief effort. The bureaucracy had developed a systematic famine code, which facilitated decision-making and permitted the relatively successful implementation of relief measures.<sup>32</sup> In 1833, famine procedures were compiled in a manual. Will believes that these procedures were utilized up through the first decades of the Chien-lung era in early Ch'ing.<sup>33</sup>

There were several phases involved in famine relief efforts. Reporting information about famine conditions was the first phase of famine relief. Peasant cultivators relayed information concerning drastic deterioration in agricultural and social conditions to the village-head, who then reported to the magistrate. The information about food shortages and famine conditions was then conveyed up through the bureaucratic ladder to the emperor. Intra-bureaucratic communication and the alertness of personnel in the bureaucracy were thus key factors in the speed and accuracy of famine reports and the overall efficiency of implementing relief measures. Since local officials could not act

without the approval of their superiors in the bureaucracy, delays and communication problems at the earliest stage of government involvement could destroy the usefulness of any subsequent policy.

The next phases involved survey-taking, the mobilization of resources, and the distribution of famine relief itself.

### The Survey<sup>34</sup>

Although the survey was painstaking and time-consuming, it was essential to the central authority's concern to ensure the food needs of those who needed relief most. Detailed procedures were prescribed in the manuals on how to get help to those who were destitute. There were two types of surveys undertaken, namely, (1) a survey on the stricken area, and (2) a survey to determine the amount of food relief required by victims. Each survey was carried out in an initial and definitive phase.

The survey on the stricken area was initially the responsibility of the village-headmen and the head of the pao-chia (a local security unit). They collected basic census data, information on whether they were landowners or tenants, on the amount of land affected by the famine, and on conditions of victimized household members. The initial phase enabled the magistrate to then define the stricken area spatially and economically, and to request the help of higher officials. For the second phase the magistrate appointed surveyors to verify the accuracy of the preliminary data by visiting the stricken households. A register for the district was compiled on the basis of the finalized data for each stricken village. This second phase took an average of forty-five days.

The survey to determine the amount of food relief needed likewise started with an initial information-gathering phase undertaken by the village-headmen and pao-chia head. The second phase of the survey was to conduct a door-to-door interview to verify the the needs of the household. The most important task was considered the identification of the most desperate famine victims, "those who could not make it through winter and spring without the help of the State in the form of food and/or money".<sup>35</sup> The survey attempted to make an assessment of household assets such as land, livestock, grain, and farm equipment. It also took into consideration the number of dependents in a household and the special needs of any household member. Relief coupons based on the overall assessment were then issued to the recipient, who redeemed them to obtain food relief.<sup>36</sup>

#### Mobilization of Food Relief

The successful mobilization of food resources depended on available food supplies and the central authority's ability to tap these supplies. It also depended more generally on the intra-bureaucratic communication and quality of personnel, as Will has pointed out.<sup>37</sup>

The far-sightedness and the administrative talents of the Ch'ien-lung emperor also point to the importance of strong and clear decision-making abilities on the part of the emperor. For example, upon receiving early reports about a Chihli famine, the Ch'ien-lung emperor mobilized grain from the government granaries even before famine had been officially recognized. He had initial shipments made to the area, and followed up with further shipments. Thus precious time was not wasted on

the bureaucratic necessities of properly assessing the famine conditions before beginning relief mobilization.<sup>38</sup> The government recognized that grain in the granaries would not be enough, and thus grain was bought from grain surplus areas such as Jehol, Fengtien (Manchuria) and Honan. Furthermore, the government opened trade channels to the area from Fengtien where there had been a bumper harvest, to the stricken area. Merchants aided greatly in transporting grain to the food-deficit areas.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, the government also relied a great deal on the gentry to donate generously to those in need of food. In return, the government offered various forms of awards, which were rarely of significant material value. The fact that private donations were remarkably generous and forthcoming in times of famine points to the strength of the legitimacy of the imperial authority, even in the face of calamity.

#### The Distribution of Famine Relief

The distribution of famine relief itself also reflected the concern of political authority to protect the most severely stricken victims. In the Chihli famine, a monthly distribution was provided free to the poorest in the famine area during the interseasonal period when food was extremely scarce. Relief was distributed on a monthly basis and issued at a rate based on need. For example, "general relief" was usually given all the stricken areas in the early phase of the famine. There was also "supplementary relief", as well as "relief to selected areas", "relief in the form of grain loans", and no relief.<sup>40</sup> Adults could receive 5 ko (.005 picul) of husked grain daily, or 10 ko of unhusked grain.<sup>41</sup> A



child under 12 years of age was entitled to half the adult ration. Half the ratio was given in grain, and ideally, half was in silver. However, the ration was usually in grain. Groups besides peasants who were entitled to receive relief were poor students, poor bannermen, and poor salt producers.

Soup kitchens were set up largely through private initiative. These soup kitchens were said to emanate more out of the Buddhist principle of altruism. They were set up in such a way as to complement the regular famine relief rather than to replace it. Help was given to those unable to receive other forms of aid, often because they did not qualify to have their names in the population registers. The registers were the basis for survey data. Such persons included:

...the urban dwellers, the landless villagers, as well as the old and sick for whom the monthly rations were inadequate; also vagabonds, beggars and wanderers of all types who, by definition did not appear in the local population registers. [translated version]<sup>42</sup>

Hence these low-class people were dependent on local custom for relief, a fact which points out a shortcoming in the imperial famine relief system. The central authority did, however, encourage the gentry to provide for soup kitchens, and were relatively successful in doing so.

In addition to relief in the form of food, the government implemented other policies intended to give relief. These included the cancellation or reduction of taxes, loans and the creation of work schemes. The latter were encouraged to keep the economy running in the various stricken areas. Typical work projects included digging wells,

planting trees, and repairing walls. Generally speaking, the government policies were aimed at relieving the small peasants rather than either the peasants deemed able to rely on their own resources to a greater extent or the destitute social groups who did not even appear on the population registers.

The government's concern with famine relief shows how it sought to uphold its legitimacy by the Neo-Confucian and paternalist ideal of providing sustenance. Below is a quote by the chief relief coordinator in the Chihli famine, Fang Kuan-ch'eng, which gives evidence of this concern and the sentiment behind it.

The offering of relief assistance after the harvest disaster is to rescue the collapse of agriculture. Peasants toil all year round themselves in order to pay taxes to the government. All the reserves in the national treasury and in the local granaries are revenues squeezed from the peasants' sweat. Therefore it is natural for the government to release these stocks for them in times of crop failure.<sup>43</sup>

The actions of the central government in its famine relief effort demonstrate the fullness of the Neo-Confucian ethic. These actions, in many ways, seem contradictory. Peasants were continually admonished to pay their taxes and be absolutely obedient to authority, as a son should be filial to his father. While peasants should work hard and not engage in frivolous activities, rulers could get away with lavish habits despite the Confucian admonition for simplicity. Calamity brought about a sudden reversal of these attitudes and judgments, however. When famines struck, the emperor fasted and wore plain clothes. He became penitential and

paternalistic. The assertion that governments must provide for the people, take care of them and guard their welfare was remembered and reconfirmed.

### Land Redistribution

In comparison to the relatively strong interest taken by the central government in maintaining the granary and famine relief systems as measures which assured the subsistence of the people, its efforts in the area of land redistribution were comparatively weak.

The ancient "well-field system", written about by Mencius, was an idealized version of land equalization about which little is known. Even before the empire in the Shang and Chou states, some records allude to the existence of the well-field system. The term derived from the division of land into nine equal plots configurated as in the Chinese character for "well"(井). Each of the outer plots was worked by a peasant family for its own subsistence, while the inner plot was worked by the families collectively and the product given to the government as taxes. One author has speculated that the well-field system rose out of a hunting society, since hunting areas were squared into enclosed areas for hunting animals. Subsequently when agriculture developed, the land plots followed the same division into squares. The author claims that the system actually existed in the Lower Yangtze River area. The land divisions followed a pattern whereby eight families held 100 mou for their own use, worked 10 mou for their lord, and 2 1/2 mou for building huts. The uncultivated land, called "gathering ground", was not owned but was used for gathering wild vegetables to supplement the diet.<sup>44</sup>

This theory is highly speculative, however, and evidence for the well-field system's actual practice is too tenuous to be taken as factual. The value of the concept lies in the idealized model it provided rulers as an ancient formula of land equalization. It was referred to, as were many of the ideas developed in the Chou period, by many subsequent rulers. For example, Wang Mang, emperor of the short-lived Hsin dynasty, tried to renew the well-field system as part of an unsuccessful effort to institute land reforms.

Another form of land redistribution was the "equal-fields system" (chün-t'ien). This system was introduced by the Turkic peoples who had settled in the north and founded the Toba Empire under the northern Wei dynasty from 385-550 A.D. According to the equal-fields system, adult males were entitled to receive 40 mou of top quality land and adult women could receive 20 mou. Lower quality land was more widely distributed. Land was inherited and was to be returned to the government for redistribution when owners reached age 75 or upon death. The other northern dynasties adopted variations on the Toba version of the equal-fields system, and it permitted a revival of agricultural production. After a long period when the system was no longer workable, the T'ang dynasty sought to adopt a modified version of it at the beginning of the T'ang period. However, these efforts were largely unsuccessful due to elite privileges to hold private lands hundreds of times the size of commoner plots. The land equalization system was finally abolished in 780 A.D.

Therefore, despite the efforts of many rulers to redistribute and equalize land, the counter currents of landed privilege were too great

for such measures to take effect for very long. Even as early as the Chou period, when the well-field system was theoretically at its best, land was distributed according to the social hierarchy. The royal family and nobility received the best lands. The land for the lower ruling class, i.e. the civil and military officials, was distributed according to the clan hierarchy in the manner of that of their Shang predecessors.

In periods when central rule was weakening, public fields and equal plot schemes tended to fall into disuse and eventually disappeared. Family ownership of land evolved in the Eastern Chou period, signaling the breakdown of clan organization of land control. This development in turn initiated a trend towards increasing land values and marketability of land.

Land as private property soon became a measure of wealth and power. This sense of private property in land, once rooted, was very difficult to eliminate. Thus Wang Mang's land reforms failed, and the T'ang government's efforts to limit gentry land concentration also failed. Other dynasties did nothing to curb land concentrations and some even encouraged it. The Chin (265-316 A.D.), for example, placed no controls over large landholders.

The Northern Sung dynasty (960-1126 A.D.) had a double standard in its fiscal policies, which favored wealthy landholders. While taxes on the southern lands it had conquered were 50% of produce, taxes on large estates held by wealthy land investors were merely 10 percent. Not until Wang An-shih, chief minister under Emperor Shen T'sung of the Northern Sung dynasty, were land reforms instituted in 1068. However, opposition was great and the reforms were not completely successful. Similarly, in

the Ming period, the first emperor tried to confiscate the lands of the wealthy landlords and redistribute them to the poorer peasants, but he was largely unsuccessful due to gentry privileges in landholding.

In early Ch'ing most of the land was public.<sup>45</sup> However, Ch'ing government policy encouraged people to bring more land into cultivation. These newly cultivated lands came to be held as private lands by those who cultivated them. The amount of private lands continued to increase until the ratio of private to public land reached 7:1 in 1887.<sup>46</sup>

Land concentration, which existed in previous periods, was likewise prevalent in Ch'ing times. Land ownership and land taxes were skewed in favor of the wealthy gentry, some of whom owned plots of more than 10,000 mou (or 1,515 acres). However, the average gentry landowner held plots ranging from 20-30 mou (or 3-4.5 acres) in the north and from 12-15 mou (or 1.8 to 2.3 acres) to 100-500 mou in the south.

Concentration of land was limited more by economic factors than by efforts on the part of central authority to equalize landholdings. There was a low rate of return on land, especially in comparison to commerce or money-lending, which had a rate of return to investment (10%-20%) double that for land.<sup>47</sup> This low rate of return was due in part to the lack of easily accessible markets for grain where produce could be converted into money either by landlord or by tenant.

According to Chang, the rate of return on land investment decreased in the 19th century.<sup>48</sup> In the late 18th century, the price of rice was about 1 tael/picul of rice and land price was about 10 taels per mou. The rate of return before taxes was 10%, and land rent was 1 picul of rice/mou. By the early 19th century, the price of rice doubled to 2

taels/mou, while the price of land increased by five times, to 50 taels/mou. The rate of return on land before taxes was thus reduced to about 4% and in some places in the late 19th century, the rate of return was less than 2 percent.

Effective control over land is more accurately measured by the food extracted from the land in the form of taxes. One of the main reasons governments sought to control land was to ensure a steady flow of food to its granaries. However, in addition, there were the needs of the imperial system itself, which necessitated the control over food and production of food, the subject we turn to next.

#### Food Control as Basic to the Imperial System

In the previous section, we have seen how the Chinese political authority sought to control food to uphold its legitimacy, especially because it recognized an obligation to provide food for the masses. Political authority also had to exercise control over food production and distribution in order to provide for the groups which comprised the ruling elite, namely, the imperial household, government officials, and military. Its policies in regard to controlling food production were far more important than its policies affecting food distribution. This section, therefore, will be directed towards an analysis of the land tax, grain tribute and other means by which the government controlled food production. The chief means used to control food production were the land tax, corvee, and grain tribute. Before describing the authority's means of food exaction, we will briefly present the administrative structure of the imperial government, which serves as a background. We

shall see that the legitimacy of authority based on food in China was invoked not simply out of benevolence towards the people, but also in support of the state's efficiency.

### The Imperial Bureaucracy

The emperor was on top of the political hierarchy by virtue of a tradition-inspired legitimacy. His authority also had a charismatic aspect derived from the Mandate of Heaven theory. He was the chief executive and appointed all the important officials at all levels of government, including central, provincial and local levels.

The imperial bureaucracy consisted of a high and low level officialdom. The group of high officials was selected from the top candidates who successfully completed the imperial examinations. They were usually related to the imperial household or from the upper gentry. They held the highest positions and participated actively in government decision-making. They lived in the capital city. The group of lower officials was also selected from successful examination candidates and were mostly members of the gentry. Some may have lived in the capital, but most were assigned to provincial or district positions. At the provincial level, there was a governor-general and a governor below him. A magistrate managed the district (chou or hsien) level of government. These officials were not from the local areas which they governed. An important part of imperial policy was to continue rotating officials to prevent the growth of local power groups.

Although the government had no official representative below the magistrate, it had created an administrative system of objective units



for facilitating tax collection at the local level. This was the li-chia system of tax collection described above.

### The Land Tax and Corvee

Land was the key factor which lent itself to government regulation and by which the government could make claim for taxes and labor services. Land registration was the administrative means by which government could tap food resources. The government required all land to be registered. However, the Ch'ing government was in no way as careful in keeping land records as its predecessors, the Ming.

The Ming system of land records was contained in the "Fish Scale Registers" and the "Yellow Registers", and a third book on land taxes. These works recorded information of "the location, size, shape, value and ownership of each plot of land surveyed". More specifically, "the data on the acreage of registered land, the number of ting (adult males), the land tax, labor services, miscellaneous taxes, the amount of taxes to be delivered to the higher authorities, and the amount to be withheld for local expenses in each district".<sup>49</sup>

Land registration for early Ch'ing indicates a decline from Ming levels of registration. However, the lower figures may be due to underregistration rather than to fewer landholders.<sup>50</sup> One estimation is that during the first century of the Ch'ing period, 1/3 of the new lands went unregistered. In the second century and a half, 4/5 were said to have been unregistered. The Ming had carried out three land surveys in an effort to determine a more exact assessment of food productivity, which enabled them to estimate maximum fiscal quotas. However, the

Manchus did not feel the need for big tax increases in the early to mid-Ch'ing period, and hence did not improve on the Ming fiscal system in any major way.

Despite the problem of underregistration, the land tax was the primary source of government revenue up to the late Ch'ing. It was paid partly in money and partly in grain. The part paid in money was called the ti-ting, a combination land tax and labor services tax. By early Ch'ing, the labor services tax had been commuted into money, while the grain tax was paid in grain until late Ch'ing.<sup>51</sup> Wang tells us that the grain tax provided more significant revenues than the ti-ting.

The grain tax was from the beginning quantitatively more important and became even more so in the course of rising prices. During the three decades between 1879 and 1909, for instance, the ti-ting tax collected in cash increased merely by 10 percent, whereas the grain tax more than doubled. Accordingly, the former component which yielded about three-quarters as much as the latter in 1879, could produce only a third in 1909. In other words, it was primarily the increase in the grain tax that caused the land tax yield to rise in the district.<sup>52</sup>

The land tax was levied at the provincial level where part was kept in the provincial treasury to pay provincial officeholders and troops. Part also went to the magistrate at the district level and to Peking, the national capital. The li-chang (head of the li-chia administrative unit which we shall describe later) was responsible for paying the tax for his unit in ten installments. Delinquency for non-payment was serious and punishment fell on the taxpayer as well as on the li-chang and the magistrate. Not only quantity but quality of grain was monitored and standards were defined by strict rules. The peasant cultivator was

responsible for delivering the grain to the nearest granary. Unless there was a rural granary where it could be deposited, he would have to take it all the way to the district seat quite far from his residence, and bear the transport charges.<sup>53</sup>

The forms of labor services were many and to a considerable extent were connected to the production and distribution of food. For the peasants, labor services could include construction and repair of granaries, irrigation channels and dykes, walls and buildings. For soldiers, labor services were generally included in their military obligations. When they were not engaged in fighting, they were often made to transport grain. They were particularly active in grain transportation during the Ming period when the grain tribute system relied heavily upon the military.<sup>54</sup>

### The Grain Tribute

The government was especially concerned about support for the imperial family, the nobility, the scholar-officials, and the military. The grain tribute was levied largely for the subsistence of these groups. Imperial lands, lands nearby the capital city, and points accessible by water were the areas which provided the grain for the tribute.

The tribute demanded by the government in the early 19th century was 3 1/2 million piculs yearly. More than half of it went to feed the garrison, i.e. about 2,400,000 piculs. Kiangsu and Chekiang provinces of the Lower Yangtze River were regular grain-surplus areas and were the major grain sources for the tribute. Other tributary provinces were

Shantung, Hunan, Anhui, Kiangsi, Hupei and Hunan. Tribute was usually in the form of husked rice, but some provinces, such as Shantung and Fengtien), also sent millet and beans.

The grain was collected from taxpayers by local officials under the district magistrate. It was transported to a station along the Grand Canal. Boatmen with special grain junks were responsible for the shipment of tax tribute to the capital Peking and to nearby T'ung-Chou. There were about fifteen granaries in Peking and two in T'ung-Chou where the shipments of grain were stored.

Although the government required the 3 1/2 million piculs of grain for its needs, in actuality about 5 1/2 million piculs were collected. The difference is explained by the large amount of surcharges required by all the people rendering services of collection, transportation and storage in the provinces en route, and in the metropolitan granaries. Moreover, the central government had to face tremendous problems related to the logistics of the tribute system. It felt compelled to try and collect more grain to compensate for the delays and losses created.

For example, the Grand Canal had a serious silting problem similar to that of the major rivers in China. Silt would accumulate in certain parts along the canal and cause bottlenecks. At times, when the silting became so severe so that it rendered the Canal innavigable, the government ordered the tribute shipped by sea. From 1823-1827, due to the silting problem, sea transport had to be used. After that date, a return to the Grand Canal was once again tried, but often part of the grain still had to be shipped by sea.

The sea also entailed other serious problems, including the hardships of sea-going travel in the unsuitably-constructed and ill-equipped vessels, and Japanese piracy. These problems were so common that family members who went to sea were often never expected to be seen again. The tribute had to rely completely on transport by sea when the Yellow River shifted its course from 1851-1855, and ruined the Grand Canal. The Taiping Rebellion in 1853-62, compounded the problems associated with the Grand Canal to undermine the grain flowing to Peking. This is manifested in the rises in rice prices:

1848 - 2.1 taels/picul of rice  
1856 - 5.0 taels/picul of rice  
1857 - 10.0 taels/picul of rice  
1862 - 10.0 taels/picul of rice<sup>55</sup>

Due to these mounting problems, the government demanded rice at reduced rates and ordered it to be shipped by sea. It relied mostly on tribute from Chekiang and Kiangsu. In addition, grain tribute was increasingly commuted into cash, which involved fewer logistical problems. With the cash the government bought grain from Manchuria and Southeast Asia, which was transported by private merchants. This was not changed until 1874, when most of the tribute was again required in grain. However, provincial governors would not comply and the policy ultimately failed. The amount of grain that reached the capital was only about half that of the period prior to the Taiping Rebellion.

The gradual realization that the grain tribute system was a greater liability to the government than a benefit led some thinkers, who came to

be seen as "reformist", to favor abolishing the tribute. Those opposed were the conservatives, who both benefitted by the old system and its corruption, and who opposed change of the imperial institutions in general. Finally in 1901, under severe pressure to change the system, all grain was commuted into money.

After the fall of the Manchu government, Peking relied on locally produced grain. The Republican government of Peking maintained the Ch'ing grain quotas, despite protest from the tributary provinces, which claimed they needed the grain. The government eventually settled on a tribute commuted to money at a rate of 4 yuan/picul. Later the grain tribute became part of the land tax.<sup>56</sup>

#### The Military Agricultural Colonies (t'un-t'ien)<sup>57</sup>

Military agricultural colonies called t'un-t'ien were settlements of soldiers posted in the border regions of imperial China. These soldiers were to subsist on the settlements by farming when they were not on duty fighting the invading populations. Each soldier was granted a fixed plot of land to cultivate. The practice of sending either prisoners or commoners or soldiers to these military colonies began in the Former Han dynasty (205 B.C.-8 A.D.).

When the non-Chinese Yuan (Mongol) dynasty took over rule from the Han Chinese, they shifted the focus of military agricultural colonies from the borders to the interior in order to maintain rule over the Han majority. The Yuan (Mongol) system was taken over by the Ming, who succeeded the Yuan, and restored Chinese hegemony.

