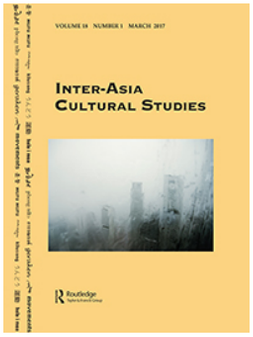

Inter-Asia Cultural Studies

ISSN: 1464-9373 (Print) 1469-8447 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/riac20

Three "centuries": the context and development of rural construction in China

Pan Jiaen, Luo Chia-Ling & Wen Tiejun

To cite this article: Pan Jiaen, Luo Chia-Ling & Wen Tiejun (2017) Three "centuries": the context and development of rural construction in China, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, 18:1, 120-130, DOI: 10.1080/14649373.2017.1278820

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2017.1278820

Published online: 12 Apr 2017.

INTER-ASIA CULTURAL STUDIES, 2017
VOL. 18, NO. 1, 120–130
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2017.1278820

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Three "centuries": the context and development of rural construction in China

PAN Jiaen[a], LUO Chia-Ling[b] and WEN Tiejun[c]

[a]Chongqing University, Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, Chongqing City, China; [b]Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University, College of Economics (College of Strait Rural Development), Fuzhou City, China; [c]Southwest University, Institute of Rural Reconstruction of China, Chongqing City, China

ABSTRACT

If the shoe doesn't fit, it is a mistake to change the foot, but in essence this is what occurred in 20th-century China, in the context of rural construction. Motivated by self-preservation, nationalist forces in China resisted the hasty, indiscriminate and harmful importation (indeed, imposition) of western influences, but these external influences ultimately predominated over traditional domestic practices. Radical ideologies evolved, destroying traditional construction methods while promoting ill-conceived, but ostensibly "modern" counterparts, or chaotic syntheses of old and new. Rural economies were devastated, to the despair of peasants. The internal response to external stimulus had become far more damaging, the cure its own fatal disease. Amid ongoing efforts at reconstruction, local committees were formed that varied in efficiency, and successive waves of rural construction featured a wide array of approaches, far more than merely "top down" or "bottom up (grassroots)." And yet, while conditions have improved, the symptoms of radical response persist. The proper cure should be context-dependent reform.

KEYWORDS

Rural construction; destruction; development; radicalism; China

Despite being a social practice led by intellectuals in direct response to the problems of the Three Rural Issues (peasants, agriculture and rural villages), there is still a limited amount of rural construction projects brought into public view in China. However,

> according to a survey by the Ministry of Industry of the Nanjing National Government (of the Republic of China), between the late 1920s and early 1930s over 600 organizations and institutions were founded which, in turn, set up more than 1,000 experimental construction zones of various kinds. (Zheng 2000, 456)

Now, as China has emerged into global focus, talk of rural construction is duly reported. The authors of this article have long been actively involved in rural construction and believe it necessary to rethink the process, which bears the chronic effects of a mismatch of internal and external practices. This article endeavors to illuminate, in gradations of light that lead to remedy, the deleterious effects of the external forces and the drastically worse, internal forces that were stimulated by radical reform efforts in China over the past century.

In service of this admittedly ambitious goal, the authors use the term Three Centuries (Century of Radicalism, Century of Rural Destruction, Century of Rural Construction) in order to examine the externally imposed and internally promoted conditions of rural construction in their historical context. However, the Three Centuries highlighted in this

CONTACT LUO Chia-Ling charleneluo@yahoo.com.tw

study are not meant to be precise measurements of successive historical periods but rather are generalized terms for simultaneous, reciprocally active events descried in macro. They are terms useful when describing the modern history of China as influenced by western ideology.

External and internal destruction: a century of radicalism from the perspective of rural construction

In the face of criticism, Liang Shuming has explained why he chose to be involved in rural construction instead of simply endorsing other, more popular ideas centering on how to save the country. It was because he believed the real underlying threat to be the interaction of two forces – external and internal destruction:

> the so-called conscious destruction refers to the decades-long emergence of nationalist movements in response to the destruction brought by external forces, an emergence that begins as self-preservation and ends as self-destruction … . [And this] vehement and drastic supplantation of traditional Chinese practices in favor of imported western practices is the real reason why Chinese society collapsed. Perceptions of self-insufficiency facilitated this supplantation and constituted a major failure of Chinese culture. (Liang 2005, 197–201)

A failure that spiraled into cataclysm: "the destruction from external forces was limited. In comparison, our reaction to these forces inflicted destruction on rural areas that was ten times worse" (Liang 2005, 151–152). The authors believe that the external and internal destruction cited by Liang reflect, to a significant degree, a hasty and indiscriminate attempt to reform rural construction, the effects of which reverberate into the present.

