Introduction

This book is about the troubled relationship between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and village dwellers in a rural border area of China. These villagers hold durable memories of the most traumatic episode of the Maoist past, known as the Great Leap Forward, a state-driven campaign to regiment and collectivize every aspect of human life in the years 1958–1961. Imposed by Communist Party activists loyal to Mao at the county, township, and village level, this campaign produced the most catastrophic famine in modern world history,[1] killing at least 40–45 million rural dwellers in one way or another.[2] The scale of death from this campaign is mind boggling. Almost twice as many people died in the Great Leap famine as in the Taiping Rebellion – the world's most devastating civil war. Actually, Mao and his political base wiped out three times more people during this episode of war communism than were exterminated by Stalin's and Hitler's cadres, armies, and death squads in Eastern Europe between 1933 and 1945.[3]

In the throes of the great famine, many of China's rural people came to believe that the Mao-led Communist Party had deliberately starved them to death.[4] Their instincts were right. As early as March 1959, Mao Zedong knew about the famine unfolding in the countryside, yet he and his party still

[1] Yang, *Calamity and Reform*, 1.

[2] The figure of 45 million is from Dikotter, *Mao's Great Famine*, x. Mao Yushi has calculated that 36 million people starved to death. Mao Yushi, "Lessons from China's Great Famine," 484–486. Mao's estimate is in line with the research of Yang Jisheng, *Tombstone*, 430. Nonetheless, Yang Jisheng also has noted that the estimate of 36 million "is still too low," in part because the reports by different localities, frequently amassed or screened by local officials, were inaccurate. Yang, *Tombstone*, 430. I agree. Moreover, it is important to note that the official reports on the death rate rarely include the number of people who died from forced hard labor, from famine-related diseases, from industrial accidents, from cadre brutality, and from politically induced suicide.

[3] See Snyder, *Bloodlands*.

[4] "Gansu Shengwei."

relentlessly pushed for higher levels of grain procurement, thereby delivering millions on millions of villagers into the arms of death.[5]

People in Tianxia village, Qin'an county, Gansu province, suffered this fate. Here commune party leaders and their brigade-level accomplices seized all of the harvest for the state, leaving villagers to starve on a grain ration of only two *liang* per day – a far cry from the officially promised ration of one pound per day.[6] Qin Ruisheng, one of Tianxia's survivors, lost her father and four siblings to the sharp hunger of late 1958. At age fourteen, Qin managed to survive by scavenging wild grass and plant stems from the stark landscapes of various brigades (villages). In the course of her desperate travels, Qin found that brigade-level cadres routinely tossed dozens of starved bodies into nearby ditches. Qin also discovered that both young and old Gansu villagers spread this satirical verse about Mao and the performance of his regime: "Mao Zhuxi xiang taiyang, Yi tian zhi gei chi er liang," which translates "Chairman Mao is like the Sun. He gives us two *liang* a day."[7] Historically, the imperial order had earned the Mandate of Heaven by keeping taxes fair and flexible and storing grain to prevent famine. In the Great Leap, Mao and his party failed on both counts. Although Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, the "enlightened" leaders of the Central government, subsequently scurried to convince rural people that the CCP was a benevolent institution and that Mao and the Communist Party still had the interest of rural people at heart, farmers who had experienced the famine first-hand did not buy into this propaganda. They felt betrayed by both Mao and his party.[8]

In wide swaths of China's deep interior, the Mao-led Communist Party induced a catastrophe in 1958–1961 and completely shredded the legitimacy of the one-party state. Following the Great Leap, the Communist Party strived to erase popular memory of the devastating famine in the countryside. But in the bleak twenty-year aftermath of the Great Leap famine, China's rural people waged a silent day-by-day, inch-by-inch struggle to climb out of the submarginal existence to which Mao's cadres had assigned them in the famine, and

[5] For the seminal scholarship on Mao's fanatical push and Mao's role in accelerating the Leap and its famine, see MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 333; Bernstein, "Mao Zedong and the Famine," 422–445; Yang, *Tombstone*, 17–18, 352–353, 363–366, 384–389, 483–484; Dikotter, *Mao's Great Famine*, xiii, 70, 84–89, 134; and Zhou Xun, *The Great Famine in China*, xiii, 23.

[6] Qin Ruisheng, interview, August 4, 2014.

[7] Ibid. Cf. Eva Song, *Xunzhao Dajihuang Xingcunzhe*, 104. For a similar anti-Mao satirical verse, see Wemheuer, "The Grain Problem Is an Ideological Problem," 114.

[8] See "Gansu Shengwei." Cf. the interviews of farmers conducted by Eva Song, especially the one from Gansu's Ji Chuanjen, in Eva Song, *Xunzhao Dajihuang Xingcunzhe*, 254–255, 261. On this point, also see Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention*, 117, and conclusion, and Thaxton, unpublished Anhui interviews of 2010. This is implicit in Wemheuer, "Dealing with Responsibility for the Great Leap Famine," 176, 186, 188–190, and it is strongly implicit in Yang, *Tombstone*, 466–473, 484, especially on the riots and rebellions in Yunnan, Gansu, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Hebei provinces.

there was little if any institutional support for this struggle.[9] Their memories of the famine and the struggle that followed were ungovernable, and they played a role in constructing the monstrous and troubling visions, dreams, and nightmares of famine survivors. To many of them, the Mao-led Communist Party had lost the right to rule.

Scholars of politics in the People's Republic of China (PRC) have argued that the post-Mao Central government implemented a reform process that redressed the material devastation caused by the failings of the Mao era, lifting several hundred million rural dwellers up from a submarginal existence to a plane of subsistence.[10] They are correct. The post-1978 Deng Xiaoping reform did just that, initially reviving the hope of the rural poor for a better, adequate life, free from predatory state interference. Nonetheless, the life stories of the survivors of the catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward offer little evidence that the post-Mao reforms *actually* restored the legitimacy of the Communist Party in the villages of the deep agricultural interior. In the eyes of many villagers, the legitimacy crisis engendered by the failed performance of the Mao-led CCP in the Great Leap Forward Famine persisted into the so-called reform era. The political habits originally responsible for the Great Leap disaster – habits of party rule that persisted over many decades – were not reformed. True, some local CCP leaders had one foot in the new world of reform, but these same political actors often had the other foot in old ways of ruling.[11]

In China's unreformed authoritarian political context, the old habits of rule sometimes stirred up agonizing memories of the Great Leap episode. In the deep countryside, the institutionalized propensity to dominate increasingly gave rise to contentious encounters with power holders, and rural people drew on such memories to defend themselves against the possibility of another round of suffering and loss. This book is about these memories and about how they have informed resistance in a North China border region with a population and territory the size of France. It is about how the catastrophic Maoist past has infused the present, about how memories of this past have been pricked by

[9] For an understanding of how rural people initially escaped the great famine largely by their own efforts, see Thaxton, "How the Great Leap Forward Famine Ended," 251–271, esp. 259–270; on the continuous struggle to thwart Maoist attempts to eliminate household farming and independent marketing after 1961, see Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention*, chapter 8.

[10] On this uplifting, see Lin, "Rural Reforms and Agricultural Growth," 35–40; Friedman, Pickowicz, and Selden, *Revolution, Resistance, and Reform*; Qian, "China's Market Transition," 232–235; Dittmer, "China's Global Rise," 496; Naughton, *Chinese Economy*, 212–215, 219, 251, 263–265; Whyte, *One Country, Two Societies*; and Xiang, "Bo Xilai Affair," 60.

[11] In other words, the local party leaders who were stuck in old ways of ruling were unprepared to give them up. This brings to mind Fan Yuan's 1994 film *The Accused Uncle Shanggang*, in which a village party secretary who was in power in both the Mao and Deng eras means well and wants to keep order, but he addresses wrongdoing in the village by pillorying and subjecting villagers to public criticism. Therefore, the authoritarian habits by which he ruled the village in the Mao era carried over to the Deng era.

corrupt, force-addicted local party leaders who were implicated in the Great Leap famine, and about how rural people, in some instances, have resisted these leaders in the reform period. The evidence in parts of the book suggests that resistance to the CCP and its reform-era policies would have formed without the Great Leap being a factor, and this might be true in some instances. Nevertheless, my purpose here is to show that resistance at the village level occasionally was linked to memories of the Great Leap's harm and that such memories influenced, and sometimes inflamed, acts of resistance and opposition. By focusing on this latter, more complex genre of contention we can better understand that resistance from below does not necessarily bode well for Central government leaders, whom some villagers hold responsible for a failed political reform and renewed suffering.

POCKETS OF CONTENTION IN "DEEP CHINA"

This book is focused on the rise of contention in Da Fo village, located in Dongle county, Henan province, and within the Hebei-Shandong-Henan border area.[12] My earlier book, *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China*, focused mainly on political conflict in this small market village during the Great Leap Forward Famine and brought the story up to the start of reform in 1978, by which time Da Fo had approximately 2,800 people.[13] This book continues the story of Da Fo's fate under CCP rule in the 1978–2013 period. However, it also relies extensively on interview data from twelve other villages in this same border area: Liangmen, Liangmenpo, Shangcunji, Dingcun, Daweicun, Weicaicun, Wangguocun, Hongwucun, and Yuanchao in Henan province and Pengdi, Pingyuandi, and Yuezhuang in Hebei province. Most of these villages share marriage and often market ties, and also a common political history.