The Ming brought the system to a climax, but the system declined after about sixty years of Ming rule.

...the system of the early Ming represented the high point of development of the military agricultural colony. The huge hereditary garrison network that spread over the empire in Ming times was designed to be substantially self-supporting, with each administrative contingent assigned lands to farm, and a certain portion of regular troops kept constantly busy on them.<sup>58</sup>

The system fell apart as the self-supporting colonies increased in size in the interior region and made a division of labor between soldiers and farmers a necessity.

#### Summary

The legitimacy of authority in China was a blend of moral virtues (benevolence and correctness of conduct) and practical social controls. Food policy in China was a blend of a concern for peoples' welfare and a need for state's resources. The Chinese elevated the food problem to the issue of the legitimacy of highest authority, a development which came later in Europe and Japan. In China, in contrast, state-building involved reestablishing the basic source of traditional legitimacy.

Thus China, in contrast to Europe and Japan, never had to face the need to establish a new social and political order with a different focus of food control. The traditional sources of its legitimacy were able to absorb the shocks of food crises. Its legitimacy drew strength from a lasting agrarian economy and the notion of nurturing the people. In Europe and in Japan, similar crises had contributed to total changes in

the thinking, in social institutions, and in the notions of legitimate authority.

In short, while food was an important factor in the state-building processes of the European and Japanese states, in China--despite an extremely long history of protest and famines--the institutions, the thought, and the notion of legitimate authority persisted. While food issues could be critical for the fortunes of particular leaders, they were less important in China's basic state-building experience. The Chinese began their political history with the legitimacy of their highest authorities linked to food concerns; something which in Europe and Japan, only came with the state-building process. Hence state-building in Europe and Japan was more revolutionary. In China, modern state-building took the form of a search for "reconstruction" and a "renaissance", a need to reassert, for different conditions, a form of central authority which had been long before legitimized.



CHAPTER SIX : FOOD AND INTEREST GROUP COMPETITION

In the previous chapter we noted that in pre-modern China, in contrast to pre-modern Europe and Japan, the legitimacy of the highest authority entailed considerations about food and the avoidance of famine. Whereas in Europe and Japan, it was only with the establishment of the modern state that food politics moved above parochial levels of authority, in China the traditional imperial system was premised upon the assumption that the legitimacy of the emperor was linked to the continued nurturance of the population.

In this chapter we shall be examining questions about tensions and competition among all the groups who had access to food control. How was it possible for the Chinese system of legitimacy to operate with so little disruptive tensions? Why did famines and food crises fail to shake the legitimacy of the dynasties more frequently than was the case, especially since their legitimacy was so explicitly tied to the question of food supplies?

In Europe and in Japan, as we have seen the process of building the modern state involved the central authorities taking over responsibilities for food supplies, which in turn meant that the new state was often the target of food riots and peasant discontent. Why was it that in imperial China the legitimacy of the highest authority was not eroded by such strains?

The answer to these and similar questions can be found largely in the subtle and complex ways in which food was used in managing the competition among power groupings, and particularly among the imperial

household, the bureaucracy, the gentry, and the merchants. Whereas food was symbolically tied to the legitimacy of the highest authority, the actual control and division of food supplies was basic to the power of the other interest groups. There was thus a division between symbol and reality: symbolically the emperor had a monopoly on food policy, in practice the bureaucracy, the gentry and the merchants competed for control of food, even while their authority and legitimacy were not associated with food policies.

Let us now examine how this competition worked so as to reduce challenges to the legitimacy of one of the world's most long enduring political systems.

#### The Claims of the Imperial Household

In theory the emperor held all the land and was due the surplus product of the land. The surplus product was usually in the form of grain, but it could also be claimed partially or totally in kind or in money depending on the time and the place concerned. Taxation and grain tribute were the principal means of demanding food and labor from the production sector of the economy. The emperor's right to taxes and tribute was, as we have seen, legitimized by a belief that he was the Son of Heaven and held the Heavenly Mandate to rule.

The emperor's family also held important privileges, which included control over food resources. Except for the eldest, who lived in the Imperial Palace, the emperor's sons lived on imperial domains with thousands of tenants. In Ch'ing times, the number of the imperial family approximated 100,000, or about .1% of the total population of 100

million. The emperor's sons received salaries estimated at 10,000 piculs of rice a year. All members of the imperial family were salaried dignitaries. The nobility consisted largely of military men, who were also salaried dignitaries.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, in addition to the legitimacy which the imperial household derived from their position as ultimate landowner, the household also had to make substantive demands for food, and thus it became a direct competitor with the other interest groups. The food requirements of the imperial household were not trivial since hundreds of thousands of people had to be supported.

The huge number of eunuchs, for example, had to be supported by the imperial revenues. Palace eunuchs existed as early as Chou times, but became very influential in palace politics in the Han period. The role of the eunuchs extended beyond their celebrated role as palace attendants in women's quarters (there were about 9,000 court ladies in early Ch'ing). They served the emperor in any of the twenty-four offices related to the palace, including building projects, procurement of luxury items, cleaning the imperial mausoleum, offering food to the emperor's ancestors, preparing court banquets, record-keeping, and entertainment. Their complicity with women consorts of the emperor on the one hand, and the trust and loyalty that they shared with the emperor on the other, enabled them to wield considerable influence in intrapalatial politics. Although recruited from the lower classes, the eunuchs competed with the bureaucrats who were from higher status and who were recruited by the examination system. Up until the T'ang dynasty, eunuchs were usually from non-Chinese tribes. From the T'ang period, they were recruited

mostly from the southern provinces of China. Their numbers were very substantial in the Ming period, and decreased in the later Ch'ing years. At the beginning of the Ch'ing period, there were an estimated 70,000 eunuchs in the Imperial Palace and possibly as many as 100,000 serving throughout the empire. Their sizeable numbers thus contributed to the food demand which had to be met by taxes and tribute.<sup>2</sup>

The traditional social hierarchy below the imperial authority included the the gentry, the peasants, artisans and merchants, in that order. The hierarchy derived from the Confucian-inspired notions of the basic inequality of men and the desirability of a division of labor reflective of men's unequal endowments. Accordingly, there were the chu-jen ("great men"), the hsiao-jen ("small men"), and the "mean people". The officials were the "great men", those whose knowledge and virtue was proven through the examination system. They commanded the most respect, were accorded the most privileges and received the highest incomes. The "small men" or the commoner class, was made up of the non-official gentry, farmers, artisans and merchants. The gentry stood above the others by virtue of their intellectual pursuits. In the Confucian value system, farmers were idealized as the foundation of the state, precisely because they were the food producers. The peasant and the emperor were thus presumed to have a common bond because of the ideologically defined importance of food. At the very bottom of the social hierarchy were the alleged "non-productive classes", the artisans and merchants, who were socially disparaged. The only people below them in status were the so-called "mean people", soldiers, the government runners, entertainers, prostitutes, beggars and bandits.

The distinctions between social groups were marked by various sumptuary laws regulating the dress and behavior of these groups. However, the reality of this social hierarchy was not the idealized version depicted by those on top, as we shall see in our discussion. Nevertheless, the central authority was able to maintain its political legitimacy and the tendency of the various social groups in pursuing their food interests was integrative, i.e. to uphold the political system. Through our discussion of the ways in which the gentry, merchants and peasants tried to exercise control over food resources, we shall show that food was not as divisive a factor in competition amongst groups in China as in either Japan or Europe.

### The Gentry

Most scholars who have written about the Chinese gentry have described a close identification of interests between the gentry and the central rulers, and hence have suggested that there was little tension or conflict between them. We shall show that food interests were among the interests they shared and the form of control over food resources they exercised reinforced their interests.<sup>3</sup>

However, while this has been the predominant view, it has not gone unchallenged. One early criticism was offered by Max Weber, who drew from a broad theoretical basis and knowledge about many societies, but had access to comparatively sparse historical material from China itself.<sup>4</sup> The other comes from recent scholarship by Hilary Beattie, who has completed a highly specified piece of historical research on one Chinese county.<sup>5</sup> These studies vary greatly from each other, but both

offer interesting challenges to the bulk of research on the subject and would be worthwhile to consider since they relate to our subject of whether the gentry based its power in land and thus posed a challenge to the power of central authority. First, we shall present the dominant views on the subject of gentry versus central ruling interests, and then turn to consider the two criticisms.

Predominant view: Food was not the focus of competition  
between the gentry and the central authority

Landholding not critical to political power and prestige

In this section land will be used as a surrogate for food, since in general the rent, taxes and tribute levied on the land were in grain and when in cash, the cash portion was largely from the grain sold.

In the view of most scholars, landholding was not critical to the political power and prestige of the gentry. Instead, the bureaucracy had established the norm of achievement as the way to power and prestige. Education and the examination system replaced noble birth and hereditary landed wealth as the means to furthering one's political career and social status.

There was thus not a stark linkage between land ownership and political power, as in Europe and Japan. Furthermore, the return on land was low for what the average gentry landowner could afford to invest. Moreover, the rate of return on land is said to have decreased into the nineteenth century. Despite increasing rice prices, land prices increased at a much faster rate, yielding a rate of return on land before taxes of only 4% in the 1820s and only 2% in the 1880s.<sup>6</sup> Therefore,

Chang points out that many gentry did not even own land:

(Although) the gentry landowners were in a better position than the commoners landowners to acquire income from landholdings ...many gentry had no land at all, and ...others had only very little. Since land itself did not provide enough income to increase a landholding substantially, and since the income from gentry functions ... also did not permit the accumulation of large fortunes, most gentry did not have the capital to buy up land at a rapid rate.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, as Chang has pointed out, rents from tenants tended to decrease because of their inability to pay. This trend had the effect of further decreasing the rate of return on landed investment. The inability to pay rents in full by tenants and the inability of landowners, especially small gentry landowners to collect, worsened after the devastation of agriculture during the Taiping Rebellion. Nevertheless, the gentry could turn to other ways to earn income. Some of these will be discussed later.

The wealthy gentry, mostly officials and big merchants (who constituted a smaller proportion of the gentry status group), were the exception to this general pattern of non-investment in land. They did have enough capital to accumulate large landholdings. More importantly, however, they had the political power to protect their landed interests, and particularly to keep from paying heavy taxes. Chang points to their political position as the key difference between their relatively successful land investments and those of commoner landowners, who may have worked very hard to maintain just what they had. Concentration of land trends in the mid-18th century reached up to more than 3,000 mou

(450 acres) for the large landowners and such trends continued on into the 19th century. Chang cited the example of a certain gentry landowner-merchant named Hao, who reportedly owned 1/700 of all the cultivable land in China, or 1 million mou. Nevertheless, gentry members who could afford such large landholdings and who kept adding to their holdings were the exception.

Chang has estimated that only 2%-4%, or from 30,000-60,000 gentry members were landowners.<sup>8</sup> The gentry owned an estimated 25% (37.5 million acres) of the total land of about 900 million mou cultivated acreage (225 million mou).<sup>9</sup> The average gentry holding would have been less than 5,000 mou and the average income from rent less than 5,000 taels annually (with an average rent of 1 tael/mou).<sup>10</sup> When these figures are checked against production estimates, the total rent collected by gentry landowners is quite close, 215 million taels, as compared with 225 million when figuring on the basis of land owned by gentry. According to his estimates, production was valued at 1.72 billion taels/year, 25% of which was from gentry-owned lands, i.e. 430 million taels. If rents were on the average 50% of production, the gentry would have received rents approximately 215 million taels/year.<sup>11</sup>

Increasing landholdings was difficult not only because of the relatively expensive investment required for initial returns, but also because of the inheritance system prevalent in China at that time. "Equal inheritance" whereby sons of the head of family inherited the landholdings equally had long been in practice. . The list of sons included sons by wives, concubines and maids. Furthermore, illegitimate sons received half the amount of land inherited by legitimate sons. In



the absence of legitimate sons, adopted sons and illegitimate sons could share the land equally. If there were no sons, daughters could inherit land equally.<sup>12</sup> These rules of inheritance had the effect for most families of decreasing landholding over generations.

The last and perhaps most basic reason why landholding did not create conflict of interest between the central rule and the gentry status group was because the gentry owed their land privileges to the central authority. The privileges of the gentry took the form of lower land taxes and the protection of the right of gentry landowners to collect full rents from tenants. Gentry landowners could hold land only because they could afford to invest in the upkeep of land, and because their political influence enabled them to protect their holdings. Large landowners owed their ability to hold and accumulate land to their relatively higher incomes as officials and their relatively greater political influence. The government issued edicts which upheld the right of gentry landowners to collect rents, and local officials were admonished to severely punish anyone refusing to pay rent. It was apparently not uncommon for the government to uphold landowner rights against those of tenants, even in time of poor harvests. The government did suggest that rents be reduced in bad harvest years, but compliance was clearly on a voluntary basis.

Lower land taxes paid by gentry was not instituted by law, but rather was due to their ability to avoid the brunt of the tax burden by virtue of their higher political positions. Local authorities levied taxes in addition to the tax demanded by the central authority. These local taxes were largely extracted from the commoner landowners. Tax rates varied

from plot to plot and this lack of uniformity made it easy to charge more on commoner plots. The big gentry landowners could get away with paying even fewer taxes than the average gentry. Moreover, the smaller landowners sought to escape excessive tax charges by registering their land in the name of a gentry landowner. Thus the nature of the land tax system was regressive and self-reinforcing.<sup>13</sup>

#### Other sources of gentry income

There were other sources of income available to gentry members in addition to land tax privileges which tied their interests to those of the central authority. The most profitable source of income was service as a government official. In the 19th century, the civil officials were paid salaries in cash (taels) and rice (piculs) according to a gradation of nine ranks, and the military officers in seven ranks. While an official of the first rank received a salary of 180 taels (plus 90 piculs of rice), provincial governors, who were of second rank, received 150 taels (plus 75 piculs of rice), and district magistrates, who were of seventh rank, received 45 taels (plus 22.5 piculs of rice). These stood in contrast to the salary of a common laborer of 5-10 taels annually.<sup>14</sup> There was also quite a substantial allowance (yang-lien) given to those officials who had staff to support, and a small allowance (kung-fen) to cover administrative expenses. The yang-lien ranged from 10,000-15,000 taels for provincial governors and 400-2,000 taels for district magistrates.

The "extra income" accruing to officeholders was said to far exceed their regular income levels. It was the extra income which permitted the

"conspicuous consumption" and "conspicuous philanthropies" of the gentry officials. In time, these extra sources of income came to be expected and were fixed. The income was usually demanded in the form of "customary fees" attached to normal services rendered by officials. The amount collected depended on the power and influence of the official in question. This extra income has been estimated at 30,000 taels for district magistrates, 180,000 taels for provincial governors, and anywhere from 12,000-52,500 taels for various court officials not counting secretaries.<sup>15</sup>

Other officials received substantial amounts of extra income also.

<u>official</u>	<u>extra income per member</u>
prefects	52,500 <u>taels</u>
intendants (circuit, salt, grain tribute, customs, and river works)	75,000 <u>taels</u>
judicial commissioners	105,000 <u>taels</u>
commissioners (grain transport, salt, and financial; director-generals of river-works and grain transport) <sup>16</sup>	150,000 <u>taels</u>

Chang summed up the overall income picture of the gentry officials as follows:

The regular income of officeholders totalled only 6,295,000 taels, while the extra income totalled about nineteen times as much as the regular income. The combined total income of gentry members from officeholding was an estimated 121,000,000 taels annually.<sup>17</sup>

He stated this amount was divided among 23,000 incumbent Chinese officeholders (i.e. 1.6% of the total gentry of 1,444,000), giving them an average salary of 5,000 taels/year.

The gentry also performed certain managerial services involving local and clan projects for which they received income. Local projects were for the public welfare. They included the construction and repair of charity granaries, homes for the elderly and orphans, schools and temples, canal digging, famine relief, and took charge of hiring labor to perform these tasks. A fewer number of gentry engaged in managing projects whose benefit was for the clan. Gentry duties in connection with clan projects involved overseeing rent and tax collections, acting as intermediary between the clan and government in fiscal matters, managing clan temples and lands, relief to the clan, and compiling geneologies for the clan.

The gentry also handled lawsuits, for which they received "retainer fees." In case of conflict between localities, the gentry represented the interests of their district. If the magistrate were brought before supervisors on charges of overtaxing, for example, the gentry would again represent the local communities. The retainer fees were actually a regular source of income paid gentry members to perform these services rather than a fee paid just at the time the service was rendered. Some retainer fees were collected by the magistrate for the gentry while other retainer fees were collected along with the grain tribute. Apparently, there were many cases of abuse in this arrangement when gentry collected much more than the quotas. The latter overcharges were referred to as "locust fees" by some officials in the mid-19th century.

There are 'bad gentry' who monopolize tax payment. They take a heavy sum from individual small households (small landowners), but pay to the official granary in a lump sum a smaller amount than what they have collected. The people call them locusts. There are those who hold on to their knowledge that magistrates are making extra charges, and they enjoy a share in these extra collections. If they are not satisfied, they would incite accusations at higher authorities or even gather a group to make trouble at the granary. In name they are working in the interest of the local people; in actuality, they are seeking income for themselves. The officials call the fees huang-ch'ung-fei ("locust fees").<sup>18</sup>

Later in the 19th century in some areas, gentry were given the right to collect taxes and gentry members were able to collect retainer fees from this service. For those gentry who were not officials, these sources of income were vital. Gentry did not have to own land to perform any of these services.

There were also secretarial services available to gentry members. Lower gentry were employed by magistrates and upper gentry by provincial officials to assist in administrative functions, advising in legal, financial and other areas of specified expertise, such as salt administration, accounting, or public relations. Their income was certainly commensurate with that of gentry receiving income from the extra services mentioned above, and usually higher. Secretaries to magistrates received from 240-400 taels/year depending on the area of expertise and the status of the official. Secretaries to provincial officials received on average 1,500 taels/year. Chang estimated there were about 12,200 secretarial assistants to magistrates and approximately 4,000 to provincial officials. Their numbers were thus substantially smaller than those receiving extra income from managerial retainer

services. The total income received by this secretarial group was approximately 9,050,000 taels/year, shared by 16,200 (little more than 1% of the gentry) gentry members, yielding an average salary of about 560 taels/year.

Teaching was regarded as the only other suitable occupation for gentry members besides office-holding. Its appeal was mostly based on a deep respect for education and learning. Income from teaching, however, was low relative to other gentry sources of income. Approximately 600,000 gentry were teachers and each earned about 100 taels/year. A few upper member gentry were engaged as lecturers in private colleges, called shu-yuan. These were prestigious and wealthy schools supported by gentry donations. Gentry members who lectured in these private schools numbered about 4,500, and received a proportionately higher income of about 350 taels/year.

The amount of income generated by such services varied with the type of service, status of gentry, and the wealth of the local area. The lowest was about 100 taels/year and the highest could be a few hundred taels/year. The total amount of income from gentry services was 111 million taels, shared by nearly two-thirds of all the gentry. The numbers of gentry receiving managerial income was a little more than double the numbers receiving retainer fees.<sup>19</sup>

Challenging views: Food was important to competition  
between the gentry and the central authority

Max Weber expressed a point of view differing from that we have discussed above. He felt there was a conflict of interest between the rulers and the gentry.<sup>20</sup> This conflict was expressed at a broad societal level as conflict between bureaucratic rational tendencies of the imperial system and traditional, patrimonial and "irrational" tendencies in the rural social organizations, especially the lineages. In his view, the gentry was caught between these conflicting tendencies, because they derived their primary source of power and influence from their lineage and local ties based on land, but aspired to the prestige and broader social and political influence offered by a career in the service of the imperial system.

Although the imperial bureaucracy had many rational elements, Weber felt that China remained primarily traditional due to its strongly agrarian based economy. A monetized economy would have strengthened the tendency towards a rationalized bureaucracy, but according to Weber, China never achieved a predominantly monetized economy during the imperial period. Instead, Weber argued, China remained primarily agrarian and traditional, with strong potential tendencies towards "refeudalization."

According to the process of refeudalization, local officials would take advantage of their distance from the central authority to "appropriate their prebends." They could, in the manner of the Japanese land stewards, keep taxes owed the central government and build bases of local power. This tendency on the part of local leaders would be

enhanced by the lineage and guild organizations which were deeply rooted in local culture. The "patriarchal forces of local self-rule" would thus challenge the central bureaucracy.<sup>21</sup> In short, Weber presented the view that the traditional patrimonial tendencies embodied in the lineage and guild systems in rural China, together with a non-monetized economy, exerted a greater force on the gentry than the bureaucratic-rationalizing one, and, therefore, central rule by bureaucracy was undermined. He posited a tension between the gentry of the so-called "outer-court" and the imperial rulers and households of the "inner-court." Weber's arguments would lead us in the direction of saying that control over food resources, i.e. the prebends, was of prime importance to intra-elite competition in China.

A very clear, thorough and convincing counter-case to Weber has been argued by Otto Van der Sprenkel who had the benefit of all the scholarship on China since the time Weber wrote. Van der Sprenkel took advantage of a more cogent picture of Chinese history to show the context in time and place of refeudalization. His excursus throughout Chinese history demonstrates the following.

Classical Chinese feudalism took place in the Western Chou period (c.1050-770 B.C.). It was dismantled by the Ch'in dynasty, which established a bureaucratic empire, and the empire continued to develop up through the later Han period (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). As the Han dynasty fell apart ushering in an age of disunion, feudal forms reappeared in response to the general social disorder that prevailed. At this time, those who rose to power and who prevented the formation of a strong central authority were the "powerful families."



In the last of these periods (of the Age of Division) China again experienced the rise to power of an aristocracy. The most highly regarded of the noble families were those whose founders had won land, wealth and clients in the civil wars that testified to the break-up of the Han. These were the 'Old Families' or chiu men. Next to them in prestige were the so-called 'Secondary Families' or tz'u men, and then the 'Later Families' or hou men. These comprised the lesser nobility.<sup>22</sup>

Van der Sprenkel held that refeudalization did not come about as a result of what Weber called the "appropriation of the prebends" by gentry officials.