Since the 1990s, the Chinese ideological-historical community has often discussed the trend to radicalism. They have stressed political-cultural perspectives, while neglecting economic-ecological perspectives; they have emphasized a century of radicalism in China, but not in the Third World, the ecology or among minorities, as capitalism and colonialism accelerated and spread. They have privileged the views of the elite – for instance industry heavyweights, knowledge brokers and political figures – at the expense of the views of everyone else, and of conditions in the wider sphere of society, particularly in rural areas, the agricultural base, and among the working class. Also neglected in discussion were the complex interrelationships between different kinds of radicalism.

The authors believe that radicalism should be factored into analyses of the past century from political, cultural, economic and ecological perspectives. China's Century of Radicalism includes ideologies of revolution and of modernism in the political and cultural sense, and also a radical imitation of the western superstructure (e.g. institutions and education). China is a third world country that has undergone a hundred years of humiliation. It exists in a Darwinian, zero-sum world where industrialization is paramount – an essential safety net. Hence, it is reasonable and necessary that industrialization based on state capitalism emerge. And yet all governments tend to be radical during industrialization, and all radical institutional reforms incur a severe social cost. This is to say, China's Century of Radicalism is no ordinary stimulus-response. It is less the ideologies proposed by individuals or parties than it is the chain reaction of internal and external forces stirred by western influences that has formed the social climate and nurtured social potential.

Collective anxiety induced by a century of humiliation and nationalism is one reason for overall radicalism; another is the self-perpetuating Chinese version of external ideology. But we must also consider how the westernizing industrialization standards that were operating under capitalism led to radicalism, which in turn caused de-contextualization. The problem of radicalism from the perspective of rural construction may not lie in its conventional (i.e. non-radical) counterpart, nor in aggressive revolutions and political reforms. Radicalism in China may have included a disregard for traditional cultures,

rural communities, the small-scale peasant economy, the ecology, national conditions and other factors. By using de-contextualization (distinguished from appropriately contextualized temporal, spatial and social relationships) as a tactic, rapid promotion of modernization through urbanization and industrialization was possible on a large scale, at the expense of the factors cited.

The double destruction cited by Liang Shuming exacerbated radicalism and brought the entire country to ruin. Compared with external destruction, self-destruction was more widespread, long-term and subtle. If external destruction affected mainly highly commercialized cities or the more commercialized areas along the coastal regions, then self-destruction spread to inland areas and rural villages. If external destruction faced sundry forms of resistance due to its link with wars, invasion, humiliation and injustice, then self-destruction's rallying cry of self-reliance put it on the moral high ground and thus facilitated passage while stifling dissent. If external destruction was a passive encounter, then self-destruction can be considered to have been a kind of active cooperation.

The destruction was material and cultural, leaving Chinese society stripped of its dignity, uncertain of its identity, and hobbled by a pair of ill-fitting shoes, designed in the west and touted in the east. Peace and stability gave way to strife, and resource shortages fanned the flames. What emerged was a de-contextualized China. Its new context was western-centric, one dominated by the notion of the colonialist-victor. But China was no victor. Its disastrous economy bore witness to the prioritization of industrialization for national security and survival competitiveness, and to the prioritization of urbanization when it came to derived capital and industrial concentration.

Century of Rural Destruction: the motivation to, and consequences of, radicalism

The Century of Radicalism has had a far-reaching influence on China. The Century of Rural Destruction was one consequence of the Three Rural Issues, and generated further radicalism. As Liang (2005, 481) concluded more than 70 years ago: "China's past 100 years is a history of rural destruction, from beginning to end."

In order more thoroughly to understand the causes and effects of the Century of Rural Destruction, the following sections discuss the multiple interrelationships between this century and the Century of Radicalism from the economic, political and cultural standpoints.