This North China tri-provincial border area has more than a thousand-year history of political turbulence. Challengers to imperial rule historically recruited the foot soldiers for their rebel armies from the villages of this yellow-earth region. During the Republican period, Mao Zedong took advantage of the rebellious political culture of this area by sending the 129th Division of the CCP's Eighth Route Army, led by Liu Bocheng and Deng Xiaoping, into

[12] The term "deep China" is from Arthur Kleinman, who associates it with the often hidden, underlying moral values that are at work in the quest of people in China to achieve a good life in the shadow of Mao-era attacks on individuals and communities. I accept this definition, but by "deep China" I also mean the remote places of the countryside and the hidden, indelible memories of rural people whose lives were upended by the CCP exercising power on them in the Great Leap Forward. I also use this term to refer to the tendency of such individuals to draw on such memories to negotiate survival and resistance to intrusive, corrupt authoritarian rule in the present. This latter use is in keeping with Kleniman's use of the term, too. Cf. Kleinman, *Deep China*, 8–16, 261–290, esp. 286–288, in which we find fantastic revelations and analyses of the reform era party-state corruption of morals important for individual honesty and integrity.

[13] Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention.*

this border area, and underground CCP leaders were able to draw the independent farmers who had suffered mistreatment at the hands of warlord, Kuomintang, and Japanese Puppet Army forces to their cause, building local support for the military strikes of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) against Chiang Kai-shek's armies in the 1946–1949 civil war. Village people in this border area provided the rear service support for these strikes, including movement of artillery to the front lines and transportation of wounded PLA soldiers to rear area CCP hospitals, and some of their fathers, brothers, and sons gave their lives to help upend the Nationalist government and bring the Mao-led CCP to power. This border area is still a place with a resistive political culture, discernible in part by the return of statues of Guangong, the War God whose legends inspired and justified resistance to state oppressors, to the household shrines and neighborhood temples of villagers in the post-1978 reform period.[14]

On the other hand, this border region is also a place where the Communist Party has not yet fully recovered from the legitimacy crisis engendered by the Great Leap Forward Famine. Though the Central government may well have reclaimed legitimacy among China's urban, more highly educated population, and also may have repaired the damage of the Great Leap famine in parts of the agricultural interior, we must keep in mind that China is a vast country and that many of the remote, poor, provincial border regions in which the pre-1949 CCP persuaded villagers that it stood for their interests were neglected, and sometimes abused, by the Mao-led Central government after the revolutionary victory. In fact, until recently these regions were still barely on the radar of Beijing-based reformers. Hence, in the case of the border region under study, it seems, following the scholarship of Heike Holbig and Bruce Gilley, that China is a complex country that "has *both* high overall legitimacy *and* serious legitimacy fissures if only because of its size and complexity."[15] This book taps the memories of individuals who survived the state-inflicted disaster that gave rise to one of these fissures. It focuses on the political and psychological damage stemming from the disaster of 1958–1961 in the villages of this one border area. It constitutes an effort to understand the extent to which, in the words of Holbig and Gilley, the reform-era policies and practices of CCP rulers have addressed the issues that made for a "pocket of legitimation failure" in this border area,[16] and to examine the consequences of the party's effort to preserve its power without undertaking genuine political reform.

[14] I witnessed the return of this deity in the post-Mao period, all through the 1980s and 1990s. See Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China*, and Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*; Duara's work first brought our attention to the importance of the War God in popular culture.

[15] Holbig and Gilley, "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China," 399. [16] Ibid.

THE CHALLENGE OF STUDYING CONTENTION THROUGH MEMORY IN AUTHORITARIAN CHINA

Understanding popular contention in micro-level settings patrolled by authoritarian Chinese rulers who have manufactured a recent catastrophe poses a daunting challenge. Few, if any, survivors of the Great Leap famine will talk with outsiders about state power, let alone voice judgments about the institutionally appointed agents of that calamity. In the PRC, where there has been no meaningful political reform, rural people often still live side by side with the perpetrators of Mao-era suffering. In this situation, many are fearful of expressing their genuine political emotions to anyone. Speaking truth about power, especially the truth about a topic tabooed by the Communist Party, is dangerous. Here the Communist Party–directed state and its local agents periodically warn village leaders against providing testimony about specific experiences of suffering in the Great Leap Forward and its famine. In this political context, few villagers will discuss internalized memories of this disaster, let alone talk openly about the link between this past disaster and personal suffering in the present.[17]

In June 1987, while interviewing in Qiliu village, in Hua county, Henan province, I had an experience that underscores this point. At the time, I was studying Republican-era political history. The Great Leap famine was not on my research agenda. I had befriended the young village party secretary, and I usually would drop by his home to chat right before I departed the village around 6 PM. One day I decided to break away early from my interview work routine to visit him. As I approached the front gate to his courtyard, I heard one of my academic hosts, a university-based Communist Party historian who was one of my minders, yelling loudly at the village secretary: "You can tell him [me] anything he wants to know about pre-1949 history, but do not tell him one damn thing about what happened here after 1949."[18] The secretary did not tell me anything about the Great Leap episode that summer, and so I left the issue alone. However, when I returned to Qiliu the following summer he invited me to come with him to meet a small group of villagers who were in their sixties and seventies in a yard enclosed by four high walls. The villagers wanted me to know, and were eager to explain, that one-ninth of the village's

[17] Arthur and Joan Kleinman remind us that the top-down mass movements that defined Mao era politics created a "culture of terror" and fear that worked against speaking candidly in the presence of power. Kleinman and Kleinman, "The Appeal of Experience," 16–17. Surely the cadre violence of land reform, experienced by kin and neighbors, warned ordinary villagers of the potential for future violence and repression. Additionally, Neil J. Diamant has discovered that people in China experienced the CCP writing of the draft 1954 constitution through fears of what the Mao-led party might do to *further* harm them, so that a fear of power already had crept into party relations with ordinary people even before the disasters of the Great Leap and the Cultural Revolution. Neil Diamant, "Talking about the Revolution, " and personal correspondence with Neil J. Diamant, May 5, 2013. This is my understanding of Diamant's insightful work.

[18] Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention.*

inhabitants, roughly 200 people, had died in the famine of the Great Leap Forward. This meeting took place when my academic hosts – and minders – were away from the village and well out of earshot; that is, within a space that was free of state agency.

In 1991, I had a similar experience in Da Fo village, also in Henan province. When I asked villagers to detail their experiences in the Henan Famine of 1942, some of them explained how they survived the famine by ageless strategies of self-help, including migrating to better-off agricultural places and begging in lively markets. But some of them also started to talk about their experiences in the great famine of 1958–1961, and their revelations began to eclipse their interest in relaying information about their fate in the Henan Famine, which had occurred under Kuomintang rule. Many wanted me to know that during the Great Leap Forward the CCP had prevented them from migrating out of Da Fo to find succor in towns and cities and, further, that the party had shut down market activity and then tabooed begging as a shameful act. Such political closure, I learned, contributed to starvation and death in the years 1958–1961, and the Great Leap famine proved far more lethal than the Henan Famine,[19] which, in contrast to the Leap famine, was the result of prolonged drought, war, and poor transport networks – not to mention the warlord infighting that impeded Nationalist government relief efforts.[20] Increasingly, when I returned to Da Fo between 1991 and 1995, many interviewees unexpectedly steered me toward the devastating impact of the Great Leap famine years; by the late 1990s I was learning more and more about the famine from these incremental, often unplanned outpourings, which took place in guarded local spaces.

The agents of the Communist Party–led state are determined to inhibit access to such spaces and to the deep *independent* judgments rural people hold of power. Scholars who do not repeatedly visit local settings or interact with villagers in such settings, who do not find ways to win trust with villagers, and who do not learn how to conduct research in small, nonstate spaces will be challenged to understand how the episodic memory of the Great Leap past influences responses to inhumane treatment by power holders since 1978. Without this understanding, we cannot get at the hidden core of contention in contemporary China.[21]

[19] Ibid.

[20] In 2012, the Central government approved the dissemination of Feng Xiaogang's film *Back to 1942*, which portrays the 1942 famine as the result of the politically dark forces soon to be ousted by the CCP-led October 1, 1949, revolution, part of an attempt to legitimize party rule. The film did not question the usual estimate of 3 million deaths, when probably no more than 1.5 million died in the 1942 famine; Clarissa Sebag-Montefiore is correct to argue that the release of this film is part of an effort to deflect attention from the growing popular demand that the party-state openly confront the history of Mao's great famine. See Sebag-Montefiore, "Great Silence," and Mackinnon, "Is China Finally Confronting?"

[21] I am not suggesting that the Great Leap episode can provide a "magic lantern" for seeing and comprehending every aspect of political life and political contention in contemporary China. Instead, my purpose is to show, by studying memory and contention in one rural place, that the

ORAL HISTORY METHODOLOGY

Of course we cannot sustain the commitment of villagers to actively participate in remembering without building trust. The methodology of oral history interviewing used for this book was aimed explicitly at cultivating such trust. The approach was grounded in a number of complementary strategies of interview work. First, only the villagers who wanted to tell their life stories were interviewed. They could refuse to participate in interviews or withdraw from the interview process if they felt inconvenienced or uncomfortable with questions. Second, most villagers were interviewed in the privacy of their homes, and they were guaranteed anonymity. Hence this book uses pseudonyms for all important persons and places in its narrative. I have invoked this procedure to protect all of the informants in the study.

Third, the interview questions were rarely about "grand official political history and events" – the Great Leap Forward itself, the Cultural Revolution, or the Deng Xiaoping Reform. Instead, open-ended questions focused on the quotidian life experiences of individuals over long periods of time.[22] The goal was to grasp encounters with power only when villagers chose to speak of how power holders intervened in, and sometimes disrupted, everyday routines of survival and efforts to preserve earned household entitlements. The questionnaires were designed to ascertain how individual villagers remembered the ways in which such encounters jeopardized survival in the Great Leap and its famine, but they also were drawn up to guard against being skewed by the interviewer's interest in the link between the Great Leap and post-Mao-era injustice. That is, the focus was on ascertaining the link between injustice in these two eras through open-ended interviewing rather than through directly introducing or emphasizing the subject of the Great Leap itself. In this way, the interviews aimed to arrive at an objective understanding of whether some of the contentious performances in the post-Mao period reflected memories of suffering engendered by the Great Leap episode.