In the only period of Chinese history in which such a process occurred (refeudalization), its protagonists were not the old officialdom of the Han but the great families who carved positions of local power for themselves by seizing the opportunities offered by the breakdown of public order. Some of these families stemmed from men who had achieved wealth as provincial governors under the Later Han; others from successful military leaders; while others again owed their influence to the prior possession of landed estates which they were able in the confusion of war and civil upheaval to transform into semi-autonomous domains.<sup>23</sup>

This process of refeudalization characterized the Six Dynasties period, so named after the rise to power of six Chinese dynasties in the south with the capital at Nanking. Similarly, feudalism appeared in the north.<sup>24</sup>

In this period of refeudalization, societal values were traditional. Birth was the determining factor in social advancement and the highest ranks were hereditary. Efforts by the Wei dynastic rulers (in the north) to introduce a more rational system in order to control the officials, were unsuccessful.<sup>25</sup>

Van der Sprenkel plays down the importance of intra-gentry competition. Weber sees this competition as vitally important as a means for the central authority to limit gentry solidarity. We do not necessarily find a contradiction here. The gentry was indeed a highly differentiated status group and members certainly vied with one another for the few select positions and for more and more privileges. The fact that they did compete with each other, however, implied their common goal--a place in the established officialdom. They shared a sense of being above the commoners and masses of people, shared many of the same values and aspirations, and identified with the ruling class. Their intra-group competitiveness did not diminish their adherence to these values; on the contrary, it indicated their keenness for a place at the top of the established social order.

The matter of lineages and guilds and their pull on the gentry relative to the bureaucracy is an important issue in our discussion of inter-group competition and the role of food in that competition. Weber assigned great importance to the lineages and guilds as forms of "traditional self-rule." Van der Sprenkel, on the other hand, felt this importance was exaggerated. While admitting the reality of local "self-government" in rural China, Van der Sprenkel argued, "it owed its existence more to 'concessions' from above than 'usurpation' from below." Borrowing a phrase from Wittfogel, he called the "self-government" in reality a "beggars' democracy."<sup>26</sup> Central government was deliberate in how much local self-government was allowed to exist and decentralization was limited to certain areas. In some areas, it welcomed local responsibility. In other areas, it clearly

intervened and took control. In still other areas, a kind of shared responsibility was worked out.<sup>27</sup>

Above we have seen that Weber's work countered the thesis that conflict between the central authority and the gentry status group was of minor importance because they shared the same interests upholding the legitimacy of authority and in the control over food resources. Another recent study has likewise challenged the thesis. This study by Hilary Beattie, holds that land was the most important source of power for the gentry. We now turn briefly to discuss this point of view.

Beattie attempted to show that land was considered a lasting source of wealth and hence the only good investment by the average gentry. Her work took inspiration from a treatise called Remarks on Real Estate (Heng-ch'an so-yen) by Chang Ying (1638-1708), a member of the elite of T'ung-ch'eng county. She shows that despite Chang Ying's early ascendance into the bureaucracy, he maintained strong ties to his lineage group and continually stressed the importance of land investments.

Beattie believes that even in the face of changing economic circumstances--the growing commercialization of the economy, changes in taxation levels and population trends--the importance of landholdings for gentry members remained strong. She relates the gentry foothold in landholdings to their ability to maintain their elite status at the local and central levels of authority. Beattie emphasizes, however, that the gentry's primary source of power rested in the local community. Hence the gentry were primarily motivated by a desire to maintain their local power base. Therefore, she gives great importance to lineage and kinship.<sup>28</sup> In the same line of argument, she discounts the importance

of equal inheritance, which was a practice leading to smaller landholdings which would have discouraged gentry investment. She also gives little importance to other means of generating gentry income, which she holds were open to only the elite gentry.<sup>29</sup> She criticizes studies which minimize the importance of lineage for defining "gentry" too narrowly, as merely "degree-holders" and thus viewing the gentry group from the top-down. On the other hand, she sees her own position as rooted in the soils of rural China and from this perspective, (which she claims to share with Fei Hsiao-t'ung), one understands the overriding importance of lineage and clan ties and the gentry's primary concern with landholding as a means of status security.

Her historical analysis, like Van der Sprenkel's above, discusses the hereditary aristocracy of the period of disorder, following the breakdown of the Han dynasty. These elite families based their power on land. Land concentration continued as land became more open to sale and purchase, especially in the Yangtze valley. The standards for elite status gradually shifted, however, and as the standards of merit and education came into force and the bureaucracy was created, the old aristocracy disappeared. Modifications in the economy also took place. There was a trend towards the formation of a national market in the Sung period when interregional private trade and a monetized economy came into sway. Yet, despite the opportunities for wealth from these new commercial sources, Beattie claims that the Sung elite still based its wealth and security of office on landed wealth.

Perhaps Beattie does not go so far as Weber to say that the gentry used their landholdings and lineage groups as their power base to further

interests against those of the central rule. She may merely be saying that land and lineage were more important to their elite status than the previously-examined factors, such as the examination system. If this is true, Weber's point is more interesting and more challenging. Beattie would be showing another source of gentry power, but not necessarily challenging, unless implicitly, that they still aspired for central positions. She does state that the gentry were concerned with local status and implies that this concern was greater than their aspirations for a place in the central bureaucracy. Although she claims to share views with Fei Hsiao T'ung, this does not appear likely, at least in his book China's Gentry, where he states:

... since the establishment of central unified political power in the third century B.C., the gentry as a class have never attempted to control political power... Under the feudal system sovereignty belonged to the aristocracy; under the monarchy, to the king-emperor. The question which arises then, is this: Why in Chinese history has there been no period in which the power of the aristocracy revived or in which a bourgeoisie middle class took over political power?<sup>30</sup>

Let us seek to sum up these views of the gentry with a mind to answering the questions of why there was not greater tension in the competition over land and food control. The key seems to be that in China, in contrast to Europe and Japan, the landowning gentry did not gain or hold its status on the basis of merely its control over land and food, however extensive that may have been, but rather the Chinese gentry gained the legitimacy of its status largely from the identification with the imperial system. Although in practice there may have been

competition between gentry and the imperial bureaucracy for revenue from the land, the tension had to be contained because the gentry could not openly challenge the imperial system, which was its ultimate source of status and power. In contrast to Europe and Japan, local feudal authority derived directly from its right to land, and there was, therefore, a fundamental conflict between local authorities, the peasants, and central authorities when the modern state was established. In China, the landowning gentry was from earliest times dependent upon centralized authority and its power did not depend upon the naked control of food, as in Europe and Japan.

### The Merchants

The control exercised by the merchant class over food was mainly in the distribution process. Merchants were involved not only in the private grain market, but also in grain marketing under government supervision. In this section we shall be concerned primarily with the nature of conflict in control over food between the central authority and the merchant class in late imperial China and what factors shaped its evolution. A discussion of the conflict in interests between merchant-gentry and non-merchant gentry in the context of this study would only be of significance if one could demonstrate their interests to greatly divergent, which was not the case in late imperial China. The nature of conflicting interests between the merchants and the other major social group, the peasantry, will be discussed in the following section.

The nature of conflict between the merchant class and the central authority may be understood by examining several key issues, namely:

1. the relative power of the merchants compared to other social groups.
  2. the policies of the central government towards merchant activities.
  3. the effect of the developing market economy.
- Each of these topics will be considered below.

#### Power of the merchant class

The ability of the merchant class to promote interests favorable to itself depended on its social status, its economic wealth, and its political power. The traditional social status of the merchant was, of course, only an imperfect measure of the effectiveness of the merchant group in pursuing its interests. As was the case of Tokugawa Japan and Europe, merchants were able to wield considerable power despite their social disabilities. Social status was, nevertheless, an indication of the government's ideal social hierarchy.

In the predominant Confucian ideology of the empire, merchants were at the bottom of the social hierarchy. This was the perspective of the elite who judged that the most honorable occupations were office-holding in the government bureaucracy and scholarship. Nevertheless, peasants, too, held a position of great value, since they were seen as vital to the whole state by their contribution of food and other necessities of life. Peasants and agriculture were thus extolled in Confucian ideology and the government was enjoined to protect them and provide for them when calamity struck. The merchants, on the contrary, were to be accorded no social prestige despite the fact that their services were recognized as necessary. Most Chinese thinkers were aware of the usefulness of the

merchants' economic activities of money-lending, money-changing, developing businesses, and carrying out the vital task of distribution of food and other goods. Nevertheless, the fact that they were still discriminated against by official ideology has been interpreted by some scholars as a demonstration of the government's awareness of the potential wealth and power merchants could amass and sought to prevent this from happening.<sup>31</sup>

How much wealth merchants were able to accumulate from their activities also affected their power and prestige. When merchant activities were not severely restricted, merchants were able to become quite influential. In Chou times, Ch'ao Ts'o wrote:

Now the law despises merchants, but the merchants have become rich and noble; it esteems farmers, but the farmers have become poor and humble. What is esteemed by the people is despised by the ruler; what is scorned by the officials is honored by the law.<sup>32</sup>

There are numerous accounts of merchants in Han times who grew very wealthy. There were some whose fortunes were equivalent to wealthy nobles and even high officials. Some made their wealth by simply selling condiments, while most grew rich from salt manufacturing, iron smelting and moneylending.<sup>33</sup> Even when legal discrimination was stricter in early Han, wealthy merchants were able to associate with the elite and carry on their activities. Most of the merchants who grew rich in the Ch'ing period made their profits off the salt trade. This was true despite high government exactions on the salt trade and heavy restrictions on the merchants. However, not all merchants were wealthy.



Those merchants who were very wealthy from commercial activities were usually office-holding gentry and, therefore, wealthy even before engaging in commerce. By Ch'ing times, it is known that gentry-officials who wanted to expand their income base took up merchant activities. These activities included not only business and trade, but also money-lending, banking and money-exchanging. As a matter of fact, Chang tells us that only those who had enough capital to invest could ever hope to accumulate substantial profits from merchant activities.<sup>34</sup> The financial requirements together with the managerial and administrative skills meant that successful businessmen were mainly gentry. Nevertheless, some non-gentry were able to carry on successful businesses, but they would usually try very hard to obtain gentry status through the "irregular route," i.e. through purchase of a degree.

Out of the entire merchant class, only a few merchants were wealthy, however.<sup>35</sup> Although there is hardly any sociological analysis of the social origins of the merchants, especially in pre-Ch'ing times, we may surmise that they came from both the commoner and the official-gentry class. Merchants may have been wealthier landowning peasants who could afford to invest in business. Perhaps they were sons of peasant families who had managed to get some education to enter lower level positions in the rice trade, e.g. as rice brokers, in retail shops.

The foregoing discussion points to the basic fact that in China, there was an early association between merchants and the central government and that this association existed despite Confucian ideological and legal discrimination against the merchant class. On the one hand, merchants had to rely on official or unofficial concessions

from the central government or from various officials willing to engage in merchant-official alliances of interests. On the other hand, the government counted on substantial revenues collected from the various merchant activities.

Most important of all, the merchants did not seek to use their wealth to challenge the ideology of the system, and hence the legitimacy of the emperor. On the contrary, merchants sought to become gentry, they educated their sons to become officials, and they operated their food trade so as to supplement and reinforce the use of food for tribute and taxes. It was in the merchant's interest to have an orderly collection of land taxes in kind, for they would in time be called upon to distribute and sell the grain collected in this manner.

The conflict of interest between the merchant class and the central government was thus much less than what we saw in the case of Japan. The ideology of the Confucian-inspired social discrimination was similar in both countries. The major difference between them was the extent to which social reality departed from the ideology and the recognition of the discrepancy by the central authority. The social outlook and values of the Tokugawa Bakufu and elite left no room for the merchants in the upper class; their disparagement was absolute. Nevertheless, merchants carried on as vital functions in Japan as they did in China. In Japan, however, their importance was not recognized as having any redeeming value. The elite surrounded itself with a pride of not knowing about merchant affairs, to the point of blindness. Although members of the elite began increasingly to turn to merchant activities, it was usually a drastic step in order to survive economically and was accompanied by a lowering of social prestige.

In contrast, the pragmatic sense of the Chinese governments and elite tended to mitigate their prejudices against the merchants. This pragmatic sense rested largely on a sense of security based on the legitimacy of the imperial system. This security also derived from other factors. Merchants were not numerous in China. Their organization into autonomous guilds was limited, and there was no significant cooperation among different guilds. Their wealth did not threaten the system, since in many ways it was so much a part of the system.

The most important point is that the political aspirations of merchants were not basically different from those of the central authority. The wealthiest and most influential merchants were all gentry-officials. They were usually first officials and then merchants, i.e. they turned to merchant activities to supplement their official duties. Furthermore, the big merchants owed their wealth and success to their official status or to their ties to officialdom. This is why non-gentry merchants sought to obtain gentry status as soon as possible, to "protect their gains." Merchants existed because they could gain privileges and concessions in countless ways from their official ties.

The case of the salt merchants is revealing in this regard. The salt merchants were among the wealthiest members of the merchant class, especially in Ch'ing times. After a generation of squandering away their wealth--so excessive as it was--the subsequent generations of salt merchants turned to building their careers in the government bureaucracy.<sup>36</sup> In short, therefore, merchants who had succeeded used their influence in wealth to integrate themselves more fully into the central bureaucracy. Their interests could not have coincided more with those of the central government.

However, not all merchants were so successful at forging their links to the central bureaucracy. These merchants were at least potentially able to mobilize their resources and form organizations with interests opposed to those of the central government. Therefore, the government created policies to curb merchants independent profit-making activities. To consider this issue, we turn next to the policies of the central government.

### Policies of central government

Discrimination against merchants by the central government was greater in some periods than in others. As we shall see, in general, the less secure the legitimacy of authority, the more vehement the legal discrimination against merchants. The corollary was also true, i.e. the more secure the legitimacy of authority, the less merchants were discriminated against.<sup>37</sup> Of course, discriminatory measures could only have been enforced by a strong central authority. When central authority was weak, merchant power could increase as they operated uninhibitedly.

In the late Chou period (to be more exact, the transition between the "Spring and Autumn" period and the "Warring States" period), feudal rule was beginning to weaken, commerce expanded and merchants flourished. Up to this time, merchants had not been bound by strict regulations. There were certain marketing regulations set forth in the Chou li (Rites of Chou) whereby commerce was restricted to certain areas.<sup>38</sup> They were largely unrestricted in other ways, however. They were able to accumulate considerable wealth and bought land. During the Warring States period, due to the prevalent social disorder, many local

authorities gave merchants the right to collect taxes. Merchants kept high percentages of the taxes they collected, thus impoverishing the peasants. Trade increased in the late Chou period and added to the merchants' profits. Since merchants could obtain metal coins through their trading activities, they could also lend money at high interest rates. When peasants could not repay their debts, merchants automatically acquired their lands. Of course, merchants in different states had relatively more or less power, but in Ch'i, the commercially strongest of the Warring States, merchants rivalled state power.

The permissive attitude towards merchants is said to have continued in the Ch'in period, and even into the early Han. The first trace of unfavorable treatment in the law is in 215 B.C., when merchants were sent to the military garrisons on the frontier regions to fight, just like other "socially undesirable types."<sup>39</sup> Emperor Wu-ti of Han maintained this policy. There is undoubtedly more legal discrimination in Han than in Ch'in. Merchants were forbidden to enter officialdom and could not own land in some areas.<sup>40</sup> Those who did own land were heavily taxed. Emperor Kao of Han prohibited merchants from "wearing brocades, embroideries, silks, and certain other kinds of fine cloth, from carrying weapons, and from riding on horses."<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, there was no clear consensus of opinion about the merchants in Han.

A heated controversy brewed in the Han period over how to consider the merchants and what policies the government should adopt in controlling or encouraging them.<sup>42</sup> Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku, two Chinese historians, argued opposite points of view on the merchant class. Ssu-ma Ch'ien felt the accumulation of wealth was a welcome sign

of achievement and was appropriate for the worthy man. Pan Ku disagreed vehemently, seeing the decline of Chou and morality in general as due to the rise of commerce and industry. One scholar has explained that Ssu-ma Ch'ien was a Taoist and wrote before Confucianism became firmly established as state orthodoxy, i.e. in the Former Han period. This period, still held some latitude for controversial points of view. The famous debates between the Confucianist scholars and the officials over whether the government should create a monopoly over salt and iron took place at this time (81 B.C.).<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, Pan Ku was a product of the Latter Han period and a staunch Confucianist and very protective of agricultural interests.

According to the Land Statutes (T'ien-ling) of early T'ang, merchants and other "non-productive classes" were entitled to small land plots, "however, in restricted localities (where the great majority of them lived) they were not entitled to any land at all."<sup>44</sup> By late T'ang, however, when the central control over local rule broke down, the private acquisition of landed estates became easier and even merchants could buy land.<sup>45</sup>

The areas where commercial activities could be carried on were officially restricted from Chou times. In T'ang, merchants had to operate within specified quarters defined by trade; these quarters (hang) are loosely translated as "guilds". In mid-T'ang, the government created internal customs stations to tax foreign trade. However, about this time and into the Sung period, periodic markets sprung up outside the restricted areas.<sup>46</sup>

The sumptuary laws were said to have been commonly violated as well as the marketing regulations. For example, in Han and T'ang, merchants who were wealthy were said to have worn silk and embroideries and ridden decorated horses, like the upper class. The prohibition against taking the examinations by merchants existed for most of imperial history through Sung.<sup>47</sup> However, as we have seen, wealthy merchants were able to consort with high officials and could sometimes purchase degrees through the so-called "irregular route."

In summary, when the central government was strong, government policies tended to limit the power of merchants. Even when the government was strong, however, merchants who had wealth could often gain privileges which did not extend to all merchants. When government was weak, merchants could become more politically influential and engage in economic activities more favorable to their interests. Even when merchants became strong, however, they did not threaten the legitimacy of political authority. The explanation for the relatively little conflict in interests between the central authority and the merchants is that they found it mutually beneficial to cooperate with each other. Therefore, although merchants were socially and often legally discriminated against the government managed to uphold its legitimacy while permitting violations of its laws and norms.

This situation was largely the result of a modus vivendi between the political authority and the merchant class, which evolved over time, rather than a conscious and shrewd policy. Moreover, the government found over time, that it could make substantial gains by holding a long leash on the merchants. There are many historical examples to illustrate

this point, but perhaps the most graphic are those of the salt and customs revenues already mentioned, which accrued to the government.

Merchants served the purposes of government in T'ang by getting consumers who would buy salt, in effect, to finance revenues which the merchants were required to pay the government. Although the government had limited means to collect more revenues from consumers, it could get the merchants to extract it and then simply extract it from the merchants.

The merchants, who had to buy their stock from the government and pay the monopoly tax on it, passed on their tax to the consumer as part of a greatly increased retail price. The government could thus collect such taxes indirectly through the agency of the merchants from the people in areas over which they had but limited authority, and where they could not hope to operate an efficient system of direct taxation.<sup>48</sup>

The government relied on the merchants for the varied and invaluable role they played in the logistics, storing and marketing of food. Merchants played a vital role in purchasing and stocking grain from peasant producers. Although for much of imperial history, the peasants themselves were responsible for transporting their grain to either the granaries or markets, for long distance commerce and tax transport, merchants handled the transportation. The system of monetary transfers, credit, loans and money exchange would not have been possible without the merchants. Finally, they played a vital role in the redistribution of food from surplus to deficit areas both through the marketing system and famine relief. Next we shall discuss how the development of the commercialized economy influenced the relations between the government and the merchants.



Development of a commercialized economy

The particular pattern of Chinese economic development gave rise to a distinctive kind of relationship between the government and merchant whereby the government managed to keep the merchants under control. This fact is what distinguishes our Chinese case from that of Japan and Europe and the kind of interest group competition over food control which we noted in those countries. We shall see that our discussion closely parallels the familiar speculations of why capitalism never developed in imperial China as it did in Japan and Europe.

The transition from the Spring and Autumn period to the Warring States period in the Chou dynasty is said to mark a change from small-scale barter at local markets to the establishment of markets with greater specialization of production, new roads and transportation routes, the establishment of a monetary system. These early markets were usually located outside administrative cities and served local needs. Han unity encouraged the development of interregional trade. Merchants in Former Han were not discriminated against, and gradually succeeded in making great profits at the expense of the state. They received concessions from local authorities to continue to make high profits off trade, gain high interest on loans, and coin money freely. The government then began to clamp down on them and Emperor Wu-ti (141-86 B.C.) took the extreme step of conscripting them into the military. This is said to have caused a decline in commerce and in economic growth.

By T'ang, markets provided exchange services, i.e. rural families who had surpluses could sell crops for currency to pay for taxes or purchase other goods. According to one estimate, about .25% of the villages had

markets in the T'ang period (out of a population of 80 million, there were approximately 200,000 villages).<sup>49</sup> These markets were used by some peasants, but most surplus was kept by the Chinese peasant. This distinguished him from the Japanese peasant, who had to deliver up most of his surplus to the bushi and dainyo.<sup>50</sup> Up until mid-T'ang, the government followed a laissez-faire policy towards the commercial sector. However, in later years of T'ang, large direct excise taxes were enacted to try to recover losses suffered by the An Lu-shan rebellion, the weakening of central rule and trade slackening. Private coinage still continued in T'ang. Long distance grain shipment dates from T'ang when rice was transported from fertile areas (i.e. Kiangsu and Chekiang) to deficit areas.