The outflow of the Three Rural Resources[1]

The authors believe that particular attention should be devoted to radical economics when considering the Three Rural Issues, because over the past century myriad powers have exploited peasants, agriculture and rural villages. There have been foreign invasion and rent exploitation of land, resulting in peasants' agricultural hardship or bankruptcy. Business capital and the modern finance industry have also incurred varying degrees of deprivation in the small-scale peasant economy and rural communities. The Three Rural Resources were siphoned through multiple channels, impairing self-sufficiency.

The history of the Republic of China is marked by internal responses to a range of external factors. The small and self-sufficient peasant economy faced tremendous pressure from commercialization and marketization (Chen 2002), forces to which it bowed. Power struggles, capital benefits, army corruption and frequent wars were also contributing factors. On one hand, urban industrialization sharply increased the demand for commercialized agricultural products, in response to which the rural-agricultural economy, predominantly barter, was rapidly monetized, with currency being used more and more generally as a means of exchange to facilitate production and peasants' everyday acquisitions and spending. The cash-starved peasants were made more dependent on remunerative (but low-skilled and labor-

intensive) employment, locally or in cities. "Financialization thus further exploited peasants and grassroots society" (Huang 2000, 141). On the other hand, since the land rent model had changed, farm leasing became commonplace and a rich peasant economy emerged, as the landlord economy substantially shifted to the industrial and commercial sectors (Huang 2000; Wen 2009). The ensuing agricultural surplus pushed the Three Rural Resources out to cities. Usurer's capital and industrial capital swept across what was left of rural communities. The peasants were thrown into penury, and bandits roamed the unsettled lands.

Now that the Republic of China was a part of the global economy, its Three Rural Resources fell within reach of the Great Depression (1929–1933). The results were dire: "Decline in national exports, sharp decrease in prices, a depressed market, shrinking industries, oversupply of agricultural products, agricultural losses, depletion of rural finance, more bankruptcies among peasants" (Liu and Wu 2010, 25). As the United States raised its gold and silver prices in an effort to save its financial industry, China, where industrialization had just started to boom and the silver standard was still in use, experienced a massive outflow of silver. The capital accumulated in its cities was rendered precarious. The risks that should have been borne by cities were transferred to rural areas, which (in addition to the aforementioned peasant bankruptcies) gave rise to involuntary land annexation, social instability, and susceptibility to external threats (Shiroyama 2010).

The outflow of the Three Rural Resources is still a root cause of the Three Rural Issues, and among the most visible offshoots are the growing ranks of the "left-behind," the children left in rural areas as their parents work in cities where their menial wages support only their own reproduction of labor power. Clearly, the outflow of rural labor has a serious effect, and divided families bode ill for social cohesion. Rural communities are further undercut by the rural financial system, through which it is difficult to get loans on account of the illiquidity of land. Moreover, land conversion through rent, and other ripple effects of the wave of urbanization, are producing further social discord in the form of de-agriculturalization.

Nevertheless, although outflow is a dominant trend, its trajectory is complex. The outflow has prompted the emergence of assorted reform implementations and has indirectly initiated the Century of Rural Construction, which refers to rural construction in a broad sense and will be discussed below. For now, let it be noted that there are varied, intricate and subtle interactions between outflow and inflow.

Change in rural order

The Century of Rural Destruction has plagued rural areas in China as a whole, and its far-reaching effects have social and political aspects.

Liang Shuming realized that order was crucial to the Century of Rural Destruction. If complete disorder in high level politics means warlordism and a decaying civil service, then in rural communities it means an overall change in the social structure. According to Duara (2003), the state pushed rural finances into a vicious cycle. An already overgrown bureaucracy seemed only to be fed still more, to the point where the well-intentioned gentry in management were crowded out by gentry with bad intentions. Huang (2000, 256) showed that "the villages of the twentieth century were destabilized as peasants were reduced to semi-proletariats." External pressure collapsed the political structure, leaving a power vacuum to be filled by tyrants and thugs. We note that the administration of traditional rural society, although relatively low-cost, generates mounting disorder, whereas the introduction of modern administrative practices into rural areas is a relatively high-cost affair, and faces challenges of implementation, in part because these modern practices developed not in rural but in largely urban (or rapidly urbanizing) environments.