Much like the book *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China*, this book is based on interactive interviews and face-to-face discussions with ordinary villagers who, in spite of suffering, managed to survive the Great Leap and its famine. To a lesser extent, the work is founded on interviews of village and township Communist Party leaders, some of whom were directly implicated in imposing the policies engendering the Leap famine. My previous book was based on 400 in-depth interviews with villagers aged 21–85. This work is based on the original oral history data set plus an additional 130 interviews. For the most part, the additional interviews were undertaken with individual

assumption that the Great Leap disaster exerts little influence on politics in the present is questionable.

[22] This approach finds its origins in Braudel, *On History*, 11–12, 35–38, 45, 78–79, and in Tomich, "The Order of Historical Time"; also see Bourdieu, "To the Reader."

villagers in the privacy of their homes and courtyards and in strict internal confidentiality, which is to say no other people living within the PRC were allowed to access any of the interviews. The age range for this additional group was 17–90, and the great majority of interviewees were between the ages 45 and 75.

In attempting to reconstruct the long-term episodic memory of the catastrophe of Mao-era rule, and to get villagers to play a central role in this retrieval process, the preframed, easily exploitable format of survey research was abandoned. Instead, individuals were engaged in iterated and intimate verbal exchanges in order to explore their past and present relationships with power. This fourth strategy was pursued with mindfulness of Uradyn E. Bulag's warning that oral history, as practiced in the Mao-era PRC, was a party-organized practice designed to discipline its subjects and, above all else, "to contain subversion from within and without the Party."[23] To dissociate the interview process from the Maoist attempt to produce "correct remembrance" of suffering through dictation, interviewees were free to take the reins in guiding the motif of discourse.[24] Villagers were allowed not only to question the usefulness of the questions but also to instinctually and instantaneously introduce their own ways of refining, or transforming, the questions into questions that seemed more worthwhile *to them*. This procedure sometimes led to unimagined paths, introducing new kaleidoscopes of political, social, and cultural knowledge that, to say the least, could not have been discovered through a preformulated way of asking questions.[25]

The lessons learned in viewing these different kaleidoscopes of local knowledge were used to rewrite questionnaires for the next round of interviews, leading to a deeper insight into what the previous round of interview work had taught. This method offered a bridge for building trust with key informants in different villages, especially in Da Fo, the village on which field work was most sharply focused. As a result, the research was continued over time, even in the face of regime efforts at the township level to scuttle it. In the early summer of 1998, a small contingent of police came to Da Fo village to question some of the interviewees. The police wanted to know what the villagers were being interviewed about. The interviewees, now trusted allies, refused to tell the police anything. They protected the research project while protecting themselves. Had research been initiated with pointed, blatantly political questions about the official transcript of hegemonic state power holders in Beijing,

[23] Bulag, "Can the Subalterns Not Speak?," 105, also 97–99.

[24] As Jun Jing has pointed out, Maoist controls on memory were pervasive, and people whose memories were at odds with regime narratives were at risk, so it was important to reassure villagers that they could relate the unabridged personal stories of *their* lives. Cf. Jing, *Temple of Memories*, 8.

[25] Scott has implicitly talked about the importance of such a process. Scott, "James Scott on Agriculture as Politics."

Zhengzhou, or Dongle county, in the collective or post-collective eras, this would have alarmed villagers and perhaps alienated them. They, in turn, more than likely would have been inclined to expose the project to the police, whom, we will discover in this work, they despise. Recognizing individuals, getting to know and respect them for *who they are*, listening to *their stories* of how they have survived the trials of single party rule, is vital to winning trust and getting to the core of human suffering and political contestation in village China.

Following Earl R. Babbie, the research also made use of the "snowball sampling" technique, relying on each individual interviewee to help locate yet another individual to interview, thereby building up a substantial network of individual villagers with local knowledge of survival and suffering in the Great Leap era and beyond.[26] This technique made it possible to interview villagers from all walks of life and villagers with varying degrees of loyalty to the party-state. Occasionally, individual informants were engaged in small group discussions, but snowballing was used mainly to identify people who had knowledge of the topic and to differentiate between those with party-state connections and those without such ties, so that Communist Party–structured sampling would not skew the results. This also made it possible to avoid mixing powerless villagers with party-connected leaders and clients in shared interview spaces and formats.

Finally, the interviewing strategy targeted clusters of ten, fifteen, and thirty individual villagers who had stories to tell about a well-defined issue that was entangled with suffering in the Great Leap and in the post-1978 path to contention. Individual interviewees were patiently nudged to think and talk about how the past was connected to a common stream of reform-era contention over treatment from the powerful.[27] When, for instance, it came to light that more than a few Da Fo villagers turned migrant workers were agitated by urban labor contractors who refused to pay them a promised wage for construction work, in-depth interviews with thirty-three migrant workers were conducted targeting this issue. By gathering more and more information about each individual migrant worker's attempt to cope with the ordeal of survival in the construction industry, it was possible to locate the particulars of each interview within a comparative individual qua individual framework of claims making and identify the common causes of contention within this issue area. An attempt was then made to follow the story of group contention in the present back to memories of similar threats to survival in the Great Leap era. This was difficult and sometimes led down dead-end alleys. But it sometimes connected persistent individual memories of past injustices to shared indignation in the present, thereby yielding a representation of contention with a lineage to the Great Leap's injustice.

[26] Babbie, *Practice of Social Research*, 114–115.
[27] Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 188.

HORIZONS OF TIME

Most social science research on contemporary China operates on "high state time," that is, a construct of time informed by approaches that locate popular evaluations of state authority and legitimacy in policy changes initiated by Communist Party leaders in Beijing. This approach has enhanced our understanding of how rural China has changed in the post-Mao period, making it possible to grasp variations in popular attitudes toward powerful high and low state actors and the effects of policy locally. To be sure, China's rural people see politics mainly in the present. By the same token, however, most older villagers and some of the middle-aged villagers approach political life through two other kinds of time: the deep historical time of the dynastic past and the deep political time of the collective era, with its episodes of trouble and terror.

This book takes seriously Paul Pierson's reminder that time horizons matter greatly in analyses of how power holders, and the institutions they control, are experienced by society.[28] To Pierson, temporal considerations are important in creating the "grounding for theoretical claims about how things happen in the social world."[29] In short, tapping into local knowledge of the past is essential if we are to grasp how rural people see state power in the present. Yet most renditions of how rural people see the Communist Party take the post-1978 reform period as a starting point, thereby divorcing contemporary contention from events and episodes that stretch back to the Mao period and beyond. The resulting "snapshots of reform" slight the ways in which the troublesome past often shapes the dynamics of resistance, protest, and contention in the post-Mao countryside.

For many rural dwellers, the promise of the post-1978 reform has been compromised by the lingering moral divide of the most traumatic episode of Mao-era rule. In Da Fo village, whose inhabitants are well aware of Beijing's policies, the majority of farmers still refer to the reform-era Liangmen township government as *the commune* – the lowest tier of state power in the collective era – and most farmers in the villages surrounding Da Fo more or less presume that the Communist Party leaders who rule from the township level operate with the same style of commune-era leaders, a style implicated in the Great Leap disaster. Yet Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li's innovative and insightful work, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*, does not even mention the episode of the Great Leap Forward or address the way in which this Mao-era catastrophe has conditioned popular emotions about CCP rule in the contemporary period. Starting the story line with the Deng Xiaoping-led reform in 1978, O'Brien and Li have argued that Central government leaders have introduced policies and laws that provide rural dwellers with the right to resist the wrongdoings of local party leaders. In this paradigm, the rural poor supposedly were institutionally

[28] Pierson, *Politics in Time*, 2. [29] Ibid., 4.

encouraged to assert and defend their interests through policy-sanctioned channels, and thus embraced a new process of contention to justify their claims by aligning with the center's beneficial policies and supportive rhetoric.[30]

Whereas China's rural people might credit the post-Mao center for providing them with a policy-based tool for resisting bad cadre behavior, Beijing's policy reforms did not give them a cause for holding local party leaders accountable for misconduct. This book argues that contention often has links back to the collective era, when villagers did whatever they could to hold on to earned household entitlements threatened by the Mao-led center's mission of rapid, aggressive collectivization – a mission that engendered the Great Leap catastrophe. The cause of such contention, therefore, cannot be found simply – or only – in the shrewd efforts of villagers to exploit the post-Mao center's policies, norms, and promised reforms for their own purpose.[31] The small, often hidden everyday struggles of individuals and households to regain these entitlements, which were violently usurped by Beijing rulers and their rural cadre base in the Great Leap Forward, continued on into the late Mao and early post-Mao periods. This study helps us understand that rural people *who had been struggling all along* found in the Deng-crafted reform policies the chance, and sometimes the means, to more openly and effectively contest long-standing grievances against party-state aggrandizement.

INDIVIDUAL ENCOUNTERS WITH POWER

Social science work on contentious politics by and large emphasizes collective action at the expense of the individual, who often appears as a nameless member of a "social movement." Yet challenges to state domination almost always begin with the attempts of courageous individuals whose elementary social rights have been violated, sometimes brazenly, by the agents of government organizations whose main purpose is to serve their own interest, usually in the name of public good or public order.[32] Collective political contention often grows out of the decisions of individuals to avoid or challenge the reach of such organizations, if only by small acts of resistance. As F. G. Bailey has pointed out, such resistance often entails a struggle against "organizational trespassing" into the treasured kingdom of individual space,[33] and the individuals who take up this resistance do so at great risk. If we trace the long fuse to collective-based contention back to its origins, therefore, we frequently discover that its roots lay in the efforts of individuals to prevent government officials, or those in their employ, from intruding into spaces and routines essential for survival, dignity, and self-respect.[34]

[30] O'Brien and Li, *Rightful Resistance*, 2–3. [31] Ibid. [32] Bailey, *Kingdom of Individuals*.
[33] Ibid., 9. [34] Ibid., 16.