Scholars have written that a "national market" emerged in the T'ang and Sung periods. However what is meant by this term differs from author-to-author. By T'ang and Sung times a national market emerged in the sense that "commercial contacts linked all areas directly or indirectly with each other".<sup>51</sup> However, it is not until Ming that a national market formed in the sense that "prices on items of mass consumption in principal cities of different regions are interrelated."<sup>52</sup>

The economic development which became prominent in the Sung period was a result of the rise in agricultural production from mid-T'ang, the specialization in commodities and improved transportation. The demand for food was greatly increased by population growth in urban areas. However, agricultural production was uneven, being quite strong in the Yangtze region, but rather south, especially along the southeast coast,

it was not good. Areas such as Fukien were heavily dependent on grain shipments through trade for their food needs. There was an important north-south trade in Sung, as well as overseas trade. Much of the long-distance trade in this period and earlier was still in luxury items. However, the rice trade also developed greatly in this period and different varieties of rice could reach different regions from where they were grown. Perkins estimates that only 7-8% of farm crops were involved in the long-distance trade before 1900, and he guesses that the amount did not change much even into the 19th century.<sup>53</sup> The government controlled the rice trade in Sung for purposes of famine relief, and the export of rice was forbidden in time of famine.<sup>54</sup>

By Ch'ing the government had to rely on this interregional trade for its own survival. By this time, East-Central China (Kiangsu, Chekiang and Anhwei) was the most densely populated region of the country and had a growing food requirement. Despite the fertility of this region, demand exceeded production, partly because of the population density and partly because this area was developing non-grain commercial production. Rice had to be imported from the Central region (Anhwei, Kiangsi and Hunan).<sup>55</sup>

### Summary

The merchant class was in a theory at the very bottom of the Chinese social hierarchy. However, merchants were permitted by the government to carry on the necessary functions of product marketing and distribution. They did not pose a threat to the legitimacy of authority since their numbers represented only a very small part of the population and their

commercial activities, particularly in relation to food supplies, were controlled by the government. Those merchants who were able to make large profits, owed their success to the government which gave them monopoly rights in exchange for taxes. Successful merchants, therefore, were really instruments of the government, existing in a symbiotic relationship with it.

As the economy developed with a more commercialized national market, the role of the merchants naturally grew in significance. However, the political authority managed to maintain a hold over the merchant and made use of his role to mobilize resources for state revenues and distribute food through trade and relief. The situation was not undermined significantly by the merchants themselves, whose organizations were not very strong, and who largely aspired towards the goals and values and prestige of the existing social and political order.

### The Peasants

Throughout Chinese history, peasant farmers constituted the great mass of the Chinese population, and their response to the politics of food was a crucial factor in accounting for the amazing stability of the Chinese imperial system. Although at times peasants did turn to violence and try to challenge the food distribution patterns, what is more impressive is the degree to which the Chinese peasants from a very early period accepted the legitimacy of a system which gave stout legitimacy to a distant authority.

Tensions between peasant and landlord of course existed, and in the scholarly study of Chinese political economy, there have been extensive

debates over precisely how badly off the Chinese tenant farmers and landless laborers were. Our purpose here is not to attempt to resolve these debates, nor to pass judgment on them. It is enough for our purposes that the historic record shows that there was more stability in the Chinese countryside when the ultimate authority was distant (and that there was little notable increase in rural tension with the establishment of the modern state) than there was in either Europe or Japan during their respective state-building processes.

We shall see that there were several complex reasons for why the Chinese experience was different. At the start, however, we should note certain fundamental characteristics of the Chinese peasantry with respect to food politics. First, in contrast to Japan and Europe, the Chinese peasantry was not homogeneous in its economic interests since it included rich landowning peasants who might even rent out some of their land, tenant farmers who had long-term and almost permanent claims to working their fields, tenants who rented from family or clan members--as well as tenants who had to pay exorbitant rents.

Secondly, given the diversity among the peasants there was not in China, nor in Japan and Europe, a sharp divide between peasant and gentry. Family fortunes could rise and fall, and there were not the feudal caste lines which prevented peasants from raising their status. All who worked the land could aspire in theory to owning land, an aspiration which broadened the legitimacy of land ownership. At the same time, tenancy itself had an ambiguous quality in China that it lacked in Japan and Europe, where peasants had servile obligations to local authorities who owned both them and the land.

Thirdly, the Chinese peasant found merit in the Confucian ideology, which also provided legitimacy for the ultimate authority. Within the context of a common ideology, the Chinese peasant felt free to compete in the control of food with the marginally better-off gentry and the considerably better-off officialdom and the imperial household.

In turning to the historical experiences of China, we must acknowledge that there are problems of inadequate data and that the issues of the political orientations of peasants have been greatly confused by ideological passions. Materials on the periods prior to the 1930s are particularly sparse, and one cannot generalize from the diverse nature of the available studies in time period, region, and approach, to make conclusive statements about the peasantry in the Ch'ing to early modern periods.

Nevertheless, bearing in mind the limitations of data, we shall try to draw a picture of how the peasantry exercised its control over food resources. We shall be guided by three questions: How did the peasantry control food? How did they compete with the central government, the gentry and the merchants in pursuing their food interests? Did they pose a challenge to the legitimacy of authority in their promotion of food interests?

The control over food by the peasantry depended on several factors: factors related to land, taxation and rent, the market system, and fortuitous events. These latter include such phenomena as wars, famines, floods, and other natural disasters, which will be discussed in the next chapter. In pursuing the above questions in this chapter, we shall see how land, taxation and rent, and the market tended to accentuate

distinctions within the peasant class, which in turn diversified their food interests especially with regard to competition with the other social groups.

### How Peasants Controlled Their Food Supplies

#### Land Tenure and Distribution

The key characteristic of the Chinese peasant's position on food politics has been well-stated by Rawski:

The Chinese agricultural system differed in several respects from those in pre-industrial Europe. For at least the last millenium, Chinse agriculture has been dominated by a large number of free, small-scale farmers, working under a system of private landownership.<sup>56</sup>

This situation is in sharp contrast with the system of estates and manors which existed in pre-modern Japan and Europe. Land tenure and distribution contributed to fundamental differences in the peasants' income, lifestyle, and ability to control their food supply. In his well-known study Land Utilization in China, J.L. Buck stated that in 1865, 93% of the land in China was privately-owned.<sup>57</sup> Since most peasant families would try to grow food for their consumption needs, the size of their landholdings was crucial in determining how self-sufficient such families were. In Fei's example of Luts'un village (Yunnan), the average petty landowner household held less than an acre of land.<sup>58</sup> In an economy lacking many non-farm sources of income, such households would suffer from a lowered income due to the shortage of land to produce food. However, there are almost always some people engaged in

non-agricultural occupations, even while also engaging in agricultural production. Household budgets of such a village revealed that food was the most inelastic commodity of all items in demand. Land was graphically the determinant of a peasant's well-being in such an economy.

Myers believes that although land inequality was great, the trend from 1880-1937 was not toward greater inequality, probably due to the equal inheritance practice.<sup>59</sup> Even if his assertion is true, the existence of differences in levels of income and well-being between the poor and rich peasant was undeniable and was clearly related to landholdings. The wealthier peasant would usually own many times the amount of land of the average and of poor peasant landowner. Often the rich peasant did not even live on his land, but instead lived in an urban areas, where he could receive the rents paid him by tenants working his land as he carried on activities to supplement his income. Myers and Gamble in their studies of villages in the north, and Jamieson in his survey of villages from various parts of China, found that land distribution was greatly unequal.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, according to Buck, private landownership was felt to be in the best interests of the government and the peasant. In contrast, the English peasant often preferred the status of secure tenancy over the responsibilities involved in private ownership.<sup>61</sup> The average peasant in China definitely preferred to cultivate his own land with the help of his family members. He could grow foodgrains and perhaps a few vegetables. Livestock raising was not common among the average peasant because they did not have enough land to use as pasture.



If a peasant could not produce enough food for household needs due to insufficient land or unproductive land, he could rent land from a landowner. Of the total amount of privately-held land, three-quarters were owned by peasant landowners and the other quarter was owned and leased to tenants.<sup>62</sup> As a tenant of a landlord, the peasant had to pay rent either in cash or in kind at a certain rate in exchange, and he kept a part of the crop for his family's consumption. If the rent was demanded in cash, the peasant would have to sell to merchants enough of the food crop to obtain the cash to pay the rent. Assuming there were no handicrafts nor other rural industries as sources of supplementary peasant income, he would have to take a loan if he could not get enough money for his crops to pay rent. Borrowing money very often entailed mortgaging part or all of the land he owned, and in the case of default, he would lose the land mortgaged. Peasants who owned their land would have to pay taxes to the government, and hence also needed to sell some of their crops to the merchants.

The view that the tenant was worse off than the peasant landowner has been challenged by Rawski.<sup>63</sup> Rawski's study, which is in part based on sixteenth century Ming sources for Fukien province, shows that in areas where there was security of tenancy or permanent tenancy, productivity remained at a high level and the tenant actually benefitted. The type of tenancy in effect was actually a kind of two-tiered ownership. The landowner was considered to own the subsoil and the tenant could own the right to the topsoil upon payment of a fee. This topsoil right allowed the tenant himself to cultivate the land and to transfer his cultivation right if desired. The arrangement, which worked out as a right to

permanent tenancy, was considered to be mutually beneficial to landlord and tenant. The landlord required extra labor to cultivate his rice fields intensively, and the tenants, according to Rawski, held a great amount of freedom. The coastal region of Fukien was highly commercialized and peasants and landlords alike benefitted greatly from the active trade and stimulated productivity known in the area. It would, however, be incorrect to hold that tenancy in other areas brought as favorable arrangements. One might even hypothesize that the Fukien tenancy arrangements became flexible and secure for tenants because of the particularly active economy of the region.

Although Rawski's work gives us a wider perspective of tenancy arrangements and demonstrates that it does not always entail a worsening situation for the tenant, her work should not be generalized beyond the region on which the study is based. Perkins would probably disagree with Rawski, as implied by his statement:

The most surprising result would have been one where there seemed to be a substantial correlation between high tenancy and a rapid rate of increase in productivity, but this is not the case in China.<sup>64</sup>

In a discussion of the variety of tenancy arrangements existing in China, Perkins concludes that a particular tenancy pattern reflected the desire by the landlords to maximize productivity.<sup>65</sup> Thus tenancy contracts were long and of permanent duration in the lower Yangtze and other highly commercialized regions such as coastal Fukien and the main rice areas of Hunan.<sup>66</sup> He explains that farmers could increase productivity over time if they had long tenure. Furthermore, irrigation

as a high capital investment made long tenure desirable for landlords. Short contracts were typical of low tenancy areas such as the north (e.g. Kwantung and mountainous Hunan), where the uncertainties of agriculture made these arrangements desirable for tenant and landlord. Fixed rents were common in the south because they gave incentive to tenants who could share in the benefits of high productivity along with landlords. Shared rents, on the other hand, were more common in the north, where crop yields varied. Fixed rents in this region would have created hardship on tenants in bad years. These different arrangements tended to balance the unfavorable effects of natural resource endowments, climates unfavorable for agriculture and frequency of natural calamities. Therefore, Perkins would probably also agree with scholars who hold that tenancy did not inhibit productivity and thus did not contribute to a more difficult livelihood for the tenant as compared with the landowning peasant.

In sum, the land tenure pattern made for a heterogeneous peasant class who in varying degrees was dependent upon positive relations with both gentry and merchants. The peasant had an interest in the maintenance of an effective food market as he sought cash to pay either rent or taxes--or both if he owned some land and rented more. Hence the peasant's interests were not in conflict with the merchants who distributed food supplies.

Inequality could cause individual tragedy and sorry, but it also operated to create aspirations for social and economic advancement. Above all, the patterns of tenancy and distribution of land holdings did not make the peasants feel they had a common problem that would put them in opposition to the legitimacy of the total system. The peasants might

all have problems, but they were of different nature and magnitudes. They, therefore, sought different strategies in their food politics.

### Population Pressure, Equal Division of Land and Landless Labor

If the peasant owned no land at all, he would have to offer to work for a landowner in return for a wage. Usually landless labor would be given meals by the landlord. However, this amount was not enough and he would have to purchase food to supplement his food needs as well as those of his family. In some cases, the lines between a poor landowning peasant, a tenant, and a hired landless laborer were very thin, since the landowning peasant and the tenant might easily have to give up what little land he had. A flood or drought could ruin his crops, force him to take loans to purchase food. If he could not pay back the loans, he would have to forsake his land. Often population pressure in combination with the practice of equal inheritance among sons contributed to great hardship on the smaller landowning peasants. As population pressure increased, landholdings diminished.

Fei showed in Luts'un (Yunnan province) that as population pressure increased, landholdings diminished due to the practice of dividing land equally among male heirs. If population pressure were great, it was quite likely that land prices would be high and fewer poor and average peasants could buy land. Moreover, it would have become increasingly difficult for them to hold onto what land they had. Food demand would rise in view of the increased population, and even if production went up, there would be the need to pay the same if not more expenditures for farm upkeep, rent, taxes, etc. Fewer peasants would be able to afford to make

investments necessary for receiving a good rate of return on the land. Therefore, there would probably be increasing tenancy and more landless labor. Population pressure often forced peasant families to break-up and to send one or more sons to take non-farm employment. Sometimes families even held high expectations that one or more of their sons would take non-farm employment, which was seen to be a steady source of income for the family. When population pressures were extreme, there were better chances for male offspring to be spared infanticide than female offspring, because there were such hopes that males could improve the family's income.

The practice of dividing land equally among male heirs, as we saw earlier, tended to limit land concentration. For the large landowners, this practice would not necessarily be disadvantageous, since each son could start his own family. Although he might start out with a smaller amount than what his father owned, if he made out well in his livelihood, he could increase his landholdings to equal if not surpass what his father owned. If all male heirs did likewise, the chia ("expanded family") would have made out quite well indeed.

In contrast, for an average landholder, equal land division could present serious enough prospects for the family to undertake the preventative measures of abortion and infanticide. Obviously, if land were divided up into plots too small to support the families living off it, they would soon lose the land. Losing land was undesirable for reasons besides the economic loss entailed. It also was seen as a breach of filial piety.

Land is transmitted according to fixed rules. People inherit their land from their fathers. The sentiment originating in the kinship relation and reinforced by ancestor worship is manifested also in this personal attachment to the particular plots of land. Religious belief in the importance of the continuity of descendants finds its concrete expression in the continuous holding of land. To sell a piece of land inherited from one's father offends the ethical sense. 'No good son will do that. It is against filial piety.' This comment sums up the traditional outlook.<sup>67</sup>

Filial piety also forced many families to set aside some land for elderly parents and after their death, this land was sold to pay for their funeral.<sup>68</sup>

The sense of desperation felt by families where population pressures on the land were high and where the practice of equal division of land was potentially a threat to a break-up of clan land, sons would often not marry and continue to live in the same household with the eldest son as the new head. Nevertheless, division of land increased in late Ch'ing, then decreased in the two decades after Ch'ing, and then increased again until 1941. The most land division took place in the 1930s.<sup>69</sup>

The effect of population pressures was thus to strengthen the awareness of family identity among peasants while at the same time weakening the unity of the family. As the land became increasingly divided into smaller family units with the growing population, there was a fragmentation of economic interests. Some peasants would have to sell out and become tenants or landless laborers; others would be able to hold out. Again, though, the general consequence was a need to maintain better relations with both merchants and gentry.

Taxation, Rents, and the Commercialization of the Economy

The importance of taxation and rent and market-related factors in determining the peasants' income and standard of living can be clearly seen through an examination of household budgets. The trend towards requiring payment of taxes and rent in cash meant peasants had to sell their crops and become vulnerable to prices. Prices were not necessarily determined by free market mechanisms of supply and demand. Wealthy landlords and merchants would sometimes hoard food until prices went up and make large profits. Not only did peasants have to contend with hoarding and speculation interferences in the foodgrain market, but also often faced surcharges of various types placed upon them by the political authorities; e.g. on transport of grain to market, on buying and selling of foodstuffs, etc.<sup>70</sup>

On the other hand, for some peasants in areas with well-developed marketing networks, efficient and cheap transport, and a cash crop in high demand, the commercialization of the economy was in their favor. Even if they did not produce their own food, a cash crop in high demand could generate the needed income to buy food from the local market or even import food from distant markets.

Calamities such as wars and famines also affected peasants' control over food, and of course, their vulnerability to these fortuitous events determined how quickly they could recover their losses, if at all. Myers showed in this study of five north China villages, that the number of tenants and landless labor was likely to increase in areas hit by disasters, if they were limited to only one or two sources of income. On the other hand, in areas with two or three sources of income, usually

with access to a developing market system, despite disasters, the numbers of tenants and landless labor would increase only temporarily or not at all.<sup>71</sup> We shall deal with issues related to these phenomena more fully in the following chapter. Although taxes may have been reduced in times of bad harvests, it was not uncommon to later levy charges which would more than make up for the loss. Furthermore, in some areas, there was no reduction unless there was total loss of crop.<sup>72</sup>

One of the most significant facts pointed out by Fei Hsiao-T'ung's pioneering fieldwork is that one cannot generalize about "the condition of the peasants". Instead, one must carefully examine differences and at the most general level, characterize types of peasant economies. A more recent work by Ramon Myers attempts to use the same approach, i.e. generalize only to the point of describing types of village economic development, but his are far less detailed and perceptive than Fei's.<sup>73</sup>

Fei Hsiao-T'ung presented three valuable types based on his fieldwork in Yunnan, in southwest China, 1939-43. Fei's example of a typical "traditional China" peasant village was Luts'un, made up of a leisure class of petty owners with average holdings less than 1 acre and a class of landless labor. The land distribution was skewed in favor of a small minority, while 31% of the population was landless, many of whom were immigrants from other villages who had to leave due to poverty.<sup>74</sup>

The family budgets of five households in Luts'un representing a range of wealth, are very revealing about the ability of families to obtain food. The two landowning households which could afford to hire labor and rent their lands, were able to supply all their rice and bean needs and



purchase some supplementary foods. The middle range household had some land of which some was rented and labor was hired only where needed. This household had to purchase most of its rice, but could still supply some rice of its own, while supplemental foods were purchased. The two households which were landless had to buy all of their rice and other food needs. The landless households spent less than the two landowning households on clothes, housing, practically nothing on religious activities and nothing at all on gifts and recreation. For the rich households, these last three categories added up to almost the same amount as what was spent on clothing. They also spent considerable sums on medicine and education, while the poor spent nothing.

Despite the different level of household resources, taxes were almost the same for all groups. The rich could receive a substantial income from their rented lands, whereas the landless, of course, had none to rent.

Differences in standards of living among these households were clearly shown in the differences in diet. The two landowning households could afford on the average a half pound of meat per day. In addition, they had vegetables, wine, and dessert of cakes and honey. Meat was approximately 25-34% of their diet. Meat consumption for the average peasant household was only 3% per day.<sup>75</sup> The average household's income was substantially reduced by the need to pay rent. In fact, they were unable to keep a constant reserve of rice and had to often sell rice they grew to purchase necessities and then bought rice again later. Food expenditures for the wealthiest group was only about 14% of their expenditures, whereas food was about 71% of total living costs for the

average household. The landless households had meals prepared for them by their employers, and still, 60-70% of their budget had to go to buy food. They ate only two meals a day when not working on the farm, while the other households could eat three meals daily all the time.

When all households were evaluated in terms of their self-sufficiency vs cash purchases at the markets, the landless households had the lowest degree of self-sufficiency.<sup>76</sup> The landless laborers had to also pay the most to obtain food, despite the fact that they were the producers. The comparison of food expenditures and income among these five household types shows that food is highly inelastic, i.e. as income increases, the percentage of income spent on food decreases.

Villagers also had to pay taxes as part of their budget expenditures. There was a household levy and a special levy which went to cover expenses for the local government, and a levy for keeping the public granary stocked. The granary was run by private obligatory amounts of rice, i.e. 3-5% of the crop, levied on landowners (and on everyone after 1937).<sup>77</sup> In addition, there were corvee services which went towards various public works.

Those households which were less self-sufficient necessarily depended on the market for food and thereby fell vulnerable to inflation and price fluctuation. Fei explained that when prices were high, less food was taken to the market by producers, i.e. the opposite of what might be expected of a profit-conscious peasant.

Thus the supply of rural produce on the market is determined, not by prices, but solely by the need of the producers. Instead of selling the rice and saving the money received, the farmers commonly save the grain itself... Owing to the traditional attitude a rise in the price of rice, if it outstrips the prices of other commodities, will result in an actual decrease in the supply, because less rice need be taken to market in exchange for other commodities. Hence, inflation, with its encouragement of rice storage, fits well into the traditional pattern.<sup>78</sup>

The second village, which we shall describe only briefly, was Yits'un, a mountain village. There was not enough cultivable land to grow all the rice they needed, and there was heavy population pressure. However, they were able to develop two rural industries, basketry and paper-making, which enabled them to carry on some trade to purchase rice. Bamboo grew plentifully in the region and thus, despite their land poverty, they were perhaps not as badly off as the landless households in Luts'un. Here, too, there was a division of income groups. The poor engaged in basketry, while paper-making, which required large investments, was in the hands of the rich.

The third village, Yuts'un, was an area which engaged primarily in commerce and industries. The industries which yielded high profits accrued to the rich, since they also required large capital investments. Fei argued that the poor could not invest in agriculture and did not gain from the relative economic development of this area. The wealthy usually moved to the towns and became absentee landlords.<sup>79</sup>

The average household land plot in Yuts'un was 4.3 mou, i.e. less than that in Luts'un. However, Yuts'un's land was cultivated intensively in truck gardening.

... from 30 to 40 different kinds of vegetables including cabbage, turnips, lettuce, leeks, squash, spinach, lutze (a snail-like tuber), and many others. All through the year something is grown; not a bit of land lies waste at any time.<sup>80</sup>

In addition, three rice varieties were grown with different maturing times. Thus although Yuts'un had less land than Luts'un, its fields were cultivated intensively, and gave rise to higher food production than in Luts'un.

Landless labor was 77% of the population of Yuts'un, which was less than Yits'un, and more than Luts'un. The average rent was 50% of produce. People took supplementary employment in duck-raising and weaving.