In the first 30 years after the establishment of New China in 1949, the communist party, which was familiar with rural communities, had to push forward industrialization through primitive accumulation, and adopted extreme measures when organizing peasants, mobilizing villages and exploiting agriculture. But at the same time, in deference to the grassroots level, the state brought educational, medical and other resources back into rural areas through other channels. The state attempted "rural construction without the rural construction camp." Since the public was well-apprised of many of the action plans, and there had been sufficient state–rural interactions, development was a low-cost, collective enterprise that achieved de-radicalization. In comparison, although reform and opening up (beginning in 1979) presented individual peasants with the opportunity of amassing wealth, the disorder in rural areas had weakened peasants' ability to defend themselves against capitalist exploitation from extra-rural sources. Further changes in the macro environment in the 1990s and thereafter exacerbated and rationalized exploitation. Millions of women, children, and elderly persons were left behind in rural communities that, continually destabilizing, were no longer so communal.

The rural homeland as problematic site

While the Century of Radicalism had immense economic impact on rural areas and social reconstruction, the functions and meaning of "rural homeland" also underwent tremendous change. First, the original multi-functional aspect (Gao and Hu 2012; Lin 2012) of rural villages and agriculture was constrained. Despite once being a diverse environment for social, political, economic, cultural and ecological purposes, rural villages were reduced to a locus of resource exploitation and crisis support. Second, rural homelands were at a disadvantage when measured by the new industrialization standard and competition logic. They were forced to admit their "backwardness" and were regarded as problematic. Once the unfolding of the Century of Radicalism had been irrevocably set in motion, and its ostensible goal of serving the cities had been consolidated into a definition, traditional cultures and values based on agricultural civilization (including production modes, ways of life and thought) were devalued, or rendered null, under the mainstream standard. Labeled non-modern, or even anti-modern, rural villages were cast further into the margins.

The prevailing trends to exploit, marginalize and problematize rural homelands widened the rural–urban gap, ridding peasants of their confidence and agriculture of its dignity, while shaking the stability of rural villages. Radicalism, together with a series of cultures deemed modern, was deeply rationalized.

The problematization of rural homelands roused awareness and prompted action, but the action itself was problematic. The intellectuals and reformers who believed that in them had been invested the right to speak and act, strayed from the issue of the rural homeland as they were caught up in identity conflicts, in debates over dichotomies such as civilization–ignorance, advanced–backward, rescue–be rescued, etc. The problem of the rural homeland was de-contextualized, cast in an artificial mold, and thus was abstracted and simplified, until the rural homeland itself, as actual problem and place, became a fertile ground for further radicalization.

Reflections on the Century of Rural Construction

Although the Century of Radicalism generated the Century of Rural Destruction on numerous levels, this imported and internally promoted radicalism, when scaled up to China's vast topography, created many gaps and ambiguities that must be taken account of, particularly when considering the Three Rural Issues.

Dialectics of the Three Rural Issues

Mainstream discussion of the Three Rural Issues is fraught with tension. The most

common approach is to reject them as factors of historical motivation, or to consider rural areas as some kind of economically backward, sacrificial lamb for urban industrialization. Engels (1971, 299) spoke of a superannuated peasantry: "our small-scale peasants, like all the other remnants of outdated production modes, are heading towards their irreversible demise."

And yet agriculture is mankind's most fundamental adaptation, one not dislodged by capitalism or industrialization. But under colonialism and a domestic economic system that was integrating into the global, agriculture, together with other aspects of Chinese society, shared the pressures of cost, high production, and overpopulation, of what the Chinese people called "exchanging space for time." Alternatively, the potential growth of chemical agriculture, petroleum agriculture and biological agriculture offered hope, what was called "exchanging time for space." However, each case – the domestication of an external stressor, and an overdrafting of the future – was bound to meet resistance from groups who bore the cost, and from intellectuals who were in favor of grassroots ecology, resistance that was more forceful when finite resources were becoming increasingly recognized as such, and crises of energy and ecology punctuated the fabric of everyday life.