This book is based on individual recollections of encounters with power. The methodological starting point for grasping collective action is not the social group involved in such action, but rather the individual human beings who act to defend themselves and the groups to which they are attached: families, friends, lineages, neighborhoods, villages, and market communities. In short, this study takes inspiration from the methodological individualism of Max Weber, who, as Stephen E. Hanson points out, saw "collective social outcomes as generated by the actions of individuals who are motivated by their diverse subjective interpretations of their positions in the social world."[35] Following Weber, this work has its origins in interview techniques that recognize individuals as independent causal agents of struggles for existence with dignity. I assume, and attempt to demonstrate, that virtually all collective forms of contention, and almost all group-based modes of resistance, are closely linked to "the particular acts of particular persons, since these alone can be treated as agents in a course of subjectively understandable action."[36]

In this study, individual contestants have lives, norms, interests, and pursuits of their own. Their resistance to authority is dependent neither on the protective support of leaders in Beijing nor on the opportunistic exploitation of the collapse of elite mechanisms of control pure and simple. Rather, they frequently turn to contention out of "longstanding interests."[37] The premise of this work is that many of them interpret such interests in light of what they remember about the humiliation and harm delivered in the catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward.[38]

In taking societies and states as the units of strategic political action, scholars of contentious politics have by and large slighted the importance of individuals in challenging institutional authority and domination. The Weberian paradigm, however, would argue that collective forms of contention are nothing more or less than the aggregated resistance of individuals and that individuals who suffer from state domination and oppression, and who find the courage to resist, are the key actors who galvanize the social groups whose claims, demands, and protests represent a contentious expression of collectivity.[39] Just as we cannot understand why authoritarian regimes, like the one in Beijing, decay and crumble without understanding why the individuals who make up the local staffs of such regimes lose faith in their superiors at the apex of state power, so we cannot understand why governments either are compelled to change policies or are overthrown without

[35] Hanson, *Post-Imperial Democracies*, 11. [36] Weber cited in ibid., 14, n32.
[37] Cf. Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta, "Return of the Repressed," 69–70, 73.
[38] In this respect, the individual activism I am speaking of is not the product of the methodological individualism of "rational choice" theory, for the contention it engages is dependent on interpretation, and not solely or mainly objective incentives and constraints. This cautionary note has been inspired by Bruce Gilley, personal correspondence, October 4, 2012.
[39] Cf. Hanson, *Post-Imperial Democracies*, 19, 25.

examining why state-abused individuals have been able to express their indignation and resistance in ways that magnetize scores of other victims of political injustice to their cause.

PERSISTENT MEMORIES: A SOURCE OF ENERGY AGAINST PRESENT-DAY INJUSTICE

In *The Seven Sins of Memory*, Daniel L. Schacter has informed us that persistent memories often originate in traumatic experiences with accidents, life-threatening illnesses, bullying, brutal official mistreatment, or insurgencies and wars. "The intrusive memories that result from such experiences," writes Schacter, "usually take the form of vivid perceptual images, sometimes preserving in minute detail the very features of trauma which survivors would most like to forget."[40]

The testimony of fifty-six-year-old (in 2010) Chen Zhigao of Jidan village, in Xuanzhi county, Anhui province, suggests one of many ways in which such memories were transferred to the next generation. Born in 1954, Chen Zhigao was only six when his first and second elder sisters starved to death in the great famine. They died in part because his mother was an honest person and hesitated to pilfer the crops of the collective and in part because his father was taken away from the village to build a huge reservoir, and hence did not know what was going on back at home. After his second elder sister died, Chen's mother also succumbed to starvation. At the height of the Leap, the CCP leaders of Jidan village gave food only to those who worked and, according to Chen Zhigao, "allowed the younger children who could not work to starve." Thus, like Zhang Ying, whose story we will take up later, Chen remembers the scene of dead children strewn across the village as very scary. But the most intrusive, disturbing memory of all is that of the fate of his father. Trapped in the commune's reservoir work camp and panicked over the possibility of losing his remaining two children, his father, Chen Zhiming, stole grain from the public dining hall, for which he was tortured to death by the CCP reservoir team leaders in a public criticism session. "The leaders," Chen tells us, "tied my father's thumbs to his back, and then tied his back to a bamboo pole. Then they hung him over the main beams of the house. After that, they forced him to kneel down on a bench with broken glass under his knees. They broke my father's back in the process. My father was unable to work after the torture. He was kicked out of the reservoir team, and he could not find enough food to eat in the village. He died after two months. *Before he died, my father told me everything that had happened to him. I have not forgotten any of this, and I will not forget it as long as I live.*"[41]

[40] Schacter, *Seven Sins of Memory*, 174. [41] Chen Zhigao, interview.

Zhang Ying also was speaking through a persistent, troubling memory in the summer of 2007, when she related her Great Leap experience as a six-year-old child in Shilu village, in Shandong's Ji Qing county:

I was only six years old at the time of the Great Leap Forward. I remember I was hungry all the time. But the hardest thing for me was that my playmate died. Chunying was the same age as me, and I played with Chunying every day. At the time, we were not in school. Children in our neighborhood all played together. We played simple games. We jumped rope together. We played marbles together. We played with other kids, but we were the closest of friends. She came to my household a couple of times a day, and I went to hers. When she came to my home my mother would offer her some food, and when I went to her home her mother would offer me whatever food they had.

One day I went to look for Chunying to play. But her mother said she was not at home. I asked her where Chunying was. She said that she was in the big ditch outside the village. Therefore I went to the big ditch to look for her. I did not expect that anything was wrong with her at the time. But when I arrived there, I discovered Chunying's body. She had died the night before [from malnutrition and diphtheria–RT], and her parents had left her there for the dogs. Her hair was messed up in the wind, and I was frightened by the sight of her, and so I ran home to tell my mother that Chunying had died.

But what frightened me the most was that Chunying's mother did not show any sign of sadness about her daughter's death. Maybe she did not want to scare me. The way she related Chunying's fate was as if her daughter was away on a journey and would come back someday.

For many years afterwards, I was not able to go that ditch, and I have had many nightmares over the death of my childhood friend. Her death posed many troubling questions for me. Did she have someone to play with in the other world? What was it like to die? What if I had to die someday? I could not sleep at night for thinking about these questions.[42]

Zhang Ying and her mother survived Mao's great famine, partly by plying the black markets on the outskirts of Qingdao and partly by jumping onto freight trains headed for the rural villages north of Ji Qing, where they traded family valuables for small bags of wheat, corn, and soybeans.[43] Though her trauma was real, Zhang Ying's Great Leap experience seems to have strengthened her will to survive, lift herself out of the dystopia of the famine and its aftermath, and confront subsequent life crises head-on.[44] One of these crises occurred in 1988, when the Deng-led reformers were starting to push for privatizing the state-owned factories. At the time, Zhang Ying rented forty *mu* of Shilu village land to start a textile factory, and within a few years her fortunes took off. Unbeknownst to Zhang Ying, however, the village party secretary, whom she had trusted, secretly sold the land supporting her factory to a developer with powerful county-level connections, and shortly thereafter the local court ordered bulldozers to clear the land and ship all of her plant machinery to a

[42] Zhang Ying, interview. [43] Ibid.
[44] As the work of Laurence Gonzales would anticipate. *Deep Survival*, 218–225.

storage lot. For the next twenty years, Zhang Ying fought to reverse this decision, successfully blocking the developer's effort to develop the land. According to Zhang Ying, "the developer underestimated my perseverance, and was never able to develop the land because of my continuous efforts to fight the case."[45]

Until recently, global China scholars were by and large skeptical about the political salience of the memories of such Great Leap survivors. Endel Tulving's research on *episodic memory* would argue for salience, however. According to Tulving, episodic memory, "the only memory system that allows people to consciously re-experience past experiences," factors importantly in human efforts to gain mastery over the present.[46] Building on this insight, and on the sagacity of Zhou Xun, the author of *The Great Famine in China*, this book is based on the premise that memories of the episode of the Great Leap and its famine are indelible, that they persist, and that they play an energetic role in the dynamics of present-day contention. The argument here is that such memories mitigate the way in which power is exercised on individuals and, further, that individuals occasionally act on the basis of such memories to galvanize collective support for contention.[47] Under the right circumstances, these persistent memories have the capacity to flood the present with the past. Such durable, receptive memories can affect the way in which people see the natural or human agents responsible for a traumatic experience in the first place. The literature on post-traumatic stress disorder tells us little about how survivors of traumatic encounters with absolute power have mobilized such memories to prevent a repeat of past harm and suffering in unsafe political environments. Relying on oral testimonies, this book shows how the survivors of Mao-era traumas have harnessed memory to build inner strengths and wage long-term struggles for survival and renewal under authoritarian rule.

In authoritarian China, rural villagers, damaged by the trauma of the Great Leap and its famine, cannot find psychic relief from safely positioned apolitical priests, grief counselors, or professional therapists. Nor can they easily escape the places in which the party-based networks implicated in the Great Leap still operate – they have little in common with Jung Chang, whose well-known book *Wild Swans* was enabled, and informed by, such a privileged escape. In this situation, memories of the Leap's trauma remain powerful. They have the potential to significantly influence the attempts of individuals to prevent reform-era rulers from inflicting yet another round of suffering and loss. Following Arthur Kleinman[48] and Steven M. Southwick and Dennis

[45] Zhang Ying, interview. [46] See Tulving, "Episodic Memory," 1–5 and esp. 6.

[47] As Zhou Xun has argued, "there's a lot we can see in what happened then [the Great Leap era] in what happens now." Cf. Zhou Xun, *The Great Famine in China*; the quote is from Tatlow, "The Enduring Legacy of China's Great Famine."