In contrasting the diets of the rich, middle and poor peasants, one finds great differences in Yuts'un, too. The rich could have pork, chicken, and duck meat, and eat three meals a day, plus an extra meal at midnight if desired. The upper-middle households consumed some meat, but mostly vegetables and rice, while the poor consumed vegetables and rice, and some only corn and no rice, although it is difficult to see how they could have survived on just corn.<sup>81</sup>

The conditions of life for persons at both ends of the socio-economic spectrum in such villages give a much more vivid idea of the context of the above-mentioned contrasts. In Yuts'un, Fei visited the home of a rich man called the "Fifth Lord", and described it as follows:

His house, which was entered by a large carved gate, leading into a courtyard in which flowers and trees were growing, consisted of at least forty rooms, built around five connecting courtyards, each with its gardens. The rooms here were large and well furnished; there were carved wooden window frames and glass in the windows, painted and decorated beams, and in certain of the rooms not only Western-type decorations but a Western-style sofa... The "lord" wears long silk gowns, which are soft and light. He need not walk, because he has a ricksha. He keeps a cow to give milk; takes ginseng root and the tip of a deer's horn, which give vitality; and smokes opium. The women in the house dress in long robes made of silk or fine cotton materials. The young men wear foreign-style student uniforms.<sup>82</sup>

Then he went to visit the home of a poor man.

Each day, as soon as we had gone past the pigsty of our landlord, we came to the houses of the poor... one afternoon we were invited by a lean, undernourished villager to come into his house. When we entered the dark room, he asked us to sit on the wooden bed platform to the left, since he had no chair but only a straw hassock. From the door came a dim light, allowing us to see the shape of a small, damp low room with its dirt floor. The bed on which we sat occupied a quarter of the whole room. On the bed was a ragged dirty cotton cover; and beside it was an old black table on which a stand for a lamp, consisting of a wick stuck in a saucer of oil, a teapot and several cups, some bottles of oil, and cooking utensils were all spread out in a disorderly fashion. Even in the dim light we were aware of the griminess of dust over all. Opposite the door, against the wall, was an open hearth with a hole in the wall above it, by which some of the smoke went out; and pots and utensils lay near by. Scattered around on the floor were straw and baskets, holding beans and rice. Our friend told us that, months ago, his wife had died suddenly. Something twisted in our hearts at his ghastly, hopeless face--at this life helplessly dragging on.<sup>83</sup>

#### How Peasants Competed with Other Groups

We have seen above that the peasantry cannot be viewed as a homogeneous class with all the same food interests. Peasant households were stratified at levels as low as the village. Peasant economies

differed from each other in wealth and growth as determined by such variables as natural resource endowments, access to cheap transport routes, and the development of the market system. Peasant households within these economies were differentiated in income and well-being according to land tenure arrangements, land distribution, rates and flexibility of taxation and rent. Peasants were therefore of a range of socio-economic standards from the destitute to the very rich.

How did they contend with other major social groups, the gentry and the merchants? How did the peasants fare vis-a-vis the central government? The rich peasant landowners usually developed their own local power base and even purchased degrees to establish their legitimacy. Hence there was limited divergence of interests with the central government. One study based on Ch'ing sources for Shantung province, holds that a developing commercialized economy gave rise to a growing class of "managerial landlords" which was gradually replacing the "rentier landlords". The former sprang up in Ch'ing as a wealthy landlord group which could afford to hire labor and sell part of their surplus for profit. The rentier landlords, on the other hand, were those who simply rented their lands to tenants.<sup>84</sup>

Many of the rich peasant landlords moved to urban areas and thus became absentee landlords. Their interests would not have conflicted much with those of the merchants, since these landlords often turned to business or commercial activities to supplement their incomes. On the whole, therefore, the rich peasants would not have questioned the legitimacy of central authority since they gained by the system as it was.

The situation of the poor to average peasant was somewhat different.

Many had a marginal existence and had to work very hard with little or no recreation. On the other hand, they were heavily dependent on the influential landlords who held local power and relied on them for protection and representation vis-a-vis the center and hence could not oppose the gentry. At the same time, those who were tenants, had obligations of rent payments to their landlords. They therefore had an interest in market operations, either for selling their crops or for borrowing money to pay their rents. The line between marginal peasant landowners and landless peasants could be very thin. Such peasants would have to mortgage part or all of their land in order to borrow money to pay for taxes and/or rent. If they defaulted, they might lose their land. Very often such peasants would migrate to another village in search of selling their labor to a landlord who could afford to hire them.

The poor to average peasant for the most part, did not pose a threat to the legitimacy of authority. Most of them accepted their lot, as encouraged by the Confucian ideology. The same ideology also encouraged the gentry and government to provide for the peasants' welfare particularly in times of food shortage, famines and disasters, and the government at least suggested local officials and landlords to make allowances for hardship in collecting rents and taxes. The government frowned upon hoarding and speculation in the market and tried to curb these activities which would have interfered with food supplies, even if such practices persisted. However, among those who were desperate, a minority joined secret societies which were explicitly anti-Confucian and they did at times carry on activities which were anti-government. We shall examine their role in the next chapter when we discuss protest.

When their situation was oppressive, the majority of average peasant landholders were either unwilling or unable to promote their interests to have taxes and rents lowered, to have better prices for their crops, or to have the government or local leaders contribute more towards investments in agriculture. Sometimes the interests were not understood in these terms, and hence not articulated as such. For example, even when food prices were high, peasant cultivators would not necessarily flock to the market to sell in order to make high profits. Usually, as Fei has pointed out, peasants would prefer to hold onto their reserves which represented an assured consumption.<sup>85</sup> The average peasant landowner would also seek indirect ways of easing his situation. It is well known that peasants would willingly register their lands in the name of a bigger and usually influential landlord who could often escape taxation or get a lower tax rate assessment.

#### Summary

In summary, therefore, the question of why the Chinese system of legitimacy had relatively fewer tensions than Europe or Japan, may be answered by examining the various interest groups in Chinese society and how they sought to further their food interests. We have seen that the bureaucracy, the gentry, and even the merchants and rich peasants aspired for a place in the imperial system. Some, mainly the gentry, desired office-holding for the income and prestige it brought. Others, especially the merchants, sought a connection in the bureaucracy to assure protection of their interests. Still others, mostly rich peasant landowners, obtained degrees in order to enhance their status and power



in their local communities. The majority of peasants were also supporting of the legitimacy of authority, although usually passively. Therefore, apart from a minority of disaffected gentry and peasants who formed viable anti-Confucian and anti-government organizations, the majority of the groups we have mentioned was able to enhance its interests by making use of certain aspects of other groups, without entering into harsh competition with them.

CHAPTER SEVEN : FOOD CRISES AND FOOD CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Let us turn now to the reactions of the authorities to famine, food shortages and social protest over food resources during the Ch'ing period and to a lesser extent the Republican period. As we have seen, food crises were key events in the development of the state in Europe and Japan since they tested the legitimacy of authority and stimulated social change. The governments of imperial China perceived food shortages as being closely related to social protest. Therefore, preventative measures were instituted to minimize their occurrence, and policies were created to contain the effects of such crises. The phenomena of food crises probably aroused more concern and received more sustained attention from Chinese governments than from either the European or Japanese governments we have examined.

China has a long history of rebellions and uprisings of a range of magnitude. Food shortages were often a compelling factor fostering discontent among rebels from many social groups. The food incentive, although not a singular nor necessarily a major cause of these uprisings, was used by opposition forces to recruit hungry peasants as soldiers to swell the ranks of rebellion. Bandits, local village defense communities, and secret society sects were all able to attain a certain degree of cohesion out of the prospect of food for members in times of food scarcity.

The maintenance of public order and the protection of legitimacy were the political concerns that compelled the governments of imperial China to seek to prevent famines and other food crises. They were aware that

an opposition group could mount efforts to seize power, taking advantage of the government's vulnerability at the time of food crises. The opposition could justify its actions by pointing to events of natural and social disorders as indications of the removal of the Mandate to rule. The Mandate of Heaven concept brought the two phenomena of food shortage and protest together in a theory which provided a rationale for the usurpation of power by an opposition group.

The government sought to protect its legitimacy by means of the Confucian ideology. As we discussed before, this ideology was inculcated through the examination system of hiring and promotion for elite members and through public morality lectures for commoners. In official documents and decrees the government drew clear distinctions between the desirables and the undesirables, those it considered praiseworthy, obedient, and loyal to authority and those whom it disparaged as disobedient and rebellious. Potential or actual rebels were referred to as "the weed people" or "the stick people," who exerted harmful and evil influence on society. Those who rebelled were equally conscious of the fact that protest was a grave step and called it "walking the dangerous path."

Although Confucianism was silent on what recourse one could take if authority were not fulfilling its obligations, rebellion and disobedience to authority were never clearly justified. Confucianism stressed values quite the opposite of rebelliousness, i.e. filial piety and respect of authority from the family on up through the central government. The authority was to be moral, father-like. It should be exemplary in carrying out its obligations and duties of rulership, an important one of

which was to guard the subsistence of the people. One writer has summed up the Confucian view of social protest and natural disasters succinctly as follows:

In traditional monarchical theory,... popular discontent did not by itself invalidate an emperor's claims--nor, by the same token, did popular approbation legitimize him. Popular discontent was a portent, as a flood might be a portent of the loss of the mandate; it was a sign ... of the loss of virtue. But a flood was not to be greeted with fatalistic acceptance. While an emperor should read the signs aright, he still should try to check the flood. And just so, the outbreak of a popular rebellion was no guarantee of its success or of its Confucian acceptability... It might be a portent, but it, too, should be and legitimately might be resisted. For the famous 'right to rebel' was a contradiction in terms. People rebelled not because they had any theoretical legal right, but because actual legal arrangements left little scope to their lives. Until they succeeded, rebels had no right, and the people's will, if they claimed to express it, had to wait on Heaven's choosing.<sup>1</sup>

Hsiao also points out that the imperial system of social control was relatively successful.

For one villager that became a 'bandit,' there was more than one who 'preferred dying of starvation to being a thief' or simply remained helpless in destitution and hard fortune. Under such circumstances it was inconceivable that rural inhabitants should rise in a body to challenge the constituted authority or to seek to ameliorate their lot by violence. Herein lies part of the reason for the relative longevity of the Ch'ing dynasty despite the short-comings of its system of rural control.<sup>2</sup>

Previously we discussed the ways in which governments tried to prevent food crises, primarily through the Confucian ideology and the granary system. Below we shall discuss how effectively governments handled the crises when they occurred. The examples will enable us to see how these crises and the manner in which authority dealt with them challenged the legitimacy of authority. We shall focus on two types of food-related crises: famines and food protest. More specifically, we shall examine the effectiveness of famine relief and other measures initiated and carried out by government to deal with them.<sup>3</sup>

In our earlier chapter we presented the ideal functions of the granary system and the imperial ideology. In our discussion of food crises below, we shall see how they actually worked. First, we shall present an overview of the dimensions of the crises posed to governments and the measures by which they were handled. We shall then discuss how these measures upheld or detracted from the legitimacy of political authority.

The typical greeting in certain parts of China, "Have you eaten today?" points to a fundamental historical reality in China, captured by the title of Walter Mallory's well-known book, China, Land of Famines.<sup>4</sup> Although statistical analysis of our subject of food-related crises is out of the question given the nature of available data, based on what Mallory, Ho and others have written, "it is apparent that natural calamities must be regarded as a normal rather than exceptional phenomena in a country as large and as dependent upon the forces of nature as China."<sup>5</sup>

### The Chihli Famine 1743-1744

The Chihli famine came about following serious drought conditions in 1743-1744. The failure of the spring rain in 1743 ruined the winter barley and wheat crops and hindered the planting of the fall crop. Rains fell heavily in the summer of that year, but there were serious grain shortages. Due to a late rainfall again in 1744, the fall crop was poor. Famine conditions began to manifest themselves as food reserves were depleted and as the means of any future production such as seed, animals and equipment were consumed or sold for food.<sup>6</sup> This famine affected approximately 1,890,000 people. Out of twenty-seven districts afflicted, sixteen were assessed as having severe famine conditions, and eleven as less severe conditions.<sup>7</sup> The overall enthusiastic and favorable assessment which scholars attribute to this famine relief effort is probably due to the fact that they saw the regulations laid out in the Cheng-chi famine manual as a step in the right direction. However, their overall balanced assessment indicates that the government did indeed have a better handle on this crisis than on both previous and later famines. We shall turn to examine some of the reasons for this relative success next.

### Famine Relief Policy

The role of the emperor was vital to the relative success and effectiveness of famine relief efforts, since all policies had to originate or be approved by him. The Emperor Ch'ien-lung, emperor at this time, was more far-sighted than most emperors and prepared for the relief effort in Chihli even before an official disaster had been

declared. He had released grain from the Tung-chou granary (nearby Peking) and sent it to the main port city of Tientsin in Chihli.<sup>8</sup> In addition, several subsequent shipments were bought, mostly from Fengtien, Manchuria and sent as relief.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, taxes were postponed until the next harvest or partially remitted depending on the degree of crop failure. In 1745, the emperor completely remitted the loan burden. Apparently these measures did help to alleviate the hardship endured.

At the first stage, the reporting of the famine conditions or impending famine was usually made by villages to the li chief, clan leader or village headman, who then decided if and when to report the news to the magistrate. The magistrate would then report to the central bureaucracy. Even at this early stage the imperial system was not necessarily effective. It relied a great deal on runners and secretaries of the lower level bureaucracy, who like their superiors, relied on bribes and surcharges for their income. This bargaining could easily hamper the delivery of information.

The next stage involved taking surveys of the afflicted area and the victims of famine and assess their food shortfall. Surveys were undertaken in two stages: a preliminary survey to give an approximate idea of what relief measures to apply, and a definitive survey to verify need among victims. The latter was carried out by means of door-to-door surveys and the classification of victims into a range of severe need categories (usually three to five categories).

### Evaluation

Most of the evaluations of the government famine relief effort in Chihli are favorable and even optimistic.<sup>10</sup> This is probably because the effort was much more effective than that in earlier famines, e.g. the famine of 1594 in Henan.<sup>11</sup> It may also be attributed to the scholars' enthusiastic response to the systematic However, the actual administration of the famine relief measures were far from ideal.

The problems of famine relief, discussed very thoroughly by Will, were part of the broader problems of the imperial bureaucracy and the nature of the social relations between classes.<sup>12</sup> These besieged any effort on the part of the political authority to administer relief at every step of the process. This part of the relief system was also beleaguered with corruption and ineffectiveness. The surveys were carried out by those who were not victims, i.e. the wealthy gentry and members of the lower echelon bureaucracy, who had their hand in distorting the need picture towards whom they favored. It was known, for example, that many students who were not badly off, exploited the situation by trying to obtain free food.<sup>13</sup> Another dimension to the problem was the precious time used up by this survey-taking. No relief would be sent until these steps were completed. The time-lag between survey-taking, reporting of results, decision of measures to implement, transportation of food to the stricken areas, and actual delivery of relief to the victims, was by definition too long. The situation of the victims in the Chihli famine was not as horrible as compared to other famines, but obviously such comparisons should not detract from their horror. Relief was probably never gauged on the basis of a level of



subsistence which might be vaguely referred to as well-being in nutritional and health terms, but rather, aimed for mere survival.

Relief measures were also less than ideal because they usually did not reach the most needy social groups. As mentioned in our discussion of the land tax, only those who had land were registered. Similarly, in the case of relief distribution, only those who were registered could benefit by the public system of relief. For this group of landless, homeless, social outcast people, the only measure of relief they received was the soup kitchen gruel. Soup kitchens were encouraged by the government but were, actually only supported by private aid. Private aid sources were limited to individuals inspired by Buddhist ideals of benevolence and altruism.<sup>14</sup>

#### The North China Famine 1876-1879<sup>15</sup>

The so-called Great Famine of China, which kept north China in starvation conditions from 1876-1879, is estimated to have left nine to thirteen million dead.<sup>16</sup> For three years previous to the famine, there had been no rain and dry winds prevailed over the land. Precious top soil was removed and young crops were covered with dust. By autumn 1876, massive crop failures occurred and famine spread from Shantung in the east, to Chihli, Honan, Shensi and Shansi. By winter people resorted to digging huge pits in which as many as two hundred people could gather together to keep themselves warm; this effort would barely sustain life, however. Others, numbering about ten million, migrated to Manchuria or to Kiangsu in the south.

The diet of a people is a good indication of the progress of famine. In Shantung, Bohr reported that people first consumed all the corn or grains of millet, kaoliang or wheat they had available. Then they would eat grain husks, potato stalks, elms bark, turnip leaves and grass seeds. Then this supply was exhausted they would eat rotten kaoliang reeds from their roofs. In Shansi, cotton and grass seeds, bean cakes used for fertilizer and ground stone made into pellets were eaten, despite the inevitable pain and sickness that would follow. Finally in desperation, incidences of cannibalism spread and even murdering of kin:

Men brutally butchered their own kin, mothers devoured their children, elder brothers their youngest, a grandson chopped his grandmother to pieces, a niece boiled and ate her own aunt. The mangled remains of those thus cruelly murdered was brought in evidence to my yamen again and again. Well may men say that for hundreds of years there has not been known so strange a calamity.<sup>17</sup>

A severe degree of social dislocation also occurred. Children were sold, girls and wives often into prostitution; houses were dismantled for fuel and parts for consumption; banditry and pillage reached high proportions; countless numbers were simply abandoned by next of kin who had the strength to migrate.

#### Famine Policy

China's famine relief policy of 1876 was too little and too late according to foreign observers and missionaries there at the time. First of all, due to poor communications, the government did not even learn of the famine until late 1877. The government relied mostly on the contributions made by merchants and gentry, on private charity

organizations, and on the family cooperative spirit. In addition, the emperor made calls to reform along Confucian lines and offered prayers at the temples. Bohr is probably justified to berate the government for its meagre efforts. A more balanced picture, however, would point out the serious limitations of communications and transportation.

Some measures were effective. Cash was sent to some of the stricken provinces, especially to Chihli, and grain was transferred from government granaries and even from tribute grain shipments. Land taxes were remitted for Chihli, Shantung and Honan in 1877. Local officials in these provinces were asked to make house-to-house inspection of the needy to evaluate the extent of required relief. Grain was transferred from other surplus provinces to form direct grants to Shantung and Shansi.

Governor Ting Pao-chen supervised government relief in Shantung apparently quite effectively. In view of rising grain prices, he ordered the removal of grain import tariffs. He also sent officials to buy grain from Manchuria. Relief stations were kept open until spring 1877, and gentry and grain merchants were urged to sell grain cheaply and to open up food stations. According to Bohr, the gentry were more active in relief than the government. They gave donations more than twice that of the initial imperial grant. They made shelters, orphanages, and schools and distributed food and clothes in north Kiangsu for relief among migrants from Shantung. They gave larger cash doles than the government and made efforts to redeem women and children who had been sold.

The governor of Shansi, Tseng Kuo-Ch'uan, also acted quite effectively in obtaining famine relief in 1877. He imported grain from adjacent provinces, sent agents to buy grain from Manchuria, ordered

grain tribute diverted to Shansi and worked for faster and increased relief during winter months. Tseng also ordered imperial troops to protect grain shipments from banditry. Tseng reported to the government in January 1878 that 1,000 deaths per day were taking place and appealed for continued relief. The government consented and had grain sent from Shantung, which had barely recovered itself. Land taxes were also remitted in Shansi from 1877-1879.

The selling of ranks of office brought large sums of money. This practice has a long history and was the largest source of emergency revenues in the 1876-1879 famine. Merchant guilds were another source of private aid mobilized. Relief was planned to end by spring 1878, but it was felt it should be continued until late summer 1879.

#### Evaluation of the Famine of 1876-1877

The poor rating of government performance that Bohr and other observers gave can be understood by the magnitude of the problem and the response of traditional Chinese statecraft. The problems were momentous, particularly in Shansi, the area worst affected. Out of a total population of fifteen million, 5,500,000 died, and reportedly only 3,400,000 were assisted. The nature of the problems ranged from the technological to the administrative and institutional. In most of the region, the transport and communication problems were immense, and left plenty of room for corruption and mismanagement of relief at all levels. There was rampant banditry and thievery undermining the delivery of relief at the local levels, and corruption at the higher government levels.

In addition, Bohr holds that the population pressure on food resources in this area had reached an upper limit.

Since the late 18th century, China's delicate balance between numbers and food had been upset by a tremendous population increase that outstripped land and technological resources. China's population in the late 18th century had been estimated at no more than 300 million. Yet by 1850, it had more than doubled to 720 million. In the five stricken provinces alone, the population had jumped from 86 million in 1775 to 108 million in 1850. Hence, by 1876, population pressures on food resources had reached a point of vanishing returns. And even if the traditional relief machinery of the state, especially the granary systems, had worked effectively, relief would have been insufficient to relieve the suffering of nearly 100 million in the northern provinces.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, despite all the relief efforts made, Bohr felt that the traditional statecraft in China was insufficient to the task:

The Chinese concept of famine relief (pei-huang) was rooted in the economic canons of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, which assumed a purely cyclical economy that precluded the expansion of revenue. This static rural economy, the scarcity of capital, and the confused and complex currency system meant that by the time the agricultural economy had been hit by an enormous population increase, the lack of economic growth potential drove the already economically depressed masses even further into the depths of poverty. Confucian statecraft continued to stress the frugal use of agrarian taxes instead of the creation of new wealth as the major source of state revenues. Thus, when agricultural revenues were cut off through tax exemptions in the five afflicted provinces during the 1876-1879 famine, the state had no other means of revenue with which to mount a relief program.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the Confucian ideals of a moral government protecting the people, Bohr says that the state relied very much on the gentry, family and private organizations to deal with public welfare, and would only help out when serious disaster struck, and even then, relatively less than its capacity to mobilize funds. Bohr is quite critical of the Chinese government, perhaps because he was seeing life through a missionary's eyes (i.e. Timothy Richard).