It is this dialectical method that stimulated rural construction in a broad sense, although the exact source may vary: it could be one or more of the four aspects summarized in Liang Shuming's "Rural Construction Theory" (rural self-help; the will to save rural villages threatened with destruction; the demand of Chinese society for construction; the need to rebuild communities after the destruction of a thousand years of social organization); it could also be a conscientious response to historical-environmental stressors (as Liang fundamentally believes); it could even be the current rediscovery and reinvigoration of agricultural diversity, long neglected and constrained during over-promotion of urbanization, a process that led to de-agriculturalization (e.g. conversion of agricultural to non-agricultural land), urban blight and eco-crises. Nevertheless, all these can be understood as realistic responses when exploring the causality between the Century of Radicalism and the Century of Rural Destruction.

As for the Century of Rural Destruction and the Century of Rural Construction, these have always been dialectical. Although previous sections of this article – the outflow of the Three Rural Resources; change in rural order; the rural homeland as problematic site – illustrate dominant trends, these trends might not be steadily linear. The evolution of radicalism also stimulated "self-protection in society" (Polanyi 2007) as well as the exploration of various alternatives. It was these forces that shaped and fostered a more diverse implementation of rural construction.

Due to this diversity, the three Centuries (of Radicalism, of Rural Destruction, of Rural Construction) have had complex and reciprocating after-effects. Deliberated, constructive implementation mitigated the extent of rural destruction. And yet conversely it was the doubts instilled and challenges presented by these diverse and long-ranging forces (including rural construction) that filled the radicalization process with twists and turns, gaps as well as open possibilities.

Rural construction goes beyond constructing villages

As Liang (2005, 161–162) noted, "the essence of rural construction is not to construct rural villages but to improve the construction of the entire Chinese society." The rise and development of rural construction in China cannot be reduced to the behavior of individual actors at the micro level but rather is primarily related to China's rapid transformation in its modern period. Advocates of rural construction may be found among intellectuals, peasants, students and other groups, with the extent and methods of support varying as circumstances change and

desires dictate. Nevertheless, the three Centuries had a common context and similar characteristics: at the economic level, they directed the flow of the Three Rural Resources back (from urban) into rural areas; at the social level, they reinstated the concept of the rural homeland (that had been supplanted by western development paradigms), in order to rediscover the value of rural communities under the new standards; at the cultural level, they broke through ideological orthodoxy and binary oppositions, and re-established an inclusive order that favors sustainable development while opening space for the implementation of alternative approaches.

Rural construction, as a compensatory and defensive response to radicalism, is regionally scattered, each region operating its own design model. As a result, researchers and observers often understand it as "reform." The implementers of rural construction also tend to use the language of reform in order to set themselves apart from mainstream radicalization. But there were significant differences between the reform of rural construction among the grassroots and rural communities (which emphasized public participation and constructive implementation) and the top-down political reforms or conservative thinking in the modern historical process. First, rural construction seemed scattered, moderate and micro, but could also bring a unique macro perspective[2] and sharp, pragmatic criticism. Second, rural construction worked not to exclude but rather to promote efforts that are beneficial to rural communities, efforts that can establish order at low cost. It endeavored to counteract the negative forces affecting rural areas, sought viable alternatives, even though the process all too often involved compromise and failure. This deliberated inclusiveness (as opposed to summary exclusion) attested to the empathy and foresight of the implementers of rural construction, while reflecting the lessons learned in the late Qing Dynasty – that the benefits of radical confrontation often rise to the elites and associated interest groups, while the detriments fall to rural communities, the ecology and minorities.

It should be noted that reform as practiced in rural construction differs from reformism. The methods of reform vary in response to environmental influences and the historical context,[3] whereas reformism supports the current structure while effecting only surface changes. Self-protection and alternative implementation in rural construction are not modes of escape, divergence or regression from the mainstream framework and radical logic, nor are they a passive defense. They constitute an active, constructive, and innovative questioning of mainstream ideas. Moreover, "alternative" and "mainstream," far from being monolithic binaries, have in operation between them thousands of subtle links and interactions.