[48] Kleinman, *Deep China*, 8–16, 269–272, 286–288; Kleinman et al., *Social Suffering*; and Kleinman, "How Bodies Remember."

S. Charney,[49] this book provides us with an understanding of how survivors of the Great Leap's disorder and suffering have relied on such memories to mobilize resistance to Communist Party misrule in the present, and invites us to conceive of resistance as a way of carrying on with everyday life and, in the process, freeing themselves from the disordered past.

HOT COGNITION VERSUS COLD COGNITION

In attempting to ascertain whether China is a stable or unstable country, social scientists have relied on survey questionnaires to record the political attitudes, opinions, and beliefs of the subjects of China's authoritarian political system, finding relatively high levels of popular support for the Central government.[50] Nevertheless, as Murray Edelman has pointed out,[51] attitudinal correlates of regime support constitute a dubious predictor of the conditions under which people will acquiesce to or actively challenge the schemes of official power. In actuality, political arousal is often situation specific and more or less influenced by memory-derived lessons of how to limit the impact of government threat and harm. The survey approach is informed by Cartesian logic, which holds that political consciousness is separate from emotional states affiliated with deep survival instincts. It is based on a model of politics conceived in isolation from memory-informed political emotions that ordinary Chinese villagers are reluctant to reveal to outsiders. Inviting respondents to answer questions that have little bearing on the engagement of the brain with everyday survival, this approach more or less skips across discrete and deep-seated memories of efforts to survive a distant episode of political damage, such as China's Great Leap disaster.

The model of information processing in survey research assumes that human beings operate through "cold cognition," articulating political dispositions by a retrospective, deliberative process structured by intellectual reasoning. In this empirical approach, human perception is based on quick, observational thinking, and such thinking is rarely processed by the body, including the brain and the emotion it can access. If rural Chinese villagers hold an emotionally conceived strategy for countering state power and force, therefore, we are not likely to discern the way in which this strategy plays out in their interaction with local Communist Party leaders by accessing "cold cognition." The latter has little to do with how villagers access emotional markers associated with memories of past state-inflicted suffering in order to hold such leaders at bay.

[49] Southwick and Charney, *Resilience*, 1, 5–6, 53–55.

[50] Nathan, "Political Culture and Diffuse Regime Support"; Gilley, *The Right to Rule*, 22, 25, 186–187; and Saich, "Chinese Governance," 2. Cf. Shi, "Cultural Values and Political Trust," 401–419.

[51] Edelman, *Public Policy and Political Violence*, 1–12.

Instead, this study attempts to discern how such a strategy plays out in the real world of contentious China by accessing "hot cognition," for in this world heated emotions are sometimes closely associated with long-term memories that, under the right circumstance, come to mind in a millisecond. As James P. Morris and his associates have pointed out, "everyday thinking about social and political objects will tend to unitize our beliefs, feelings and behavioral intentions in long term memory. When they are 'contingently activated,' as they frequently will be, beliefs, feelings, and intentions become linked in memory, perhaps so strongly that the mere exposure to a 'triggering event' will bring them automatically to mind."[52] The book investigates the way in which Chinese villagers locate the claims placed on them by present-day local, provincial, and national Communist Party rulers within the episode of the Great Leap Forward, why such claims tend to become emotionally charged, and why and how specific individuals have mobilized long-term memories to protect themselves from the implicit danger in being exposed to such claims.[53]

Following Joseph LeDoux, I am interested in the moments when villagers under attack from the agents of China's reform-era authoritarian single-party system rely on deeply positioned markers, located in memories of past threats, to activate the networks of the brain that demand quick improvisation for survival.[54] Precisely because the CCP ultimately rules the countryside by force and fear, villagers who are the targets of its fear-based politics are constantly challenged to use the power of counteremotions to survive and maintain self-respect.[55] For villagers, everyday politics is permeated by emotional encounters with powerful local party leaders. But because these encounters are oral, physical, short lived, and unrecorded in official records and archives, it is not easy to document them, let alone gather enough evidence to explain them from the standpoint of "hot cognition." Still, this book gives us a glimpse into the hot zone of everyday contention at the ground level, capturing some of the moments when specific individuals, many of whom were born prior to the Great Leap, have accessed what Laurence Gonzales has termed a system of "emotional bookmarks"[56] to challenge an aggressive mode of domination that crystallized in the Great Leap and its famine. In several of this book's chapters, we will see how this process has triggered bad, fearful memories of the brutes who enforced Mao's Leap policies, and how it has charged villagers to stand up for their rights to survival and self-respect.

[52] See Morris, Squires, Taber, and Lodge, "Automatic Activation of Political Attitudes," 3.
[53] This section has benefited from ibid., 3–4, and it is consistent with Jing, *Temple of Memories*.
[54] LeDoux, *Emotional Brain*; also see *Synaptic Self*; Gonzales, *Deep Survival*, 37, 51–55, 122–123, 197–198.
[55] For the logic here, see Gonzales, *Deep Survival*, 197–198.
[56] Ibid., 51, 55.

ENGAGEMENT WITH REFORM IN DEEP CHINA

Ever since the nominal end of the Great Leap famine (i.e., the winter of 1961 to the spring of 1962), rural people in the zones of its carnage have lived in a state of emergency, due largely to the Leap's damage to the material security of the household. Few China scholars have acknowledged the persistence of this emergency or the difficulty of escaping it by merely putting trust in Communist Party–led governance.[57] There has been no significant political reform in the deep countryside. Villagers in deep China have had to find ways to enable their families to survive and achieve a good life outside of, and often in spite of, the Central government and its sprawling party-state network at the provincial and subprovincial levels. This book derives its narrative from their stories, drawing on them to help us understand that individual villagers have been able to survive only through daily struggles purposefully aimed at carving out free space previously usurped by the Communist Party in the peak years of collectivization and that they have utilized this space to simply "make do" under the otherwise suffocating oversight of party-state networks in the reform period. It shows that "making do"[58] cannot be equated with "accepting authoritarianism."[59]

Beijing's highest officials, and the plethora of academics, cultural workers, and party cadres with ties to the national state, want us to believe that the individuals who have led these struggles have succeeded by compromising with a CCP-led national revival of safe, integrated local communities, but the oral history evidence from Da Fo and scores of surrounding villages calls this claim into question. Based on the stories of individual villagers who have persisted in showing up each day to wage the struggle for their households to operate without interference from Communist Party–based networks, this book introduces us to people who have challenged the notion of the party as a community-enhancing political institution. It focuses on how the memories of the Great Leap have influenced these struggles, reminding us that rural people who hold these memories can at any minute become the targets of violent state intrusions involving arrests, tortures, and brutal imprisonment at the hands of public security forces. It asks us to think harder about whether such targeted people interact with local Communist Party officials in order to improve the policies governing their lives. Its narrative suggests that such an assumption reflects the CCP-orchestrated illusion that policy making is a mutually interactive process through which the ruling group bolsters legitimacy.[60]

[57] Friedman, however, does this. Friedman, "Persistent Invisibility of Rural Suffering."
[58] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, chapter 3.
[59] Compare the premise and approach here with Wright, *Accepting Authoritarianism*.
[60] This illusion is advanced in the scholarship of Xu Wang, *Mutual Empowerment of State and Peasantry*. In constructing this argument, I have benefited from Allen Feldman, "Punition, Retaliation and the Shifting Crises of Social Memory and Legitimacy in Northern Ireland."

The voices of Da Fo's inhabitants, and of people in other border area villages, seem to tell a different story. They suggest that the party-led state hardly interacts with anyone – it mainly dictates, and rural people therefore have little choice but to respond through contention. These voices also offer a different way of thinking about policy. Contrary to the master narrative of CCP-framed historical memory, which represents policy as a benign prescription for improving the human condition, people in Da Fo and surrounding villages have long equated "policy" with magnum force aimed at compelling them to instantly serve the interest of Beijing, whose local party agents redirect the center's policy bullet to produce largess almost exclusively for their own networks – a process that brought on the catastrophe of the Great Leap. This book is about how individual rural people remember, narrate, and inflect this force and how they interpret CCP-framed policies and propaganda in light of the party's long-standing use of force to achieve its agenda.

Of course the official narrative of Central government leaders naturally promises reward from reform. Rural people welcome this promise. But they interpret the promise through deeply stored, encoded memories that caution engagement with reform policy and that warn its delivery can be a potential threat. Even as Da Fo's farmers endorsed the end of the commune and pressed for household farming and market entry, they were reluctant to embrace the Deng-led center's version of modernity, which, as Daniel Kelliher has taught us, was to be realized by radically increasing grain harvests in order to promote state-managed industry and generate foreign exchange.[61] They shared the concern of their counterparts in Xianning county, Hubei province, who, on catching wind of the center's plan to quadruple grain output, expressed fear that this "new" version of progress would mirror the Great Leap Forward, which "was pushed to the point where there was no food to eat."[62]

As the preceding example suggests, the reform-era developmental agenda of the CCP has been superimposed on such alternative memories, which constitute an endless dense forest of local knowledge that competes with the thin edge of dominant institutional memory and the external identities, training, and experiences of China scholars whose efforts to understand political contention in rural China are undertaken on the outer edge of this forest. Once we enter the forest through individuals and their personal life stories, we meet up with memories that come shooting out of the terrible Maoist past. These memories, in combination with the injuries and injustices of reform, structure polychromatic discourses that compete with the CCP's monochromatic claim on the sole, sovereign right to use force to promote development and crush any challenge to its hold on power.