Timothy Richard had viewed first-hand the horrors of the 1876-1879 famine and felt a paralytic frustration of not being capable of bringing fast relief. He says that one of the reasons why the government became concerned during severe disasters was based on a belief that disasters were signs from heaven of cosmic disorder caused by a dynasty's decay and negligence of Confucian ideals. It may also have to do with China's preoccupation with protecting its authority role.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, if one draws a comparison with India, the difference made by the Confucian tradition does become clear. The Chinese government did have a different orientation towards disaster relief than did the Indian government of the nineteenth century. Public welfare (ming-sheng) and benevolent government were at least shadows on the wall in the Chinese case.

When signs of famine were seen, the government's first reaction was to turn to these traditional Confucian forms. All departments of government were appealed to to reform their corrupt ways and the court set about offering prayers for rain. The emperor offered public prayers and had the prince burn incense at the Altar of Spirits and of the Land and Grain, where prayers were said in time of grave disaster. In efforts to propitiate heaven, edicts were sent out to prohibit extravagant expenditures on celebrations and banquets, and an injunction passed to forbid the consumption of meat at the palace and to bar imperial officials from eating more than one meal a day during the famine. One could argue that these were trivial measures with little practical effect, yet their symbolic importance far outweighed their apparent effect. The actions of prayer and penance underscored the willingness to uphold the Confucian traditional order and to maintain legitimacy of rule

based upon it. Famines had to be contended with at the practical level, but more importantly for the sake of the preservation of authority's legitimacy, at the symbolic level. Hence prayers came first.

### The Famine of 1920-1922

Forty-four years after the famine of 1876-1879, famine hit the same region in the north. By the time the North China famine hit in 1920-1922, the vulnerability of the northern Chinese ecosystem to droughts and famines had become well-known. After the famine of 1876-1879, the famine of 1892-1894 left approximately one million dead and famine struck again in 1900. (Even after the famine of 1920-1922, famine would again hit the region in 1928-32). The provinces of Chihli, Honan, Shantung, Shansi and Shensi were struck in that order of severity. Famine conditions hit several areas in the fall of 1920, and by winter of 1920-1921, and estimated 48 million were in famine conditions. Gradually, famine spread to the central region of China in 1921-1922, mostly in the Yangtze River area.<sup>21</sup> In 1917, there had been a devastating flood in Chihli. During the following year, the rains failed. These extremes in weather conditions gave rise to extensive crop failures. In the central region, the areas affected were more dispersed. Here famine was caused by heavy rains, which caused rivers to overflow just at the time of the spring harvest.

Despite the extensive area covered by famine conditions, fewer mortalities occurred than in the famine of 1876-1879. There were an estimated 500,000 deaths in the famine of 1920-1922, as compared to 9-13 million deaths in the famine of 1876-1879. The major difference can be

attributed to the international aid received and the use of the railroad in the later famine. Nevertheless, the numbers of famine-stricken out of the total provincial population were quite large.

<u>Province</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Destitute</u>
Chihli	18,819,653	8,836,722
Honan	11,461,791	4,370,162
Shantung	7,488,000	3,827,380
Shansi	4,569,497	1,616,890
Shensi	6,504,834	1,243,960
	<u>48,843,775</u>	<u>19,895,114</u>

The severity of the famine was evaluated by several symptoms. Investigators made a survey of household food supplies and found people subsisting on:

K'ang mixed with wheat blade, flour made of ground leaves, Fuller's earth, flower seeds, poplar buds, corn cobs, Hung Chin Tsai (steamed balls of some wild herb), sawdust, thistles, leaf dust, poisonous tree bean, kaoliang husks, cotton seeds, elm bark, bran cakes (very unpalatable), peanut hulls, sweet potato vines ground (considered a great delicacy), roots, and stone ground up into flour to piece out the ground leaves.<sup>23</sup>

They also witnessed houses being torn down in order to sell the timber for food and use the roofs for fuel. Animals were noticeably absent. Children were sold as servants and wives as prostitutes. An estimated one million migrated to cities or other districts.

#### Famine Relief Policy

The government efforts were greatly enhanced by the work of the Peking International United International Famine Relief Commission, to which most of the credit for the largely successful handling of the



relief effort in this famine was due. For its part, the government remitted fees on the transport of grain reducing costs by 25%. In addition, grain was mobilized from Manchuria, North Kiangsu and Anhwei. Some of it was purchased directly (53 million tons) and shipped free at a cost to the government of \$1 million per day. Some was purchased by contract with grain companies who took the responsibility for delivery. The government placed a surtax on the Maritime Customs in order to help cover its costs.

Famine relief was largely handled by the Peking United International Famine Relief Commission (PUIFRC), which was a combination of foreign and Chinese relief organizations.<sup>24</sup> The PUIFRC utilized a wide range of famine relief methods and engaged as many existing agencies and organizations as possible. Their distribution effort was centered at one location in a large district at an estimated 5,000-12,000 portions of grain daily. However, in areas where transport was too difficult, money grants were given. Approximately 20 catties of grain (kaoliang, millet or corn) per person per day were distributed free of charge to some three million people. In general, soup kitchens were not established, in preference to home delivery for the very destitute. For those who could not go to the food relief centers, an effort was mounted to encourage them to stay at home rather than recruit them in to refugee camps where the chances of epidemics would have been great. The Famine Commission undertook seeding in full to ensure a summer harvest. They established schools for children victimized by famine and distributed money for the family through the child in an effort to curb the sale of children. The Commission made an effort to visit homes on a spot-check basis, to study

the effectiveness of the method of famine relief. In addition, various handicraft industries were taught to women, who were paid for their labor. Similarly, reconstruction projects of various types were begun, such as road construction, irrigation digging, bridge repair, tree planting, and dike-building.

In contrast to the relief effort of 1876-79, this one was characterized by a humanitarian spirit. Famine victims were classified into two basic categories: first-degree severity, i.e. those with no resources, and second-degree severity, i.e. those having some resources. In speaking of the latter group, the Commission wrote:

This group comprised the backbone of the country life and were the ones who, if helped, would be the greatest good to the country. Humanitarian grounds, however, compelled the passing by of this group and the giving of relief to those completely destitute even though they might be of less value to the community.<sup>25</sup>

The relief effort was not without problems, however. The major problems of the relief effort stemmed from the political situation. This period of Republican China was one of weak central rule. The granary system, which had been decaying, was practically gone by 1920. Effective power was in the hands of warlords who dominated various regions of the country. These local power-holders opposed the movements of grain from their territories and were supported in their efforts by peasants anxious about their food supply and speculations looking for ways to make a profit.<sup>26</sup>

For example, in December 1920, a group of speculators went to the grain surplus area of Manchuria, bought large stocks of grain and brought

it to the famine-stricken province of Chihli. There they simply deposited their supplies in the station of the capital city and stopped free grain from reaching the market, while they waited for prices to go up.<sup>27</sup>

In 1921, a group of military chiefs managed to stop some of the vehicles on the railroad which transported relief food and seeds to famine areas. Also in 1921, General Li Liec-chun refused to export rice from the rich rice area of southwest Hunan to other provinces stricken with famine.

The crucial difference between the 1877 and 1920 famine relief efforts was where emphasis was placed in the system of food control. In the case of the former famine, the government relied on grain reserves, whereas in the second case, it relied on grain distribution by means of the railroad system and merchants.<sup>28</sup> However, despite the political situation of the 1920s, the relief efforts were more successful both due to the increased mobility of grain provided by the railroad system the wider international scope of aid sources, and the flexibility and openness of a system not as hampered by the traditional statecraft.

### Social Protest Related to Food

#### Conditions of Decline

Towards the latter half of the Ch'ing period, the central government's control over and responsibility towards the food supply began to decline due to a number of factors. Foreign influence had increased by this time, and China's balance of trade with foreign countries shifted largely in its disfavor because of a high demand for

opium in China. China used silver to purchase its expensive imports and this led to inflation. In addition, corruption, especially after the K'ang Hsi emperor (1662-1772), was seeping into all levels of government and interfering with bureaucratic efficiency. The government had become very extravagant and sold offices in order to pay expenses. Taxation levies became increasingly arbitrary as local officials used corrupt means to obtain profits as tax-collectors.

Moreover, the population increased from the mid-nineteenth century. According to some estimates, it more than doubled since the mid-eighteenth century. This trend led to increased pressure on the land. Peasants could not yet go into Manchuria at this time. Most of the population experienced a decline in their standard of living. The mainstays against famine and disaster, the granaries and dike-repair were increasingly neglected. By the mid-nineteenth century, many granaries were left empty. Natural disasters when they occurred, therefore, led to great social unrest and disruption and disenchantment with the government.

Merchants gained a greater degree of control over the flow, quantity and price of foods available as an elaborate network of markets developed. The central government tried to place strict regulations on the merchants and marketing, but trends towards the commercialization of the economy continued. The granaries were increasingly neglected to the point where many were left empty by the mid-nineteenth century. Those consumers who were dependent on marketed food became vulnerable to price increases. These increases could have been caused by supply shortages, but also by food hoarders and speculators who sought to make a profit when demand was high and supplies low. Those who used to depend on the

granaries were forced to buy their food on the market when granary supplies dwindled.

Those who were without sufficient food did not automatically turn to rebellion. As we have seen, there were strong deterrents to revolt. Strong moral and legal sanctions stood in the path to disobey authority. However, conditions in mid-Ch'ing were favorable to rebellion since the fabric of government sanctions was loosening and conditions affecting the supply and distribution of food to those living at a marginal subsistence level were worsening. Hsiao sums up the attitude of most starving people as follows:

For when the choice was between immediate death and 'treading the dangerous path', the decision was not very difficult to make.<sup>29</sup>

#### Food and Rebellions

Many of China's well-known rebellions in the Ch'ing to early Republican periods were associated with deteriorating food conditions. In the Taiping, Nien and Boxer Rebellions, conditions of food shortage and famine played a very important role in fomenting unrest and an increasing dissatisfaction with officialdom. This becomes apparent by examining the example of the Nien rebels, for example.

The stronghold of the Nien rebels, the area north of the Huai River, was part of the North China Plain. This area had been a famine area, especially in the early 1850s.<sup>30</sup> The Nien rebels won over large numbers of desperate people. In this area earthen walled communities had been built under the direction of the provincial authorities for the

protection of individuals. These communities developed into autonomous units which, e.g. could collect their own taxes. The Nien won over the chiefs of the communities and concentrated on encouraging food production among the landowners, who would then be obliged to give half their produce to the Nien. Famine in this area from 1853-1862, caused starving peasants to turn to the Nien, who held out the promise of more consistent food supplies and less corrupt leadership. The Nien had developed into a military organization by 1856. They used the strategy of supporting local grievances against the local authorities and feeding the masses in their area, and thereby enlisting their support. They obtained their supplies by the grain demanded of landowners under their rule and by plundering government grain stocks. Since provision of food supplies was a key to their great popular support, in fighting them, the government tried to attack their food supplies directly. Although this strategy did not work, eventually, the government managed to cut them off from some of their supplies by forming a blockade and eventually crushed the rebellion.

#### Food and Riots

Riots over excessive taxes were common in the late Ch'ing period and increased since the Opium War. They were indirectly food-related, since the rate of taxation was inversely related to the amount of food surplus or reserve left for the tax-payer. Riots concerning taxes and debts frequently occurred in the time of famines and food shortages.

The immediate cause of tax riots was usually extortion on the part of officials. The form of such riots varied from impeding the tax collectors from carrying out their levies, to taking them to court for

excess levies, to violent acts against the tax or local officials. Such riots occurred in Chekiang (1842), Hunan (1843), Kiangsu (1850s), Honan (1854-1855) and nearby Peking (18702).<sup>31</sup> In various provinces causes have been reported of villagers beating and even killing tax collectors and magistrates. In an incident in Chekiang in 1870, a magistrate and his entire family were killed.<sup>32</sup> One of the official responses to contend with growing unrest and more frequent tax riots was to legitimize the t'uan, which were "natural local units", into the official system by allowing them to carry on the tax functions they already had begun to assume.

Another local organization, the lang-yueh ("lang" league), underwent an interesting functional transformation due to the food shortages. The lang-yueh was organization of associations formed by villages as a form of local security in the face of decreasing protection from the weakening local administration. They were said to execute bandits without recourse to judicial process.

Around harvest time every year, meetings would be held for every group of lang-yueh led by commoners, in order to map out strategies of how to protect their crop. There was prolonged food shortage in Hunan in the late 1840s. Relief food was shipped from Kweichow where rice prices rose rapidly. Officials thereupon decided the peasants would pay higher taxes since they were getting high prices and promptly raised taxes. When the harvest returned in Hunan, and prices fell in Kweichow, they did not reduce taxes accordingly, which spelled great hardship for the peasants.

Unrest occurred. The lang-yueh then made a turnabout and adopted the role of organizing peasants for tax resistance. In 1852, leaders spread their control over ten to thousands of households. The lang-yueh, therefore, came to resemble the so-called pao-lan, which were organizations to fight excessive taxes, and actually assumed sole power to collect taxes.<sup>33</sup> They eventually even formed a militia of loosely-organized peasants and attacked the provincial officials. However, the better-armed and organized militia of the provincial authority eventually suppressed the lang-yueh.

In addition to the pao-lan and the lang involvement in tax resistance, there was the t'ang. The t'ang of the mid-nineteenth century were associated with the rebel group of the heterodox Heaven and Earth Society called the Triads. They were an organization of households whose interests were upheld by the "rice host" (mi-fan-chu), whose position was based on his ability to maintain a grain treasury for members through banditry practices.

The t'ang became active in armed tax resistance riots (k'ang-liang), especially in the south. The common goal of members was to protect their t'ang from the taxing authorities which meant using some of their resources for militarization. Occasionally, t'ang would band together with other t'ang to enlarge their forces.

It is easy to see why the central authority would be threatened by both the pao-lan and t'ang, since they could effectively enclose themselves from official influence. This actually happened in parts of central and western Kwangsi, where more t'ang banded together forcing a cut-off from official tax agents for a decade.



There were also riots directly related to obtaining food. Examples parallel to what Tilly called "retributive food riots" took place in many places. Crowds beat officials, burned their homes and granaries, and in one example, burned the boat which carried tribute. This last example overlaps with the form of riot which Tilly called the "blockage food riot", since it was aimed at preventing grain from leaving the local area. There were numerous cases of such "blockage food riots" along rivers and at ports and other junctures of food supply and food export.<sup>34</sup>

Rioting also occurred where there had been prolonged or acute food shortage and food relief was not forthcoming or was delayed. Riots would begin when the hungry banded together forming a sizeable group, then proceeded to seize rice directly from a grain source. They raided granaries and would attack a well-known wealthy family or known hoarder, at times using violent and destructive means. Whoever had grain stores was vulnerable to attack, and it was not uncommon that the family's grain was taken and its possessions and property destroyed. In the early nineteenth century, when rice had become expensive in Kwantung province, a rice riot broke out when a group of hungry poor went begging door-to-door and had been refused food. After famine had struck a poor district of farmers in Kiangsu in 1832, mobs formed to go around seizing rice from wherever they could obtain it. Similar incidents were recorded for the province in 1899 and 1911, when all the wealthy households of two districts were raided for rice.<sup>35</sup>

An example of a food riot in Chihli showed that at times political authority was fearfully aware that a hungry crowd could easily form a revolt and authority should handle them with restraint. In 1801, there had been flooding and then famine in Chihli (in Ting Chou). A crowd pleaded with a wealthy man known to be hoarding grain to loan them some. When their request was refused, the crowd began to break in and help themselves. The provincial authority considered sending in troops to restore order, but fearing this could provoke a revolt, decided to send an emissary instead. The emissary delivered a lecture on Confucian principles and light punishments were administered. Apparently the strategy was successful in bringing the outbreak to a peaceful solution. However, such examples of restraint on the part of authority were rare.<sup>36</sup> In most cases the alleged ring-leaders were executed.

In another case of peasant protest related to famine, merchant moneylenders from Shensi had demanded peasants from north Szechwan to repay their debts despite the fact that there had been famine conditions. Peasants were unable to pay their debts and the moneylenders approached the court. The magistrate was lenient and forgave the debts. When the moneylenders threatened to repeat their charges when a new magistrate arrived, a group of peasants attempted to force the merchant moneylenders away. Another magistrate arrived on the scene and arrested and killed the leaders of the peasant group.<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to observe that the target of food-related rioting was usually the lowest level of officialdom, i.e. the local magistrate. This might be explained by the simple fact that higher officials were more remote, but Hsiao feels that in the mind of the rebel, the imperial

authority was not blameworthy. Instead he implies, rebels clearly blamed corrupt local officials.

In a typical riot scenario, the rioters would petition their grievances before the local officials; usually this would bring about no changes. Rioting would ensue, followed by either suppression or a larger-scale revolt. In one example from the late nineteenth century, Hsiao described how rioters sought revenge on local officials who had levied the tax and collected what was considered excessive charges. About twenty-thousand rural villagers marched on the city mandarins and seized the property of the wealthy. Furniture, silk, rare objects were all tossed into a huge bonfire. However, they guarded the imperial treasury to make sure no harm should come to it.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, the reason rioters targeted whom they did was because of a sense that authority had exceeded its correct bounds. Hence popular officials might be spared attack. Hsiao states:

The Chinese people have in numberless instances risen in opposition to their local rulers, but it has been an uprising against abuses of the system of government, never against the system itself. They have been known to deal with a local magistrate... in a most democratic and unceremonious manner; have gone so far as to pull his queue and slap his face; but it was not because of the exercise on his part of lawful authority, but because he had exceeded it.<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, however, there are not enough detailed accounts of riots to make any firm conclusions about their causes, motivation, size or duration. It is not possible to know the precise timing of when rioting took place in relationship to famine, whether the rioting crowd

was mostly made up of those who were starving or simply those opposed to the local authority or local elite. An exceptionally well-analyzed riot is the Changsha rice riot of Hunan.<sup>40</sup> It sheds light on some of these issues and will therefore be discussed briefly below.

### The Changsha Rice Riot

The rice riot of Changsha, Hunan, broke out in the spring of 1910, about half a year following a harvest failure. Hunan province was generally a rice surplus region, and surrounding provinces relied on grain imports from Hunan. However, in the fall of 1909, heavy rainfall flooded the major rice-producing area and an estimated one million persons were victimized. Relief from the imperial and provincial governments was inadequate and slow to arrive. The fact that Hunan was normally a rice-exporting region worked to its disadvantage, since channels to supply other areas struck by flooding and crop failure were considered first, e.g. Hupei. Hoarding and speculation caused rice prices to rise considerably. There were no reserves on hand, because they had been used towards the building of the Canton-Hankow railroad.

The political setting of the rice riot is seen as particularly important for understanding this particular riot. There was a major conflict of interest between the imperial government as represented by the provincial governor of Hunan (Ts'en Ch'un-ming), and the gentry. Despite differences within the gentry, it shared certain characteristics: its members were from the upper gentry; they had gradually replaced their foothold in their eroding traditional power bases with one in commerce, industry, and the new educational system. They opposed modernization and foreign interests. The situation of the peasantry in this region had

been gradually worsening. After taxes went up in 1901, due to the Boxer Rebellion, "a disproportionate share fell on the peasants and common people."<sup>41</sup>

There was a much higher percentage of tenants in the 1900s as compared with the 1700s, i.e. 70%-80% compared to 50%-60%. The conclusion drawn by Evelyn Rawski that rising rice prices in the 1700s had actually enabled Hunan tenants to improve their standard of living, was no longer true by the 1800s, according to Rosenbaum.

Whatever the exact position of the peasantry, one fact stands out. Despite the surpluses, a bad harvest such as those of 1906, 1909, and 1910, could drive many peasants to the brink of disaster. The problem was not absolute scarcity but unequal distribution, hoarding and price manipulation by the gentry.<sup>42</sup>

In other words, the scarcity exacerbated the existing unequal distribution. The scenario of the rice riot itself was as follows. A crowd of two hundred peasants requested a certain popular prefect named Kuo, to open the granaries and reduce the price of rice. The prefect's efforts to do so were opposed, however, by his superiors. One of his superiors, Ts'en, threatened to use repressive measures rather than to comply with the peasants' wishes.

A crowd came together again, only to be pacified once again by Kuo. However, the arrest of a carpenter on charges of slandering the government incited the crowd once again. Their number grew to two thousand. Once again Kuo managed to pacify them.

When the police arrived on the scene and threatened repressive measures, the crowd became rowdy. Officials opposed to Ts'en incited the

crowd, which pushed its way to Governor Ts'en's yamen (administrative quarters), breaking the gate and hurling bricks at the guards. Clear concessions from the government were made such as opening the granaries and lowering the rice prices, but the crowd rejected them, because they were being directed by conservative gentry who sought to depose Ts'en.

Eventually the riot turned into a strike led by certain gentry members. Ts'en was forced to negotiate. He rejected the gentry demands, who in turn directed an attack on the governor's yamen. The crowd burned Ts'en's yamen and then set about destroying other government yamens, which to them symbolized foreign homes and institutions. Ts'en finally resigned and a new governor who had the support of the gentry replaced him. Peking sent an army to the area and appointed its own candidate, Yang Wen-ting, to succeed Ts'en. Once in office, Yang proceeded to build evidence against the gentry in its version of who instigated the rice riot.

Apparently in the closing years of the Ch'ing dynasty, there were many riots, including rice riots. One writer cites 285 riots in 1910 alone. Yet he recognizes the complexity of factors involved in these riots.