Three waves of rural construction in the past century

The authors believe that rural construction in China's modern history did not begin with the limited efforts undertaken by Yen James Y.C., Liang Shuming, Tao Xingzhi, Lu Zuofu, and other representative figures in the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, rural construction began even earlier, with signs of development visible in the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China. After the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), the Century of Radicalism and Century of Destruction together led to a series of constructive actions and multi-agent responses against the backdrop of local and rural communities (and not against the "backdrop" of upper class elites and the movements – the Self-Strengthening Movement and the Reform Movement – which the elites advocated in regard to materials and institutions). The agents, methods and content involved were exceedingly diverse. Chinese intellectuals went to rural villages with the goal of saving them; rural communities initiated, and well-intentioned gentries led, local activities directed

towards rural self-help and social construction; and since 1949 there have been other complex implementation methods. All these methods described above can be summarized as three intermixing waves of rural construction.

The first wave of rural construction was a cooperative union of officials and the people, a deliberated, bottom-up kind of social reform that developed in 1904 out of the local autonomy and rural self-help in Zhuocheng Village of Ding County, Hebei Province. The wave surged when an outbreak of wardlordism in the 1920s led the central authority to tacitly approve the powers of the local administration and to invite forces in the community to solve the problems of rural management. The wave receded when the Guomindang pressed ahead with the *Baojia* system[4] that produced "evil gentries" in rural communities, and when Japan invaded China in 1937 (the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War). The first wave of rural construction was then diverted to the Beibei District of Chongqing City (what became known as the Beibei experiment), and to the Huaxi region of Sichuan Province, site of an experimental zone for rural construction education. In 1949, the first wave was replaced by the national construction campaign pushed forward by the Communist Party.

1904 can be seen as the year in which the implementation of rural construction in China began. In that year, Mi Chunming, a member of the local gentry of Zhuocheng village, was hired as the principal of an education agency (*Quan xue suo*), and regarded his village as an experimental case. He implemented a series of reform measures and actively developed village autonomy so as to make room for economic development, new education policies, the formulation of village rules, and the establishment of autonomous organizations. It was this Zhuocheng Experiment initiated by local residents that directly led to the Ding Xian Experiment ("Xian" meaning "County") carried out in the 1920s and 1930s by Yen James Y.C. and the Mass Education Movement, with the help of funding from the Rockefeller and other American foundations. In the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Zhang Jian pushed forward highly effective, grassroots rural construction in his hometown Nantong City of Jiangsu Province. The local construction led by this scholar-turned-industrialist reflected Chinese society's urge to revitalize itself after China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War. Moreover, like the village autonomy in Zhuocheng, it owed its implementation to the new policies of the late Qing dynasty. Such construction ideals as "parallel development of industrialization and agriculture," "fathers as educators and mothers as industrialists" and the results of these ideals, are the best stimulus for future discussions on topics such as "building an agro-industrial country" and "conservatism vs. radicalism."

This study will not address the first wave of rural construction, that swept through the 1920s and 1930s and in which Liang Shuming, Yen James Y.C., Lu Zuofu, Tao Xingzhi, Huang Yanpei along with other representative figures were actively engaged, in order to avoid restating the already ample research on the subject.

We turn then to the second wave of rural construction, which was set forth in 1949 by the ruling Chinese Communist Party under the aegis of large-scale industrialization, and which can be understood as a practice of "rural construction without the rural construction camp."

Compared with the first wave of rural construction during the time of the Republic of China, the land revolution of this second wave mobilized the entire lower class and served as a foundation for systematic reform in the rural community. Despite reducing and eventually stopping the efforts of intellectuals from the "rural construction camp," the second wave of rural construction represented a concerted, nationwide effort. This effort comprised multifarious concepts and goals, for instance barefoot doctors, village militias, commune and brigade enterprises, construction of irrigation works,

skills training and literacy initiatives, decent work initiatives, enhanced status of peasants and the emancipation of women.

The national power generated during the collectivization stage was dedicated to rural areas so as to obtain a rural surplus for industrialization and urbanization, even though rural development had once again been made subordinate to urban industrialization. Rural construction existed silently in the broad rural community, and there was much grassroots effort towards maintaining stability while preserving tradition.

In the 1980s, due to burgeoning industrial capital and accelerating globalization, the household-responsibility system (a self-sufficiency initiative by which the state retained land ownership but devolved land rights to peasants, including the advantage of profits and the burden of losses) could not solve the Three Rural Issues nor the administration problems at the grassroots level. Once this system had rejuvenated the traditional small-scale peasant economy, it faced the problem of atomized peasants who, as such, lacked the advantages of organization and systematization, for instance price bargaining power. In pursuit of organizational and institutional development, and in further pursuit of industrialization and modernization, the government established an experimental zone for top-down rural reform in 1987. It was only when the East Asian Financial Crisis struck in 1997, and the macro environment changed, that the experiment ceased and reform withered. But this was to be a brief decline.