This book draws on these oral discourses with individuals to show that the official, monochromatic narrative of the Communist Party has crumbled under

[61] Kelliher, *Peasant Power in China*, 40–42, 46–49. [62] Ibid., 45.

reform. People in Da Fo and other border area villages increasingly see the attempt to maintain it as discredited folly. Their counternarratives emerge from the forest of long-term memory to challenge the party's attempt to confiscate their understanding of the past, posing an obstacle to the party's efforts to create a civilization in which rural people are not individuals with memories of a state system that has repeatedly attempted to take ownership of personal and private life, to take away the cultural resources necessary for individual remembering of its violence, and to build deniability into the process whereby its agents endanger those who rely on what has previously been learned to challenge inhumane methods of rule.

A RECOVERY OF RIGHTS

In attempting to explain the proliferation of mass protest incidents in the PRC under reform, some China scholars have pointed to the phenomenon of a growing "rights consciousness" movement, attributing this movement to the desire of would-be citizens to freely establish the right to participate in governance in order to reform the exclusive and harmful politics hitherto practiced by the CCP-captured state.[63] Whether the rise of rights-focused contention has occurred independent of the influence of CCP rule is an important question. To Elizabeth J. Perry, the reform-era assertion of popular claims through protest and resistance reflects a long-standing commitment of the Mao-led CCP to guarantee the livelihood of the rural poor and the Maoist embracement of Confucian norms supportive of the state obligation to care for the basic social rights of its subjects.[64] Such resistance, understood as a "state-conferred privilege" rather than an inviolable right, and representing a quest for social justice rather than a challenge to regime authority, allegedly has supported, rather than subverted, China's authoritarian political system.[65] Starting with a somewhat different premise, O'Brien and Li have asserted that the rural people who have turned to "rightful resistance" have justified their claims in the participatory language, statutes, and policies of the regime itself, a process that sometimes has enlisted leaders in Beijing in their cause, so that such resistance most likely has bolstered the legitimacy of the party-state.[66]

By way of contrast, this book conceives everyday contention in the Chinese countryside as an attempt by villagers to exercise long-standing indubitable rights – rights that historically were acquired through household-based struggles to keep the state at bay. Such rights were indeed enshrined in Mencian-Confucian philosophy and passed on locally through practice.

[63] See Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen*, 71–74, and O'Brien and Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*, 126–127.

[64] Perry, "Chinese Conceptions of 'Rights,'" 38–40, 42. [65] Ibid., 45–46.

[66] O'Brien and Li, *Rightful Resistance*, 123–128. For a review that concurs with this reading of O'Brien and Li, see Froissart, "Book review," 2.

Following Perry Link, this book questions the notion that Mao and the CCP ever stood for such rights. It argues that the Mao-led CCP actually was against the codes of humane political conduct demanded by Mencian-Confucian teachings[67] and that the Communist Party attempted to destroy the core of this philosophical system, especially in the campaign of the Great Leap Forward, when Mao, operating on the assumption that this philosophical system had trapped the countryside in poverty, declared socialism superior to Confucianism.[68]

All through the Great Leap, local party leaders were busy suppressing the right of the former independent tillers who opposed the transcript of socialist collectivization, and during the Leap famine Mao himself subverted the core principle of Mencian-Confucian thought – the right to remonstrate with imperial power and, if necessary, to remove tyrannical rulers through rebellion.[69] In reality, therefore, Chinese villagers have resisted state intrusions into life-sustaining routines and struggled for individual and family dignity for centuries, but the tight repressive controls of the Mao era made such resistance exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. Thus it should not occasion surprise that the upsurge of contention in present-day rural China has resonance with popular Confucian norms and that such contention has a root in the failures of Mao-era governance.[70]

The post-Mao CCP leaders in Zhongnanhai could not convince the survivors of the Great Leap episode in this rural North China border region that they stood for popular Mencian-Confucian norms, for several reasons. For one thing, the institutional density of the Communist Party's hegemonic institutions – schools, credit cooperatives, health clinics, and media outlets – was never impressive in the remote villages, so that pro-Confucian individuals, groups, and networks were not constantly subjected to the canon of party ideology and, in any event, were not the beneficiaries of a competent party-led performance that could make a case for supplanting common-sense notions of right and wrong, empowerment and disempowerment. In reality, illiterate,

[67] Link, "China's Core Problem." Further support for Mao being anti-Confucian can be found in Pantsov, whose work argues that the moral teachings of Confucius played no role in shaping Mao's character or soul. Pantsov, *Mao*, 173, 193, 195. According to Hans Steinmueller, conflict in contemporary China often reflects tensions that were intensified by the CCP-guided process of early state formation, which drew on "a Maoist discourse that violently denigrated Confucianism." Steinmuller, "Communities of Complicity," 547. Also see Wenguang Huang, whose book, *The Little Red Guard*, shows how commitments to honor pre-1949 Confucican family obligations persisted, even within the households of lower party leaders, in spite of the Maoist attack on such. Huang, *The Little Red Guard*, esp. 67, 77, 125–127, 162.

[68] See Lemos, *End of the Chinese Dream*, 32–33, 36–37, 104–105, 129–130; Xiang, "Bo Xilai Affair," 60–61; and Zhou Xun, *The Great Famine in China*, 91.

[69] See Yu and Pei, "Seeking Justice: Is China's Petition System Broken?"; Link, "Popular Chinese Views," 9–10; Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention*, introduction; and Zhou Xun, *The Great Famine in China*, 142–143.

[70] On this point, I draw especially on Link, "Popular Chinese Views."

often ignorant local party leaders were pressed to compete with the Confucian messages passed on through memory-structured oration and story telling, and so the old mnemonic systems of folk norms continued to compete, more or less effectively, with the party's institutional propaganda.[71] For another thing, because the Maoists shut down rural schools in the Great Leap Forward, and did further damage to rural education in the Cultural Revolution, the CCP was never able to use the school system to bring popular everyday Confucian teaching and thinking to an end at the grass-roots level. As a result, even though the Confucian discourses came under attack in Mao-era campaigns, Confucian values continued to infuse, as Columbia University historian W. Theodore De Bary has put it, "forms more subtle yet still palpable in the popular imagination" – proverbs, songs, doggerels, and poems reflecting the tenacity of this alternative to socialist ideology and community.[72]

In reality, many of the Da Fo villagers born prior to 1978, and especially before the Great Leap Forward, had imbibed key precepts from the *Four Books* and learned from the *Analects*. Consequently, they knew, and still know, what Everett Zhang has discovered in his brilliant scholarship: from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping, the CCP has been, and is, more interested in maintaining the "power of death" over rural people than in ensuring their basic social rights.[73] Faced with the legitimacy crisis inherited from the Great Leap episode of state building, reform-era Central Party leaders attempted to appropriate Confucian language and concepts to elicit personal sacrifice from individuals and families in order to promote and defend the party's own interest. However, the anti-Confucian Mao-era campaigns not only had failed to wipe out popular Confucian norms but also discredited the CCP. In this situation, therefore, the survivors of the Leap disaster understood that the Communist Party's unreformed modality of rule was anything but Confucian, and, by extension, they could not put faith in insincere center promises to support struggles to recover basic rights surrendered to Great Leap–era savageries.

RECONCILIATION VERSUS REVENGE

To fully understand the problem with the Communist Party strategy of ritualizing the Great Leap into oblivion, we first need to turn to the work of Jose

[71] This is why the Mao-led CCP had to shut down oral dissent through the Hundred Flowers Campaign on the eve of the Great Leap Forward. In constructing this section, I have benefited from Thompson, *Voice of the Past*; Yates, *Art of Memory*, xvii, xi, chapters 1 and 2, esp. 4, 38–47; and Foer, *Moonwalking with Einstein*, 10, 18–19.

[72] De Bary and Tu, *Confucianism and Human Rights*, 22.

[73] Zhang, "The Truth about the Death Toll in the Great Leap Famine in Sichuan," in Zhang, Kleinman, and Tu, eds., *Governance of Life*, 72; also see Watson, "Feeding the Revolution," in Zhang, Kleinman, and Tu, eds., *Governance of Life*, 35.

Maria Naharro-Calderon, a scholar of the place of memory in the aftermath of the Franco-era brutality in Spain. Naharro-Calderon asks us to consider three different types of memory:

1. *Inframemoria* : memories of a harmful direct personal encounter with power, stored in individual victims
2. *Intramemoria*: memories formed when individual encounters with power are given meaning by a community
3. *Supramemorias*: collective memories appropriated by power and used to legitimate the dominance and advantage of those who rule.[74]

Using this conception of memory, we can see that the CCP-originated *yiku sitian* ritual, designed to encourage villagers to recall the bitterness of the pre-1949 Kuomintang period and to savor the sweetness of the good life delivered by the CCP-led revolution, was highly problematic. This ritual, used by the Mao-era CCP to recast the Great Leap disaster as a minuscule sacrifice in the party's long-term struggle to improve popular livelihood and save the nation, failed to revive the legitimacy of the party-state in pre-1978 rural China, as it did not address the personal suffering inflicted on individuals by party activists during the Great Leap and the ensuing famine. The CCP had invoked this ritual to evacuate the kingdom of *inframemoria*, but in reality the antihuman track record of fanatical local party leaders who did the dirty work of the center was seared into the memories of individual survivors.[75] Through these memories, people made sense of their efforts to endure the Great Leap's ruin, so few wanted to give them up.[76] *Yiku sitian,* which was designed to laud the advantage of CCP rule, did not resonate with individual memories of Mao's harm, and so the post-Mao Central government faced an enormous challenge when it came to persuading famine survivors that they could trust the party to perform in ways that would serve their basic interests. In reality, the CCP was not up to this challenge, for the experience of the Great Leap and the ensuing famine inoculated villagers against the post-Mao CCP scheme to reshape consciousness, and the party-state effort to force-feed a bowdlerized version of the ghastly past floundered on the overreach of the *yiku sitian* ritual.[77]

This legitimacy dilemma more or less compelled the Deng Xiaoping–led center to come up with a plan to take the "heat" out of the explosive issue of the Great Leap famine, and so in 1981 *People's Daily* published *A Resolution on Certain Questions in Our Party's History since the Founding of the PRC.* As Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik has pointed out, in this resolution the CCP

[74] For a summary of this, see Faber, "The Price of Peace: Historical Memory in Post-Franco Spain," 215.