The massive scale of these revolts reflects strains engendered by crop failures superimposed upon tensions created by Western imperialism, the decline of dynastic authority and the process of reform that weakened traditional authority and increased taxation.<sup>43</sup>

Food Crises and The Legitimacy of Authority in China

Rebellions and famines were certainly capable of posing a threat to the legitimacy of authority, even if the more localized food protest was not, as seen above. Many of the forms of protest in Chinese history, from the sporadic cases of banditry to the larger-scale more organized rebellion, were associated with the secret societies and heterodox sects. Some of these groups date back at least to the early Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 23) period, and many became most active during the Ch'ing period. They played an important role in the Taiping, Nien and Boxer movements, as well as in the 1911 overthrow of the Ch'ing dynasty by Sun Yat-sen. They responded to the need to succor the peasants, who became increasingly vulnerable to the consequences of weakened central rule, e.g. banditry. Most, if not all, expressed opposition to the government and were anti-Manchu or anti-Confucian.<sup>44</sup>

It is important to note, however, that such food crises in themselves did not threaten the legitimacy of authority. While they opposed the government, a more careful examination of their structure and ideals indicates how strikingly similar they were to the ideal functioning of the Ch'ing government. One may hypothesize, therefore, that they are more of an effort to recreate the ideal imperial social organization and institutions in order to restore the Heavenly Mandate. Seen in this perspective, their efforts to remove the traditional social order to herald in a new one were very closely connected to the traditional pattern of legitimate authority.

The secret societies were diametrically opposed to the Confucian order and its social conventions. But at the same time, they set out to create, at least symbolically, a system of rules and political conventions as complete as the one they opposed... In short, they mirrored established society while constituting--for hundreds of years--the principal force of political opposition and religious dissent.<sup>45</sup>

This can be pointed out as well by examining the Taiping actual and ideal structure and ideology. They expressed ideals of social and economic equality. Their program was written up in "The Land System of the Heavenly Dynasty," which envisioned an ideal distribution of land and food.

All lands in the empire must be cultivated by all the people in the empire as a common concern. If there is a deficiency of land in one place, the people must be removed to another; and if there is a deficiency of land in another place, the people must be removed to this place. The yields of all the land in the empire, whether the crops are good or bad, should be universally circulated. If there is a famine at one place, the [surplus food] of the place yielding good crops must be transported to relieve the famine-stricken place, and vice versa. The purpose is to enable all the people in the empire to enjoy together the abundant happiness provided by the Heavenly Father, Lord on High, and Sovereign God. If there is land, it shall be shared by all to till; if there is any food, clothing, or money, these shall be shared by all. In this way all places will share the abundance equally and all will be equally well fed and clothed.<sup>46</sup>

There was an elaborate system of land gradations and the needs of each household member were considered. There was no discrimination based on sex, women and men were entitled to the same amount of land. There was to be collective ownership of crops, which would be regulated by means of a sacred treasury which was then redistributed. This was decreed as early as 1851.



However, although they recruited from all walks of life and ideally did not discriminate between the sexes, their actual social organization was very hierarchized along the lines of a replicated "dynasty", which they claimed to have founded.<sup>47</sup> There was a supreme ruler, a ranked civil and military elite, and the commoners. The same ideal traditional social categories were referred to, i.e. scholars, farmers, artisans and merchants, but in reality, here as in the "corrupt world", peasants were on the bottom. These social distinctions were reinforced by sumptuary laws and "salary was expressed quantity of meat. A wang was entitled to ten pounds of meat and others received smaller amounts according to their rank".<sup>48</sup> The ideology was imbued with concepts from the Classics and Confucian texts.<sup>49</sup> The Taipings also had a civil examination system in which women could participate.

CHAPTER EIGHT : CONCLUSIONS

Our case studies of Japan and China have demonstrated the crucial importance of food control in the building of the modern state. Food has served as a tracer to examine the social processes which shaped the particular kinds of states that emerged in these Asian countries. While other studies in the political development literature have indicated the importance of such variables as the control over the means of violence as critical to the establishment of a modern state, our study adds "food" to such a list of variables.<sup>1</sup> In addition, while the example of the control over a military is indicative of a punitive power of the developing state, the importance of control over food shows that the state's "power to grant" is as important as the "power to punish."

In our study, the relationship between food control and state-building has been shown to be important in three key areas:

1. power-gaining and the maintenance of legitimacy by political authority,
2. competition among interest groups, which may form alliances with or against political authority, and
3. handling food crises, including food-related popular protest and natural disasters such as famines, by the political authority.

In China, where traditionally, food held a focussed and explicit place in the legitimacy of authority, the political system of the empire had remarkable endurance up to the emergence of the modern state. In contrast, food was not in as sharp focus in the legitimacy systems of Japan and Europe, where the state-building processes were characterized by conflict and change. The modern states of these countries were forged by greater societal tensions bred by relatively greater interest group conflict in comparison to China. These contrasting examples of the correlation between food control and state-building processes might seem surprising in light of the relative greater frequency and severity of famines and rebellions in China's history. What enabled the Chinese political system to absorb these shocks, and why were the Japanese and European systems less capable of handling less severe shocks? Some of the reasons for these patterns of state-building as they relate to food control have come to light through our study. We shall next turn to discuss our findings.

Food was an explicit part of the legitimacy of the Chinese imperial state, and political authority took responsibility for the provision of food for the people. There were several factors which permitted the state to uphold its legitimacy, despite its inability to ensure constant supplies of food.

First, China had a bureaucratic system of rule, which offered positions of prestige and wealth to those who proved themselves through the examination system. The diminished importance of land to power in China in comparison to Japan and Europe made it less likely that strong regional powers would continue to undermine central rule, which was the

case in Japan and Europe. The removal of this control over a basic food resource, land, was a key to controlling potential opposition groups. Political authorities throughout history have understood this strategy, e.g. both French King Louis XIV, who removed all the landed nobility to Versailles and Japan's Tokugawa Ieyasu, who forced all daimyo to spend every alternate year in Edo, had the purpose of removing the elite from its power base. However, few have been able to manage this task so effectively as China, and the bureaucratic system seems to be the key to China's success.

Secondly, the bureaucratic system developed a managerial capacity among the gentry at the local level and among the scholar-officials at the central level of authority. Thus highly trained personnel made the awesome administrative duties of collecting taxes and regulating food in a huge empire manageable. The relatively high degree of unity and peace achieved by Tokugawa was also related to the extension of public education.

Thirdly, the greater social mobility in China as compared to Japan, encouraged the social integration of classes rather than competition among classes.<sup>2</sup> Theoretically, in China, anyone could try to advance themselves through the education system. Positions of prestige were ideally based on merit rather than on birth, as was the case in Japan and Europe. Even wealthy merchants were not forced to compete, since they would buy degrees. In short, interest group competition in China over food resources was low relative to that in Japan and Europe.

Fourthly, food control, as part of an imperial system in China, facilitated intra-regional grain distribution even before the extensive

development of private marketing structures. Although relatively crude, China did have developed transport networks in order to convey tax grain from all over the empire. These could equally be used for shipping grain from surplus to deficit areas when food shortages occurred. However, one should not diminish the difficulties of these tasks in view of the cumbersome transport and communication channels in China as late as the twentieth century.

Furthermore, food control as part of the imperial system enabled China to establish a granary system, a salt monopoly, and land distribution measures. Although the latter policies were not as successful as the first two, the traditional inheritance practice of equal division of land among male heirs compensated for the weakness of the land policies to some extent. Undeniably, the inheritance practice meant hardship for poor peasant landowners. Nevertheless, it served the function of setting an upper limit on land concentration among the wealthy landowning families. The salt monopoly was a major source of state revenues, particularly invaluable during periods when the land tax could not be collected regularly. Japanese governments were unable to harness the merchants to obtain regular revenues from them. The best the Tokugawa governments could do was to exact forced loans from the wealthier merchants, but even the benefits of this measure were largely undone by other privileges granted merchants. The merchants in Japan grew very powerful, partly by virtue of their ability to form strong guilds, as was also the case for European merchants. The answer to the question why the Japanese merchants could form strong guilds while the merchants in China could not, probably rests in the relatively greater

independence of the Japanese merchants under the feudal system. The granary system, when it functioned well, also helped in food distribution and relief in time of shortage or famine. Although not all granaries were supplied by the government, those gentry who contributed to granary reserves acted out of a sense of goodness as defined by the Neo-Confucian state orthodoxy, and thus upheld the system.

Finally, the imperial system of China to some extent gave a legitimate place to protest, including food protest, through the Mandate of Heaven theory. The imperial system could not constantly function as ideally conceived. Inevitably food shortages and famines would occur in certain regions of the empire. These events and related popular unrest tested the legitimacy which claimed to provide for the people. However, this potential threat was also partly absorbed by the political system through the legitimation of rebellion in the Mandate theory. By defining certain conditions under which rebellions were justifiable, people could rebel without necessarily threatening the foundations of the political authority's legitimacy. The imperial system withstood many potential threats by absorbing them in one way or another. When it finally collapsed, external foreign influences of the Western powers played a more important role than internal factors. China, therefore, provided a case where food was not as important to the development of the modern state as in Japan or Europe.

In Japan, on the other hand, the de facto political authority rested on military power, which when established, derived a traditional legitimacy from the politically weak but symbolically strong emperor. Food control was managed through a feudal rather than an imperial

system. Lacking a developed bureaucracy, political authorities in Japan had to rely on the daimyo to extract the taxes from the peasantry. These taxes formed the bulk of state revenues. The daimyo, unlike the gentry in China, did have substantial landholdings which formed the basis of their wealth and power. They used their land and the food it produced for their own purposes, independent of the interests of central authority.

An important part of their legitimacy to rule derived from their nurturance of those below them. Land and the food produced were thus cause for many centuries of contention among various clans in the pre-feudal era and among daimyo in the feudal era. Centralized rule was established now and again, but was always undermined by powerful regional forces organized by the big families. Food protest was part of the long years of fighting among clans, and since the political system did not condone rebellion, protest would climax in a radical transformation of the state. As a result of this dynamic tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces, the feudal system evolved, with the central authority becoming gradually stronger and able to control increasingly more food resources. The Tokugawa era represents the climax of these trends in the feudal system. The fact that it remained feudal, however, meant that the daimyo maintained relative autonomy over their fiefs. The Tokugawa government, however, designed policies to control the daimyo to a greater extent than previously. Such measures included the important step of removing them from their fiefs, their bases of power. The Shogunate government also made them and their retainers, the samurai, dependent upon the government for their stipends and salaries. The income of the elite, therefore, depended on its ability to extract resources from the

peasants. The legitimacy of the elite, which had been based on the nurturance of the peasants, faced a crisis as a result of increasing demands from the central authority. The crisis eventually took the form of food riots all over Japan in the later half of Tokugawa. There were also tensions between the daimyo and the central authority, since the latter controlled the rice which was the medium of salary payment for some time into the Tokugawa period. Finally, tensions between the emergent merchant class and the traditional elite, together with famines and food protest in the late Tokugawa period, brought about the fall of Tokugawa and the creation of the modern state bureaucracy in Meiji.

For Europe, one could actually trace different state-building processes for each country, or describe a more generalized pattern for East and West Europe, respectively. In the existing literature, Charles Tilly has done extensive work on Europe. Our task was to expand on Tilly's seminal work on the subject of food and state-building by providing comparative studies from the Asian context. Our findings from Japan and China indicate the overall validity of Tilly's approach and the relevance of variables chosen for Europe. Furthermore, we have modified Tilly's historical approach by presenting a political science approach. Our approach takes advantage of variables shown to be important for Europe by Tilly and Thompson, as well as adds to them to include the variables of food and its relationship to the legitimacy of authority, interest group competition over food resources, and famines and food shortages were added to food protest, which was Tilly's focus.



FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

State-Building and the Politics of Food

- <sup>1</sup> Gibbon, Edward, The Decline of the Roman Empire, (N.Y.: Dell Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 122-123.
- <sup>2</sup> Tilly, Louise, "The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 2 (Summer 1971): 23-59.
- <sup>3</sup> The New York Times: 19 Jan. 1977, p. 7; 20 Jan. 1977, p. 1; 21 Jan. 1977, p. 3; 18 April 1977, p. 8; 20 April 1980, p. 10.
- <sup>4</sup> The New York Times: 19 April 1973, p. 1; 29 April 1973, p. 1; 24 June 1973, p. 1; 8 July 1973, p. 4; 16 Sept. 1973, p. 1; 19 Sept. 1973, p. 1; 13 Jan. 1974, p. 2; 14 Jan. 1974, p. 2; 19 Jan. 1974, p. 7; 20 Jan. 1974, Sec. 4, p. 2; 25 Jan. 1974, p. 1; 10 Feb. 1974, p. 1; 11 Feb. 1974, p. 2; 13 Feb. 1974, p. 6; 17 Feb. 1974, Sec. 4, p. 3; 24 Feb. 1974, p. 1; 19 Mar. 1975, p. 4; 20 Mar. 1975, p. 6; 21 Mar. 1975, p. 1; 3 April 1975, p. 1.
- <sup>5</sup> The New York Times, 2 Dec. 1971, p. 1.
- <sup>6</sup> The New York Times, 15 Jan. 1979, p. 3.
- <sup>7</sup> The New York Times, 25 June 1976, p. 1; 26 June 1976, pp. 1, 5; 18 Sept. 1976, p. 4; 21 Jan. 1977, p. 1; 24 Aug. 1980, p. 1; 24 Aug. 1980, Sec. 4, p. 1; 29 Aug. 1980, p. 1; 7 Sept. 1980, Sec. 4, p. 4.
- <sup>8</sup> Feldman, Herbert, "Aid as Imperialism?" International Affairs 43 (2), (1967): 219-236.  
  
Idem, From Crisis to Crisis, Pakistan 1962-1969 (London: Oxford University, 1972).
- <sup>9</sup> Wriggins, Howard W., Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960).  
  
Snodgrass, Donald R., Ceylon: an Export Economy in Transition (Homewood, IL.: R.D. Irwin, 1966).

DeSilva, Mervyn, "Sri Lanka: the End of Welfare Politics," South Asia Review 6 (2), (Jan. 1973): 91-109.

Wilson, A. Jeyaratnam, Politics in Sri Lanka 1947-1973 (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1974).

Note: President J.R. Jayewardena has now replaced the rice subsidy with a system of food stamps in an effort to eliminate the rich from benefitting from the subsidy along with the poor.  
The New York Times, 11 Sept. 1979, p. 13.

- 10 Thompson, E.P., "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," Past and Present, No. 50 (Feb. 1971), pp. 76-456.

11 Ibid.

- 12 Almond, Gabriel A. and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1966).

Binder, Leonard, et al., Crises and Sequences in Political Development (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), especially:

Pye, Lucian W., Chapt. 4: "The Legitimacy Crisis," pp. 135-159;

LaPalombara, Joseph, Chapt. 6: "Penetration: A Crisis of Governmental Capacity," pp. 205-233.

LaPalombara, Joseph, Capt. 7: "Distribution: A Crisis of Resource Management," pp. 233-283.

Ilchman, Warren F. and Normal T. Uphoff, The Political Economy of Change (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1971).

Pye, Lucian W., Aspects of Political Development (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

Weber, Max, Economy and Society, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittick, Vol. 2, (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1978).

Note: Historical scholarship on subjects related to our study comprise the bulk of citations throughout this text and thus will not be referred to here.

- 13 There have been periods of serious food shortages during the Communist era, although at present the contours of the food situation are not well understood.

PART I : JAPAN

- <sup>1</sup> Absolutism or "autocracy" is taken to mean "a government or polity in which a single governor has or claims unlimited power", International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, David L. Sills, ed., Vol. 1 (N.Y.: Macmillan Co. & The Free Press, 19 ), s.v. "Absolutism", "Autocracy" by C.W. Cassinelli, pp. 478-480.

CHAPTER TWO : Food Not Explicit to the Legitimacy of Authority:

- <sup>1</sup> Sansom, G.B., Japan: A Short Cultural History (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1952), p. 53
- <sup>2</sup> Imperial rule in Japan is said to exist since 660 B.C. when it was established in the region of Yamato by a legendary warrior figure, Jimmu. However, the date is not taken seriously by many scholars, who put the date later. See Sansom, Cultural History, p.28.
- <sup>3</sup> Strayer, J. R., On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970).
- <sup>4</sup> Webb, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, "Assize of Bread", The Economic Journal (June 1904): 196-218.
- Ross, Alan S.C., "The Assize of Bread," Economic History Review, Second Series, 9 (2), (1956): 332-342.
- <sup>5</sup> Rice for the Japanese granaries was at first collected from all subjects, but in the Taiho era (702 A.D.) a new law stipulated that rice be collected only from the middle and upper classes
- Footnote on giso reference.
- <sup>6</sup> Bellah, Robert N., Tokugawa Religion: the Values of Pre-Industrial Japan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p.21.
- <sup>7</sup> DeBary, William T., ed., Sources of Japanese Tradition, Vol. 1, "Emperor Nintoku and His Rule of Benevolence," (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 66-67.
- <sup>8</sup> Hane, Mikiso, Japan, A Historical Survey (N.Y.: Scribners, 1972).
- <sup>9</sup> Tsukahira, Toshio G., Feudal Control in Tokugawa Japan: the Sankin Kotai System, East Asia Research Center Monograph, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1966).
- <sup>10</sup> Sankin-kotai service was not revised to less frequency before 1862.

- 11 Tsukahira, Feudal Control, p. .
- 12 Duus, Peter, Feudalism in Japan (N.Y.: Knopf, 1969).
- 13 See Smith, Thomas C., Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1959).
- 14 Note: In the Meiji period, those who cultivated the land came to be called "nonin" (farmers), a term more respectable than the term used formerly. Prior to the Meiji period, the term "hyakusho" (peasant) was used and had a derogatory connotation. The change in terminology marked an effort to elevate the cultivator's status in the Meiji period. (I owe the linguistic insight into this issue to Ms. Atsuko Shoji).
- 15 According to Norman E. Herbert, Japan's Emergence as a Modern State, (N.Y.: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940), p. 94.
- 16 Norman, Japan's Emergence, p. 165.

### CHAPTER THREE : Food Critical to Interest Group Competition

- 1 The ko could cover the extended family or several families. Fifty ko made up a village, defined administratively [ri or later go]. These had a chief who was in charge of these functions, too.  
  
Tarring, C.J., "Land Provisions of the Taiho Rio," Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan 8 (Dec. 1879): 145-155.
- 2 Hall, John Whitney, Government and Local Power in Japan 500 to 1700 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), p.7.
- 3 Based on Hall, Ibid, pp. 86-88.
- 4 See Tarring, Land Provisions.
- 5 Hall, Local Power, p. 100.
- 6 Ibid, p.8.
- 7 A kind of patriarchal rule characterized by groups of autonomous clans or uji. However, J.W. Hall disputes the use of the term "clan" for uji, claiming it is neither equivalent to the Germanic nor Chinese term; see Hall, Local Power, p. 6.
- 8 The non-imperial lands were ruled by other autonomous clans which accepted the traditional supreme authority of the emperor.

<sup>9</sup> By this time in China, given the special cultural and historical Chinese circumstances of the T'ang dynasty, a well-functioning bureaucracy had evolved. However, it did not work in a simple "borrow and apply" manner for Japan where social and political circumstances were quite different.

<sup>10</sup> Hall, Local Power, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> Boys received 2 tan of rice land and girls 1.3 tan at 6 years of age. Based on Tsuchiya, T., "An Economic History of Japan," Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan (T.A.S.J.) 15 (Dec. 1937).

<sup>13</sup> The term shoen is commonly translated as "manor", but this translation is disputed. The shoen were said to be dispersed plots of land owned by a single owner while the manor was a consolidated land plot.

<sup>14</sup> In the following chapter, however, we shall see how the introduction of certain interpretations of Buddhism in the Kamakura period loosened this shackle.

<sup>15</sup> Hane, Mikiso, Japan, a Historical Survey (N.Y.: Charles Scribner Sons, 1972), p. 66.

<sup>16</sup> Honjo, Eijiro, The Social and Economic History of Japan (N.Y.: Russell & Russell, 1965), p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Kamakura rule has been characterized as a "decentralized feudal system" in contrast to the "centralized feudal system" of the Tokugawa period. These terms are only loose characterizations. According to certain scholars they are inaccurate and contradictory. See Hane, Historical Survey, pp. 78-79, and Duss, Peter, Feudalism in Japan (N.Y.: Knopf, 1969), pp. 81-82.

<sup>18</sup> Hall, Local Power, p. 201.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, pp. 200-201;

Note: "Ashikaga" and "Muromachi" are interchangeable. The former is the dominant family's name, the latter is the name of the place where they established rule

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 238.

<sup>21</sup> Hane, Historical Survey, p. 113.

<sup>22</sup> See Bendix, Reinhard, Nation-Building and Citizenship: Studies of our Changing Social Order (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1977) p. 227.

- 23 See Yazaki, Takeo, Social Change and the City in Japan: from Earliest Times Through the Industrial Revolution, trans. David L. Swain (Tokyo: Japan Publications, 1968).
- 24 Sheldon, Charles David, The Rise of the Merchant Class in Tokugawa Japan, 1600-1868, Monograph for the Assoc. for Asian Studies, (N.Y.: J.J. Augustin Inc., 1958).
- 25 Sansom, G.B., Japan: A Short Cultural History (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1952), p. 362.
- 26 Mostly from 1764 on.
- 27 Alternatively, some nakama were to supply goods or labor free of charge or at lower than normal charge
- 28 Smith, Thomas C., Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 68-69.
- 29 Sheldon, Merchant Class, p. 166.

#### CHAPTER FOUR : Food Crises Challenge the Legitimacy of Authority

- 1 Sansom, Japan, A Short Cultural History (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1952), pp. 125-26.
- 2 See DeBary, William T., Sources of Japanese Tradition, Vol. 1, (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1967).  
  
I owe much to an unpublished paper by Hoyu Ishida, "Buddhism in Japan, the State and Religion: Monism, Dualism and Non-Dualism," Harvard Center for World Religions, 1979.
- 3 Hane, Mikiso, Japan, A Historical Survey (N.Y.: Charles Scribner Sons, 1972), p. 82.
- 4 The earlier Omī-Ryō of 662, revised in 689, is not extant.
- 5 Sansom, Cultural History, p. 291.
- 6 Hall, J.C., Japanese Feudal Laws, T.A.S.J. 38, Part 4 (1911).
- 7 Joei Shikimoku
- 8 Sansom, Cultural History, p. 306.
- 9 Steirer, Kurt, Local Government in Japan (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 15.
- 10 Ibid, pp. 15-16.