The third wave of rural construction has been in force since 2000. Because overcapitalization and the Three Rural Issues are under the control of the central government, it follows that development will be stimulated to the extent that the government interacts productively with the people, and this indeed is the defining feature of the third wave, which, however, underwent changes when urbanization accelerated, and rural communities bore the brunt of the global financial crisis.

After the radical reform of the 1990s, and with China's incorporation into globalization, mainstream society formed alliances with elites so as to transfer the gains of modernization to urban areas and the costs to rural areas, while internal and external interest groups formed further collaborations. Centralized rural construction was reinstituted and at first was led by local forces. Tens of thousands of peasants, migrant workers, students, intellectuals and people from different industries participated. After 15 years of hard work they developed five approaches to contemporary rural construction: "students entering the countryside, supporting agriculture with education," "encourage cooperation between peasants and improve administration," "promoting mutual help among workers and promoting the dignity of labor," "promoting social agriculture and rural-urban integration," and "encouraging public involvement and cultural reinvigoration."

Despite numerous similarities with the first wave, notably its bottom-up implementation, this third wave of rural construction faces even greater challenges. Globalization and urbanization have been making enormous change in Chinese society. As rural resources shrink and China's economy falters, autonomous organizational innovation and institutional construction by and for peasants becomes ever more difficult. Furthermore, the external environment faced by contemporary rural construction is becoming even more complex. For example, overproduction and structural crises (environmental, energy, ecological) might provoke the dominant interest groups to self-reflect, and then make deliberated adjustments to their practices, thus initiating another round of interest battles in disguise.

This is to say that the third wave of rural construction is faced with even more pressure, competition, and temptations from capital and power, all against the backdrop of globalization. Consequently, the implementation of rural construction was not confined to the rural homeland but took place across society, mobilizing forces and participation. There was the

reimplementation of traditional practices, there was (as in the Third World, to which the actuators of this third wave of construction turned for inspiration and advice) cultural critical consciousness and self-reflection, there was criticism of developmentalism, facilitation of dialogue, as well as inter- and cross-field integration, all of which expanded the breadth and diversity of orientations.

Conclusion

We have considered reform and radicalism as these pertain to rural construction in modern China. Incorporating the contemporary context and historical background, we have examined the complex interrelationships between the Century of Radicalism, the Century of Rural Destruction, and the Century of Rural Construction, demonstrating the key importance and essential features of rural construction in China's modernization, as well as the deep commonalities between successive waves of rural construction. Some closing remarks are called for.

For more than a century after the Opium War of 1840, China suffered invasion and oppression by western powers. Resources were siphoned out, and the ensuing survival anxiety in turn generated complex and unpredictable responses, haphazardly bundled into movements such as Self-Strengthening and Self-Help. Regarding the Three Rural Issues (peasants, villages, agriculture), we note that, under the influence of global capitalism as driven by superpowers, the radical efforts of various (Chinese) nationals towards modernization often systematically transfer the economic, social and environmental costs of these efforts to the rural community, thus generating poverty, instability and ecological crises, among other harmful effects. It is precisely this Century of Radicalism, this deviation from the traditional practices that emerged out of a historical context (i.e. the local, rural and national context), and towards a singular consensus in society, that so damaged villages, giving rise to a Century of Rural Destruction.

How can rural communities and minorities survive? They cannot simply rely on confrontation or opposition. Radicalism in the modern history of China, a country where agriculture is a bastion of civilization and where peasants form the majority of the population, generated the Three Rural Issues and different forms of rural destruction. And yet radicalism also nurtured the Century of Rural Construction as a means of self-protection and alternative practice.

Rural construction in China will always be related to the Three Rural Issues, since China's predominantly peasant population is typically forced to bear the multiple costs of radical modernization, a burden the less sustainable as traditional society collapses and cultural values are destroyed. Peasants, responsible intellectuals, and various other social forces combine to seek alternative, non-western-centric development paths under the constraint of an external, western-centric environment, and the further constraint of limited local resources. Their ongoing efforts will generate further waves of rural construction, with the inevitable ebbs and counterflows, as China moves forward into an integrating and yet ever more uncertain world.