[75] On this point, see Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention*, 292–324.

[76] Cf. Kleinman, *Deep China*, 27–271.

[77] I am indebted to Steven I. Levine for helping me sharpen this point; personal correspondence, spring 2014.

leadership assumed responsibility for the Great Leap disaster and also for the antirightist movements of the Mao era. But the Deng-led reformers also relied on this same resolution to establish institutional domination of public discourse on this topic, making it clear that publicly expressed individual counternarratives of this episode were unwelcome.[78] If the Deng-led center sanctioned a discourse of reconciliation with the Maoist past, this discourse was primarily a nation-building propaganda effort to persuade alienated rural subjects that they had best follow the Communist Party in addressing the past. The purpose was to create a shared memory of the turbulent Maoist past and to convince wounded individuals they could join in a national process of healing wounds incurred in the Mao era. Precisely because the Deng-led transition did not end the authoritarian state system, and in reality was aimed at shoring up that system, there remained a yawning gap between the center's supra-representation of the past and the *inframemoria* of the individual survivors of the Great Leap famine. In failing to create an institutional framework and mechanisms supportive of a reconciliation process attentive to individual discussion about who had harmed whom and who had taken the lives of loved ones, the Communist Party left each living victim of Mao's willed famine[79] to carry the burden of hurt, grief, and resentment within a hidden, silent interior self and to address the wrongdoings of the party's Leap disaster *outside* the channels of the reform-era political system.[80]

Precisely because there was not enough regime change after Mao and because reform-era Central government leaders did not carry out a deep reform of the political work style of party leaders at all levels, the survivors of the Great Leap found it difficult to exit the past and, further, to take up contention that was not linked with active memories of the Leap's injustice. By retaining its village-level political base, the Communist Party granted a silent amnesty to the perpetrators of the Great Leap famine, relieving them of institutional pressure to face up to the criminal violence inducing the famine's damage. By coddling these unapologetic accomplices of a distant, state-orchestrated atrocity, the Deng-led center reassured local party leaders, for whom the CCP was the extension of a robust political identity. Rooted in an understanding that their positions of power and privilege were significantly dependent on a narrative prescribed from higher-ups in Beijing, this identity put the cause of the party above the worth of individual villagers and stressed building state power at any cost to civil society.

In the early 1980s, these local party leaders not only were stuck in the time warp of Mao-era war communism, they also were fearful the angry survivors of the Great Leap might seize on reform to dislodge them and destroy their families. This explains why, in the case of Da Fo village, the old-guard Maoists

[78] Cf. Weigeliln-Schwiedzik, "Taking the Heat Out of a Problem," 11–12, 18–19.
[79] On Mao's willful politics, see Bernstein, "Mao Zedong and the Famine."
[80] Cf. Hamber and Wilson, "Symbolic Closure."

who still ruled the roost in the Mao-Deng transition frequently responded to popular complaints and claims in a defensive, arrogant, and vulgar manner, thereby exciting memories of unrepentant evil. Their persistent justification of the ruthless means of Mao-era rule, coupled with the continuing rewards for obeying the orders of superiors, poisoned the soil of reform, transforming it into a garden in which the hostile memories of Great Leap–era injustice and loss could grow like weeds. As we will see in Chapters 3, 5, 6, 7, and 10, in the Da Fo area these memories infused contention in the reform period, and contention took the form of ostracism, beatings, arsons, and threats of extinction against local party leaders and their clients.

I began to understand the importance of these politically charged memories toward the end of my first decade of field work in Da Fo. In previous field work, I had avoided interviewing Bao Yibin, the vice-party secretary who was seriously implicated in the moral descent of the Great Leap and its famine, in the presence of other villagers. In August 1997, I asked several of the individual survivors of the famine to join me in an interview with Bao in his courtyard. I had interviewed them on many occasions, so I knew them well. On their arrival I could tell something was wrong. After a few minutes of silence, they implored me not to speak with Bao Yibin, and they let me know *they* did not want to speak with him. I discovered that they, and scores of other villagers, including Bao Yibin's brother, who was deeply angered by Bao's Leap-era refusal to assist their starving mother in 1960, had not spoken with Bao for nearly four decades. Bao was being ostracized for his Great Leap sins. The village had mounted a silent challenge to Bao's cold-hearted work style, and the challenge included avoiding Bao and occasionally stoning his house to keep him from roaming the village freely. These acts, much as the beatings and arsons targeting other Da Fo party leaders in the reform era, were small ways of punishing local party leaders who were members of a political system that was not about to allow the institutionalized involvement of rural people in any healing and reconciliation process.

Furthermore, although Deng Xiaoping should be credited with dismantling the vigilante institutions of Mao-era killing, the Deng-led center did not go far enough. The so-called reformers failed to provide any forum for desensitizing the local party leaders who had inflicted the terrible acts of the Great Leap's politics. Worse, in some villages they allowed the perpetrators of such acts to operate with impunity across the early decades of reform. The unimaginable cruelty of the Great Leap episode, and its seepage into the post-Mao era, is lost in mainstream academic writings on the so-called great reform of the Deng-led center. By way of contrast, the visceral nature of the Communist Party was not lost on the villagers who, like their counterparts in the USSR in the post-Stalin period, or those in post–Pol Pot Cambodia, had to live in uneasy coexistence with the perpetrators of mass killing and cataclysm. I conducted field work in the Hebei-Shandong-Henan border area villages for many years before I began to grasp the importance of this phenomenon to apprehensive village dwellers.

It first came to me in 1991, when I was conducting an interview of a local party leader who played an important role in helping bring the Communist Party to power in this border area. This particular leader, Yu Weirong, was from Jinglu village, in Neihuang county. In the reform era, Yu had moved out of the border area to Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan province. Villagers helped me find him in Zhengzhou, where I interviewed him on a cloudy day in June. In the course of explaining to me how he had strangled an opponent to death with his bare hands during the pre-1949 revolution, Yu Weirong started to embellish and praise his murderous accomplishments. What struck me was Yu's insistence that the killing of his individual opponents was a necessary, fully justified engagement with Mao's Communist Revolution. Killing was, he said, what the politics of the epoch was all about; that is, killing was central to the normal order of the revolutionary process.

Later, in an August 1997 interview in Da Fo, I discovered that Bao Zhilong, the Da Fo party secretary before and after Mao, also took his identity significantly from being a member of a group of killers and that killing opponents was, to Bao, necessary for keeping the Communist Party in power. I began to develop an understanding that the core identity of many of the key local party leaders in Da Fo had formed in the years of pre-1949 insurgency and crystallized in the war communism of the Great Leap.

The post-1978 Deng-orchestrated reform did not instantly, or systematically, disband this group of killers in rural China – it only dismantled the mechanisms they had relied on to make villagers comply with the routine tasks of Mao-era rule. At the village level, many of these killers were still around, either in power or lurking in the shadows of power. Villagers still feared them. Their presence was a warning that the "normalcy" of Mao era might return, and this presence served as a constant reminder of the pain and loss suffered in the Great Leap upheaval, when the center and its accomplices swiftly imposed a violent normalcy on the countryside. That these local party leaders by and large still ruled with impunity was not lost on villagers, who in the turbulent years of the Mao-Deng transition were still fearful of the aggressive self-serving acts of these leaders. The threat of a return to this past normalcy, coupled with the ability of local party leaders to use their privileged positions and networks in the struggle for the rewards and spoils of reform, made it impossible for villagers to move toward a reconciliation based on forgetting, a politics that infused contention within and beyond the village.

APARTHEID CHINA AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

The question of why flammable memories of loss in the Great Leap persist, and from time to time foment contention in the countryside, whether it be an individual or community clash with the agents of the party-state, cannot be fully understood without reference to the perpetuation of the Mao-era system of partitioning city and countryside. This state-designed rural-urban divide

system – in essence an *apartheid* system – was institutionalized in the run-up to the Great Leap Forward, and it gave urbanites, as opposed to rural villagers, better food security and hence a better chance of surviving the Leap famine. At the village level, the rising social tensions over CCP rule in the present swirl around the failure of Beijing to muster the will and courage to resolve half a century of discrimination against rural dwellers. This book suggests that the harm delivered by such discrimination in the present has reminded individuals, and the small groups of which they are a part, of the fundamental nature of the politics underlying the CCP-dominated political system: in this system, policy is prioritized to serve the material interest of powerful urban-based aristocrats at the apex of the party-state hierarchy. In the reform era, the Communist Party apparently has focused mainly on priming this *apartheid* system, thereby stranding the rural poor in a state of poverty that, to a greater or lesser extent, recalls the damaging inequality and material deprivation of the Great Leap episode.

It is important to emphasize that the reform-era Communist Party has accomplished little if anything by way of effectively altering the core policy–structured *apartheid* practices engendering traumatic loss in the Great Leap Forward, all of which planted angry memories of the "fake rights" of participation in the developmental schemes of socialist dictatorship and seriously damaged the credibility of the party-state. Chapters 4 and 9, which deal with rural education and rural-to-urban migration, suggest that the post-1978 center has continued this pattern of Mao-era *apartheid*, which has become entwined with the fraudulent ad hoc developmental projects of corrupt local power. After listening to villagers express resentment of this entwinement, it seems they live with the specter of a repeat of the deceptive politics in which local party leaders engaged to push the developmental agenda of the Great Leap. To be sure, the CCP-led Central government has attempted to reform the system of rural education and to recognize the importance of labor mobility in lifting rural people out of poverty. But the data on Da Fo show that local power not only has falsified reports pertaining the center's universal goal of nine years of schooling for each rural child but has also designed a "new" education system that mainly puts money into the pockets of corrupt leaders whose local clients were implicated in stunting the development of an empowering school system in the Great Leap. In a similar vein, the reform-era fate of Da Fo's migrant workers has underscored Beijing's failure to put an end to one of the most exploitative labor scams of the Great Leap era: the false promise of a living wage paid to villagers who were pressed, or fled, to work in rural and industrial construction projects. In each of these issue areas, the center has tolerated a pattern of politics that recalls the injustice of the commune era and hinders the amiable and civil pursuit of livelihood.