- 11 Ibid, p. 15.
- 12 See Takekoshi, Yosoburo, ed., The Economic Aspects of the History and Civilization of Japan, Vol. 3, Chapter 8, "The Internal Hanseatic League in the Ashikaga Epoch", (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1967), pp. 230-245.
- 13 Ibid, p. 242.
- 14 Ibid, p. 374.
- 15 Ibid, p. 377.
- 16 See Aoki, Koji, Hyakusho Ikki Sogo Nempyo (Tokyo: 1971).  

This expression of dissatisfaction by leaving rather than by staying and protesting is one of the many forms of protest neatly classified in Hirschman's book Exit, Voice, Loyalty. See Hirschman, Albert O., Exit, Voice, Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1970).
- 17 Honjo, Eijiro, The Social and Economic History of Japan (N.Y.: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965).
- 18 Honjo, Ibid, p. 17.
- 19 Takizawa, Matsuyo, The Penetration of the Money Economy in Japan, (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1927).
- 20 Takekoshi, Yosaburo, The Economic Aspects of the History of the Civilization of Japan (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1967), p. 134.
- 21 Sippel, Patricia, "Popular Protest in Early Modern Japan: the Bushu Outburst," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 37 (2), 1977: 272-323.
- 22 Borton, Peasant Uprisings, p. 19.
- 23 Ibid, p. 60.
- 24 Bellah, Robert N., Tokugawa Religion: the Values of Pre-Industrial Japan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957) pp. 104-5.
- 25 Aoki, Hyakusho Ikki for the Heian-Sengoku periods, and Aoki, Koji, Meiji Nom'in Kakuyū no Nenji-teki Kenkyū (Tokyo, 1967) for the Meiji period. See Kokusho, Iwao, Hyakusho Ikki no Kenkyū for the Tokugawa period.
- 26 Hane, Historical Survey, p. 234.
- 27 Borton, Hugh, Peasant Uprisings in Japan of the Tokugawa Period, Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, 2nd series, 16, (1938)

- 28 Kokusho, Iwao, Meiji Shonen Hyakusho Ikki (Peasant Revolts at the Beginning of the Meiji Era) in Meiji Ishin Shi Kenkyu (A Study of the Economic History of the Meiji Restoration) ed., Honjo, Eijiro, (Tokyo: 1930), p. 707, in E. Herbert Norman, Japan's Emergence as a Modern State: Political and Economic Problems of the Meiji Period (N.Y.: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940), p. 72.
- 29 Herbert, Japan's Emergence, p. 79.
- 30 Ibid, p. 94.

## PART II : CHINA

### CHAPTER FIVE : Food and Legitimacy in Imperial China

- 1 Its origin has been dated as early as the Hsia period, a "mythical period", ca.2197-1766 B.C., which preceded the Shang dynasty, c.1766-1400 B.C.
- 2 Creel, H.G., The Birth of China (N.Y.: F. Unger Publications, 1937), p. 371.
- 3 Thompson, E.P. "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th Century," Past and Present, No. 50 (Feb. 1971): 76-136.
- 4 Nivison, David S. and Arthur F. Wright, Confucianism in Action, (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. 33.
- 5 Chu Hsi dealt with the concepts of the Great Ultimate, the principle of li, material force or ch'i, human nature and the mind.  
  
See DeBary, William T., ed., Sources of Chinese Thought, Vol.1, (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1967) p. 479.
- 6 See Nivison & Wright, Confucianism in Action on Neo-Confucian concepts used in state ideology.  
  
Also see Feuerwerker, Albert, State and Society in 18th Century China, Chapter 2: "Ideology as a Unifying Element," Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, No. 27, (1976), pp. 11-35.
- 7 Based on Ho, Ping-ti, The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility 1368-1911 (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1962).
- 8 Chang, Chung-li, The Chinese Gentry (Seattle, WA.: University of Washington Press, 1955), p. 173.
- 9 However, for a while during the K'ang Hsi era, discussion questions replaced the examination on the classics



- 10 Chang, The Chinese Gentry, p. 198.
- 11 Ibid, p. 203.
- 12 Hsiao, Kung-chuan, Rural China: Imperial Control in the 19th Century (Seattle, WA.: University of Washington Press, 1960), p. 185.
- 13 Quoted in Hsiao, Rural China, p. 189.
- 14 On how effective or ineffective they were, see Hsiao, Rural China, pp. 194-201.
- 15 This part is largely based on Hsiao, Rural China, Chapter 3: "Police Control: the Pao-Chia System."
- 16 Hsiao, Rural China, p. 28.
- 17 Ibid, pp. 44-45.
- 18 Mossman, Samuel, China (n.p., 1867) p. 278; Williams, Middle Kingdom, (n.p., 1883) I, pp. 281-83; both quoted in Hsiao, Rural China, p. 322.
- 19 Hsiao, Rural China, p. 68.
- 20 Ibid, pp. 89-90.
- 21 There are many important works on China devoted to various aspects of the issues of water conservancy, hydraulic systems, dike-building and repair, irrigation, flood control, land reclamation, etc., which show the enduring importance of these issues in the Chinese social and political history. Besides the famous work by Wittfogel, , Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), see:  
  
Li, Lillian M., "Flood Control and Famine Relief in the Hai Ho Basin: 1801 and 1917," Paper prepared for Workshop on Food and Famine in Chinese History, Harvard University, Aug. 1980.  
  
Mihelic, Mira, Polders and the Politics of Land Reclamation in Southeast China during the Northern Sung Dynasty, 960-1126 Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, (Jan. 1979).  
  
Perdue, Peter, "Official Goals and Local Interests, Water Control in the Tung-t'ing Lake Region in the Ch'ing Period," Paper prepared for Workshop on Food and Famine in Chinese History, Harvard University, Aug. 1980.
- 22 This section is based on Hsiao, Rural China, Ch'u, T'ung-tsu, Local Government in China under the Ch'ing (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1969).
- 23 Gras, Norman S.B., The Evolution of the English Corn Market from the 12th to the 18th Centuries (N.Y.: Russell & Russell, 1967).

- 24 Shen Kua, Meng-ch'i pi-tan, quoted in Yang, Lien-Sheng, "Economic Justification for Spending: an Uncommon Idea in Traditional China," Harvard Journal of Asian Studies, (19 ) p. 68
- 25 Except for Shensi and Kwangsi, which were managed by the magistrate.
- 26 Ho, The Ladder, p. 131.
- 27 Ho, p. 136
- 28 Ho, p. 142
- 29 Ho, 165
- 30 Chang, Income, p. 157
- 31 Will, Bureaucratie, pp. 81-83.
- 32 Idem, p. 83.
- 33 Idem, p. 103.
- 34 Except where noted, this section is largely based on Will, Ibid, Part 2, Chapter 2: "L'Enquete sur la Famine," pp. 93-117.
- 35 Ibid, p. 106, translated from text:
- les foyers dont la condition economique est telle qu'ils ne peuvent passer lecap d'hiver et du printemps sand une aide de l'Etat sous forme de vivres et d'argent.
- 36 Yim, S.Y., "The Imperial Management of the Agrarian Crisis in 18th Century Chihli," paper prepared for workshop on Food and Famine in Chinese History, Harvard University, Aug. 1980, p. 13.
- 37 Will, Bureaucratie, Part II, Chapter 1: "Problemes de bureaucratie," pp. 79-93.
- 38 Yim, "Imperial Management," p. 32.
- 39 Idem, p. 37.
- 40 Ibid, p. 14.
- 41 See Appendix for measurement conversions.

42 Will, Bureaucratie, p. 127, translated from text:

...les habitants des agglomerations, les villageois sans terre, de meme que les vieillards et les malades auxquels les allocations mensuelles ne suffisent pas; egalement les vagabonds, mendiants, et errants de toutes sortes qui par definition n'apparaissent pas dans les registres locaux de la population.<sup>44</sup>

43 Cheng-chi 2/18a-19a, quoted in Yim, "Imperial Management," p. 49.

44 Sun, E-Tu Zen and John DeFrancis, trans., Chinese Social History: Translations of Selected Studies (N.Y.: Octagon Press, 1972).

45 See Chen, Shao-kwan, "The System of Taxation in China in the Tsing Dynasty, 1644-1911," Studies in History, Economy and Public Law, Vol 59 (2), (N.Y.: Columbia University, A.M.S. Press, 1970), see List 9 on types of land.

46 Ibid, 737,565,584 mou private land to 186,495,407 mou public land.

47 Feuerwerker, Albert, The Chinese Economy 1870-1911, Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, No. 5, (1969), p. 14.

48 Chang, Income, pp. 138-39.

49 Wang, Yeh-chien, Land Taxation in Imperial China, 1750-1911 (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 20-21.

50 Ibid, p. 26.

51 Ibid, p. 10.

52 Ibid, p.117.

53 See Ch'u, Local Government.

54 Hoshi, Ayao, The Ming Tribute Grain System, trans. Mark Elvin, Michigan Abstracts of Chinese and Japanese Works on Chinese History, No. 1, (1969), and Hinton, Harold C., The Grain Tribute System of China 1845-1911, East Asian Research Center, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1970).

55 Hinton, Grain Tribute. p. 32.

56 Ibid, p. 103.

57 This part largely based on Kuhn, Philip A., Rebellion and its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure 1796-1864 (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 20-22.

58 Ibid, p. 21.

CHAPTER SIX : Food and Lack of Interest Group Competition

1 Mousnier, Roland, Peasant Uprisings in 17th Century France, Russia and China, trans. Brian Pearce, (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 242-243.

2 Mitamura, Taisuke, Chinese Eunuchs, The Structure of Intimate Politics, trans. Charles T. Pomeroy, (Rutland, VT.: Charles Tuttle Co., 1970), 176 pp.

3 See Chang, Chung-li, The Chinese Gentry: Studies on their Role in 19th Century Chinese Society (Seattle, WA.: University of Washington Press, 1955).

Ch'u, T'ung-tsu, Local Government in China under the Ch'ing (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1969).

Ho, Ping-ti, The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility 1368-1911 (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1962).

4 Weber, Max, The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism, trans. and ed. by Hans H. Gerth, (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1951).

5 Beattie, Hilary J., Land and Lineage in China: a Study of T'ung-Ch'eng County, Anhwei in the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

6 Chang, Chung-li, The Income of the Chinese Gentry (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962).

Chang cites Jamieson, George, Tenure of Land in China and the Condition of the Rural Population, Journal of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, New Series, 23 (2), (Shanghai: May 1889), pp. 59-118.

7 Chang, Income, p. 136.

8 This is out of a total of 1.5 million gentry in the 19th century, of whom 11%-14% were members of the upper gentry. See Chang, Chinese Gentry, Table 8 on estimated number of gentry, p. 111, and estimated number of landowning gentry, and how calculation was done, p. 146.

9 Nine hundred million mou figure is from Hui-tien 17/3ff. cited by Chang, Income, p. 146. Twenty-five percent figure is Chang's estimate, Ibid, p. 145.

- 10 Chang, Ibid, pp. 145-46.
- 11 See Chang, Income, for "A rough estimate of the annual GNP in the 1880s" Supplement I and "The gentry's share of the native product", Supplement II, pp. 291-331.
- 12 Ch'ing legal code [Ta-Ch'ing lu-li hui-chi pien-lan] 1876, chuan 8, section on property division, pp. 54-56, quoted in Chang, Income, p. 128.
- 13 Chang, Income, Chapter 5: "Landownership as a source of income", pp. 127-149.
- 14 Ibid, p. 12.
- 15 Ibid, Table 15: "Estimated Annual Extra Income of Key Chinese Provincial Officials," p. 40, and Table 16: "Estimated Annual Extra Income of Chinese Court Officials," p. 41.
- 16 Ibid, Table 15, p. 40.
- 17 Ibid, p. 42.
- 18 Quote from Hu Lin-i, "A Memorial on Malpractices in the Hupeh Grain Tribute System" in Sheng, Wen-pien 37/1aff, 1857, cited in Chang, Income, p. 64.
- 19 Chang, Income, p. 73.
- 20 Weber, Religion of China.
- 21 Van der Sprenkel, 368
- 22 Van der Sprenkel, 361
- 23 Van der Sprenkel, 362
- 24 For example, Van der Sprenkel, Otto B., "Max Weber on China," History and Society 3 (1964): 348-370, and Eberhard, Wolfram, Conquerors and Rulers: Social forces in Medieval China (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1965). Eberhard claimed this stratification was complicated by the factor of ethnicity, which determined the stratification pattern.
- 25 Van der Sprenkel, p. 360.
- 26 Van der Sprenkel, p. 368.
- 27 Van der Sprenkel, p. 369.

- 28 Beattie, Hilary, Land and Lineage in China: A Study of T'ung-Cheng County, Anhwei in the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 128.
- 29 Beattie, Land and Lineage p. 131.
- 30 Fei, Hsiao-Tung, China's Gentry: Essays in Rural-Urban Relations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953) p. 33.
- 31 Ch'u, T'ung-tsu, "Chinese Class Structure and Its Ideology," in volume edited by John K. Fairbank, Chinese Thought and Institutions (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 235-251.
- 32 Pan Ku, Han-shu 24A:11a-12a, quoted in Ch'u, T'ung-tsu, Jack L. Dull, ed., Han Social Structure (Seattle, WA.: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 111.
- 33 Examples from the Han-shu and Shih-chi are cited in Ch'u, Han Social Structure, pp. 114-115.
- 34 Chang, Income p. 161.
- 35 Small merchants are not written about in the histories; very little is actually known about them.
- 36 Ho, Ladder of Success, pp. 287-292.
- 37 Ch'u, T'ung-tsu refers to Max Weber in Fairbank, Chinese Thought and Institutions, pp. 386-387. Quote is from Gerth, H.H. and C.W. Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, (1946), p. 192:
- Yet if such economic acquisition and power gave the agent any honor at all, his wealth would result in his attaining more honor than those who successfully claim honor by virtue of style of life. Therefore all groups having interests in the status order react with special sharpness precisely against the pretensions of purely economic acquisition. In most cases, they react the more vigorously the more they feel themselves threatened.
- 38 Shiba, Yoshinobu, Commerce and Society in Sung China, trans. Mark Elvin, Michigan Abstracts of Chinese and Japanese Works on Chinese History, No. 2, (Ann Arbor, MI.: University of Michigan, 1970), pp. 140-141.
- 39 Ch'u, Han Social Structure, p. 118.
- 40 Ibid, p. 119.

- 41 From Han-shu 24B:3a, quoted in Ch'u, Han Social Structure, p.118.
- 42 See Swann, Nancy L., trans., Food and Money in Ancient China: the Earliest Economic History of China to A.D. 25, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950) and article by Yang, Lieu-sheng, "Notes on Dr. Swann's Food and Money in Ancient China," Harvard Journal of Asian Studies 13 (3-4), (Dec. 1950): 524-557. Material from these sources is based on the Shi chi 129 and Han shu 91, "Huo-chih lieh-chuan" or "Narrative on the Rich", see Yang, "Notes," p. 525.
- 43 Gale, Esson McDowell, trans. with introduction and notes, Discourses on Salt and Iron: a Debate on State Control of Commerce and Industry in Ancient China, (Leyden: E.J. Brill Ltd., 1931).
- 44 Twitchett, D. C., Financial Administration Under the T'ang Dynasty, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 4.
- 45 Ibid, p. 21.
- 46 Shiba, Commerce and Society p. 141.
- 47 Ch'u, "Chinese Class Structure," in Fairbank, Chinese Thought, see footnote 70, p. 247.
- 48 Twitchett, Financial Administration p. 49.
- 49 Rozman, Gilbert, Urban Networks in Ch'ing China and Tokugawa Japan (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 107.
- 50 Ibid, p. 112.
- 51 Elvin, Mark, trans. note in Yoshinobu Shiba, Commerce and Society, p. 1.
- 52 Rozman, Urban Networks p. 28.
- 53 Perkins, Dwight, Agricultural Development in China 1368-1968 (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1969).
- 54 Shiba, Commerce and Society p. 30.  
Also on the development of the grain trade in Sung, see Aoyama Sado, "Le developpement de transports fluviaux sous les Sung", Etudes Song, Series I, vol. 3, (1976): 281-296.
- 55 Rozman, Urban Networks, p. 128.

56 Rawski, Evelyn, Agricultural Change and the Peasant Economy of South China (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 3.

57 Buck, John Lossing, Land Utilization in China (N.Y. :Paragon Book Reprint Co., 1964).



- 58 Fei, Hsiao-Tung and Chih-i Chang, Earthbound China: A Study of Rural Economy in Yunnan, see Table 8: "Size of Farms in Luts'un", p. 54.
- 59 Myers, Ramon H., The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung 1890-1949 (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 220-227.
- 60 See Myers, Ibid;  
Gamble, Sidney D., Ting Hsien: A North China Rural Community (Institute of Pacific Relations, 1954), pp.  
Idem, North China Villages: Social, Political and Economic Activities Before 1933, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).  
Jamieson, Tenure of Land.
- 61 Buck, Land Utilization, p. 9.
- 62 Ibid, p.192.  
See also Table 20: "Landholdings in China in 1865 by Type of Ownership," p. 193. According to the later National Agricultural Survey (Nanking, China) taken in 1929-33, the number of tenants was greater, i.e. 29% of the agricultural population.
- 63 Rawski, Peasant Economy.
- 64 Perkins, Agricultural Development, p. 102.
- 65 Ibid, p. 104.
- 66 Rawski's conclusions for Hunan are somewhat less convincing than her work on Fukien. Apparently there was no tenancy in Hunan in the late seventeenth century. Soon after a resettlement campaign was begun, however, land began to get scarce and expensive. Peasants preferred to buy tenancy rights, which were cheaper than buying land outright. Rawski skirts the issue of how the tenants' situation changed after they became tenants, merely saying that they "enjoyed material improvement". However, no data is offered to support this assertion. See Rawski, Peasant Economy p. 21.
- 67 Fei and Chang, Earthbound China, p. 182.
- 68 Myers, Chinese Peasant Agriculture.
- 69 Ibid, on Sha-Ching village, p. 58.
- 70 Ibid, on Ling Shui Kou Village p. 88-105.
- 71 Ibid, p. 124.
- 72 Ibid, pp. 71, 86.

- 73 Ibid,
- 74 Fei and Chang, Earthbound China, Table 8: "Size of Farms in Luts'un," p. 54.
- 75 Ibid, pp. 91- 92.
- 76 Ibid, Table 17, p. 96.
- 77 Ibid, p. 99.
- 78 Ibid, pp. 106-107.
- 79 Ibid, pp. 205-206.
- 80 Ibid, pp. 207.
- 81 Ibid, pp. 247-48.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Jing Su, Luo Lun, Landlord and Labor in Late Imperial China: Case Studies from Shandong, trans. and intro. by Endymion Wilkinson, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1978).
- 85 Fei and Chang, Earthbound China, pp. 106-107.

CHAPTER SEVEN : Food Crises and Food Crisis Management

- <sup>1</sup> Levenson, Joseph R., Confucian China and its Modern Fate, Vol. 2, "The Problem of Monarchical Decay", (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1964), p. 12.
- <sup>2</sup> Hsiao, Kung-chuan, Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century (Seattle, WA.: University of Washington Press, 1960), p. 418.
- <sup>3</sup> Despite the great importance of these concerns to imperial governments, remarkably little scholarship has been produced on the subject. If more cases of food crises could be analyzed in detail, a more coherent picture of the social processes involved would emerge, including the government's motivations and effectiveness as read through its food-related policies. Unfortunately, very little attention has been given this fertile and challenging area of research by scholars who can work in both Chinese and English. The work that has been done in Western languages is only on famines from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries and only on a few provinces.

- 4 Mallory, Walter, China, Land of Famine (National Geographic, 1926).
- 5 Ho, Ping-ti, Studies on the Population of China 1368-1953 (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 230.
- 6 Will, Pierre-Etienne, Bureaucratie et Famine en Chine au 18e Siecle (Paris: Mouton, 1980), pp. 37-38.
- 7 Yim, S.Y., "Imperial Management of the Agrarian Crisis in 18th century Chihli," Unpublished paper prepared for workshop on "Food and Famine in China," Harvard University, Aug. 1980, p. 10.
- 8 Ibid, p. 37.
- 9 See Table of purchases, Ibid, p. 36.
- 10 Will, Bureaucratie;  
Yim, "Imperial Management."
- 11 Will, Bureacratie, p. .
- 12 Ibid, Part II, Chapter 1: "Problemes de bureaucratie," pp. 79-93.
- 13 Ibid, p. 124.
- 14 Ibid, p. 125.
- 15 Based largely on Bohr, Timothy, Famine in China and the Missionary: Timothy Richard as Relief Administrator and Advocate of National Reform 1876-1884, East Asian Research Center, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1972), and Ho, Ping-ti, Population.
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#### CHAPTER EIGHT : Conclusions

- 1 For example, see Finer, Samuel E., "State and Nation-Building in Europe: the Role of the Military," in Charles Tilly, ed., The Formation of the National States in Western Europe (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975).
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Appendix A: Time Chart for China

Mythical Period	ca.2697-1766 B.C.
Shang	1766-1122
Western Chou	1121- 770
Eastern Chou	770- 249
Ch'in	221- 205
Former Han	B.C.205- 8 A.D.
Later Han	25- 220
Six Dynasties	222- 589
Sui	581- 618
T'ang	618- 906
Sung	906-1279
Western Hsia	1038-1227
Liao	916-1125
Chin	1126-1211
Yuan	1234-1368
Ming	1368-1644
Ch'ing	1644-1911
Republican	1912-1948
People's Republic	1949-

Appendix B : Conversions

Monetary : 1 tael = 1 ounce silver

Volume : 1 shih = 1,036 hecto-liter

1 sheng = 0,01 shih

Length : 1 li = 0,5 kilometer

Surface : 1 mu = 0,0615 hectare





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