

DOCTORAL THESIS

Local organizations and efficiency of state extraction in rural China: a case study of a county in Guangdong Province, 1949-1956

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Abstract

The present study focuses on the local organizations and state extraction in rural China from 1949 to 1956. But in order to provide an understanding of context and processes the thesis at the same time examines the secular changes in local organizations and the historical experience of state extraction in rural China during a relatively long period from the fourteenth century to 1956. Specifically, the present study focuses on the relationships between local organizations and the efficiency (transaction costs) of state extraction in rural China from the fourteenth century to 1956, and finds that the actions and interactions of the state (or rulers), state agents (recorders in lijia organization and lineage leaders before the twentieth century, local bosses during the first half of the twentieth century, and heads and recorders in the collectives after 1949), and constituents (the common peasants) led to the changes of institutions in state extraction (forms of taxation, forms of contract between the state and state agents, structures of local organizations) and institutions in broader social context (informal institutions), and the changes in the efficiency (transaction costs) of state extraction, by using the historical experience of state extraction from villages in A County (a County in southeast China) from the fourteenth century to 1956 as a case study. The thesis therefore revises key aspects of the new institutionalism model (Williamson 1975; North 1981, 1991; Kiser 1994; Levi 1988), and develops a new model for understanding organizations, what might be called the process institutionalism model. In contrast to the new institutionalism model which emphasizes the efficiency properties of alternative forms of organization, and their centrality to the actions and interactions of organization participants and the other actors in

broader social context, the process institutionalism model focuses on the processes whereby the organizational participants and the other actors in broader social context, having different interests and valuing various inducements, take actions and interact with each other, and emphasizes that the processes of the actions and interactions of organization participants and the other actors in broader social context are fundamentally important to the changes in organization structures and the other institutions in broader social context, and the changes in the efficiency of institutional patterns. Secondly, the present study follows the research approach opened by Schumpeter (1991) and develops a relatively complete framework to understand the changes in state institutions, and the efficiency of state extraction, not only in China, but also in the other countries after the fourteenth century (including the development of a relatively strong central representative institution in England in the seventeenth century and the establishment of bureaucratic monarchy in the major European continental countries in the eighteenth century).

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