Notes

1. These being land, labor force and capital.
2. Note for example that the subtitle of Liang Shuming's 1937 book *Theory of Rural Construction* is *The Future of Chinese Nationals*. And Yen James Y.C. emphasized that rural construction "should not be scattered, but an overall system."
3. For instance, after the outbreak of war, the goal of most rural construction changed from "saving the people" to "saving the country." The construction work would now contribute directly and indirectly to defense, as well as contributing to rural development in a broader way through political mediation, talent nurturing, promoting mobilization, and through other measures.
4. *Baojia* system: a community-based system that combines the functions of household registration and civil control.

Funding

This work was supported by 国家社会科学基金 The National Social Science Foundation of China, [grant number 14ZDA064]. The work is an outcome of a sub-project on "国家安全与乡村治理的历史比较 Historical Comparison of National Security and Rural Governance," led by Liu Weiping, Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University, Fuzhou City, China, as part of a larger project, "全球化挑战下保障国家综合安全的乡村治理结构与机制研究 A Study of the Structure and Mechanism of Rural Governance Basic to the Comprehensive National Security," led by Wen Tiejun, a co-author of the present work.

Notes on contributors

PAN Jiaen 潘家恩 is an associate professor at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, Chongqing University.

LUO Chia-Ling 罗加铃 is a lecturer at the College of Economics (College of Strait Rural Development), Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University.

WEN Tiejun 温铁军 is the executive director of the Institute of Rural Reconstruction of China, Southwest University.

References

Chen, Hansheng 陈翰笙. 2002. *陈翰笙集* [The works of Chen Hansheng]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press 中国社会科学出版社.

Duara, Prasenjit. 2003. *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900–1942 文化、权力与国家: 1900—1942 年的华北农村*. Translated by Wang Fuming 王福明. Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Press 江苏人民出版社.

Engels, Friedrich. 1971. *Selected Works of Marx and Engels 马克思恩格斯选集*. Vol. 4. Beijing: People's Press 人民出版社.

Gao, Ning, and Xun Hu 高宁, 胡迅. 2012. "基于多功能农业理论的都市农业公园规划设计——以莫干山红枫农业公园为例." "The Planning and Design of Agricultural Park in the Perspective of Multifunctional Agriculture: A Case Study of Mountain [Mount] Mogan Agricultural Park." *建筑论坛 / 南方建筑* [Architectural Forum / South Architecture] 5: 82–86.

Huang, Phillip C.C. 黄宗智. 2000. *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China 华北的小农经济与社会变迁*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中华书局.

Liang, Shuming 梁漱溟. 2005. *梁漱溟全集第二卷* [The complete works of Liang Shuming, vol. 2]. Jinan: Shandong People's Press 山东人民出版社.

Lin, Qing 林卿. 2012. "中国多功能农业发展与生态环境保护之思考." "Development of Multifunctional Agriculture and Protection of Ecological Environment in China." *Journal of Fujian Normal University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition) 福建师范大学学报 (哲学社会科学版)* 6: 19–23.

Liu, Kexiang, and Taichang Wu 刘克祥, 吴太昌, eds. 2010. *中国近代经济史 (1927—1937)(上册) [The Economic History of Modern China (1927–1937). Vol. 1]. Beijing: People's Press 人民出版社.*

Polanyi, Karl. 2007. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time 大转型: 我们时代的政治与经济起源*. Translated by Feng Gang and Liu Yang 冯钢, 刘阳. Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Press 浙江人民出版社.

Shiroyama, Tomoko. 2010. *China During the Great Depression: Market, State, and the World Economy, 1929–1937 大萧条时期的中国: 市场、国家与世界经济*. Translated by Meng Fanli and Shang Guomin 孟凡礼, 尚国敏. Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Press 江苏人民出版社.

Wen, Tiejun 温铁军. 2009. "*三农*"*问题与制度变迁* ["Three Rural Issues" and institutional change]. Beijing: China Economic Publishing House 中国经济出版社.

Zheng, Dahua 郑大华. 2000. *民国乡村建设运动* [Rural construction movements in the Republic of China]. Beijing: Social Science Literature Press 社会科学文献出版社.