Chapters 4 and 9 make it clear that whether we are talking about the delivery of a public good (education) or the development of a quasi-public industry (construction), the CCP is first and foremost an organizational empire

of rent collectors, and its powerful local operatives do little more than collect rents from the rural poor, while leaving the targets of their plunder to fall behind urbanites. Thus, by complicating villagers' chances to move ahead to a decent life, to move beyond the despair and discontent of the Great Leap episode, the CCP has unwittingly increased the possibility that increasingly mobile villagers will consult such memories in mounting resistance to a state system that specializes in promoting disparities in basic public services and basic social rights.

The testimonies given in this book make clear that the Great Leap, among other CCP-powered failures, had laid bare the lie that the party knew how to make the world a better place for individual villagers and their families. As Barry Naughton has pointed out, in the early years of reform Deng Xiaoping actually did not have a clear plan for the economic development of rural China.[81] Rural individuals, working in myriads of villages like Da Fo, seized on the indecision of Central government rulers, and on the power vacuum created by the collapse of Mao-era controls, to enact their own plans for creating wealth.[82] Invariably, such transcripts called for the revival of ageless household strategies of cereal cultivation, animal husbandry, and petty trade. Rational, benevolent national policy did not direct this revival. Instead, as Fang Lizhi has argued, farmers across China (including those in Da Fo) embraced a slow-moving, day-by-day, year-by-year struggle to lift their families to subsistence, above the poverty into which the unprecedented famine of 1958–1961 had plunged them.[83]

Of course Deng Xiaoping and his allies took credit for this internal, rural ascent even though the December 1978 Third Plenum of the Eleventh CCP Central Committee, which proclaimed Deng to be the paramount ruler of China, forbade many of the reforms that rural people wanted. In the final analysis, therefore, Deng and his allies facilitated the ascent by reluctantly and slowly relaxing Mao-era controls on market participation and by allowing villagers to practice family efficiencies in agriculture and to put creative energies into household-based enterprises.[84] In the meantime, their policy efforts were focused mainly on getting rich from embracing globalization, and in any event they used "reform" internally to benefit their own privileged families and keep power in the hands of their local political networks.[85]

In short, the quest for recovery from the painful material damage of the Mao era did not take place within, and was not driven by, some post-1978 imaginary moral community of reform. Villagers, including those in Da Fo, welcomed reform in order to sustain a long-running, low-profile struggle to regain the

[81] Naughton, *Chinese Economy*, 81.
[82] See Zhou, *How the Farmers Changed China*, and Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention.*
[83] See Fang, "The Real Deng."
[84] See Friedman, Pickowicz, and Selden, *Revolution, Resistance, and Reform*, 254–255.
[85] For this continuity, see ibid., 279.

economic freedom of the household, including the freedom to till and trade outside the sphere of state rent. If the fabric of everyday material life had been ripped apart in the Mao era, the major concern of Da Fo's farmers in the post-Mao years was how to reconstitute the material basis of a secure, normal life. The evolving site of popular memory of the material deprivation resulting from the great famine, therefore, shifted to two alternative economic spaces in the first decade of reform: the first site was the land, the second the market. The act of tilling a small plot in the solitude of a protected self was vital, for this particular alternative economic activity reflected a household qua household rejection of the state-colonized agricultural system of the collective period, and the act of trading and acquiring material goods in the market constituted a rejection of the Mao era's stifling controls on individual creativity, sense of worth, and material security.

Social science literature tells us that the Deng-led center supported a state-framed version of household agriculture, known as *baochan daohu*. But it does not tell us why. By advancing support for this system the Deng-led reformers attempted to leap ahead of poor farmers who were determined to go it alone, to take credit for alleviating the pain associated with material loss in the famine and its grinding twenty year aftermath, and thus draw villagers into a social contract with the center. In reality, however, people in Da Fo and countless other villages opened this breathing space through everyday struggles, for which the Deng-led center took credit. In reality, Deng and his men were slow to keep up with such everyday struggles to detach the household economy from the state-planned economic system.[86] This book shows how these struggles became entwined with contention, especially when local party leaders threatened their progress with demands that reminded villagers of the Great Leap's harm, and how the counterforce they have mustered against this threat has changed rural power relations.

OVERVIEW

The book's chapters are divided into roughly five parts. The opening chapter transports us into Da Fo village at the dawn of reform, when millions upon millions of rural dwellers still lived a submarginal existence and the Deng-led Central government had to do something to address rural poverty and prevent the rural poor from storming the cities en masse in search of food security.[87] The chapter relates how Deng and his men instituted reform by imposing a violent Strike Hard Campaign known as *yanda*, which was enforced by local public security forces targeting poor farmers who could not afford to pay the rents demanded by state monopoly. It looks into the impact of this campaign

[86] Naughton implicitly recognizes this; *Chinese Economy*, 95–96.
[87] See Yang, *Calamity and Reform*, and Fewsmith, *Elite Politics in Contemporary China*, 41.

on Da Fo's desperate farmers, and asks whether this campaign resolved the legitimacy crisis that originated in the Great Leap disaster.

The next three chapters focus on the way in which reform-era Central government policy was received at the township and village level, by both local party leaders and villagers. Chapter 2 is about the way in which villagers responded to state appropriation. It focuses on how Da Fo's farmers saw the reform-era attempt of Communist Party rulers to impose taxes on the countryside and on why taxation stoked fears of another episode of state-delivered famine. It describes what people in Da Fo and other villages did to resist the renewed burden of taxation.

Chapter 3 explores the process whereby villagers, particularly females with the support of their patriarchal families, attempted to reclaim the rights to their bodies, especially the right to produce children as they saw fit. This chapter focuses on the one-child policy and the renewed state invasion of child bearing in a village where the production of children was seen as essential to overcome Great Leap–era ruin of customary social insurance arrangements. It introduces us to the agents of this invasion, to why their unprincipled acts stoked bad memories of the Great Leap, and to how villagers attempted to resist the one-child policy.

Chapter 4 is about villagers' efforts to reinstate a historic entitlement that was all but destroyed by poorly educated, ignorant Mao-era local party leaders: the entitlement of education and enlightenment. This chapter sheds light on the impact of the Great Leap famine on schools and teaching in Da Fo, on the importance of education to poor farmers as well as teachers, and on why and how teacher grievances with roots in the Great Leap era informed resistance in the reform period.

The third part of the book is organized around the theme of corruption. Chapter 5 provides a worm's-eye view of the dangerous wave of corruption that has spilled over Da Fo and the surrounding countryside under reform. This chapter focuses mainly on corruption within Da Fo village and Liangmen township, enabling us to see that this phenomenon has links to the Mao period. It explores how corrupt reform-era party leaders continued to violate popular Confucian ethical codes of conduct that were forsaken in the Great Leap, and how such behavior spurred everyday challenges to party misconduct. Finally, this chapter sheds light on the corruption enveloping the reform-era police force and helps us grasp how rural people saw the police and their version of protective order.

Chapter 6 investigates the way in which Central government leaders have prospered from the state monopoly of a vital public good: electricity. It traces this monopoly all the way down to the village level and focuses on the process whereby the same local party leaders who benefited from the inequities and injustices of the Great Leap Forward took charge of the monopolistic delivery of electric utility services, thereby repositioning themselves and their families to get rich at the expense of farmers. This chapter reveals why the post-Mao

CCP's artificial reform of a state monopoly fueled villagers' confrontations with its ground-level operatives in Da Fo, whose family reputations for venality extended back to the Great Leap calamity.

Chapter 7 focuses on the attempt of villagers to remove corrupt Communist Party rulers by embracing electoral democracy. This chapter shows how the township-level party leaders undermined the democratic project, leaving in place a *nomenklatura* system of power that has changed little since the Maoist era. In Da Fo, the CCP subversion of villagers' quest for democracy was of no small consequence, for this quest was driven by villagers' fears of corrupt and incompetent party leaders engendering another famine. Focusing mainly on Da Fo but on other villages as well, Chapter 7 documents the political weapons frustrated villagers used after the CCP usurped the electoral process, providing us with a hint of why this part of rural China is such a turbulent place.

Constituting the fourth part of the book, Chapter 8 is concerned with an ageless form of contention: deferential petitioning of the powerful. With the CCP capture of the democratic experiment in Da Fo, petitioning became the order of the day – it was one of the few ways villagers could express grievances and present claims to powerful officials. In this chapter, we meet an individual petitioner whose contention was influenced by an incessant yearning to make sense of life in the aftermath of the Great Leap famine. His fate became linked with a transvillage, transcounty, and transprovincial protest movement of ex-PLA soldiers whose efforts to survive and escape village-level dearth in the post-Leap famine period led them to the frozen mountainous terrain of Pakistan. This chapter traces their long struggle for compensation for a distant, secretive sacrifice for the nation, and shows how it was thwarted by higher-ups, including powerful CCP-controlled military hierarchies in Beijing and in Zhongnanhai. Pointing out that Mao also had suppressed petitioners who called attention to the pain of the Great Leap, this chapter invites us to reflect on whether the reform-era repeat of this pattern pricked memories of Mao-era neglect, repression, and betrayal.

Chapters 9 and 10 comprise the fifth part of the book. Each focuses on the rise of counterforce in the reform-era countryside. Chapter 9 documents the engagement of Da Fo's migrant workers, many of whom hailed from households ruined by the Great Leap, with the construction industry in far-flung cities, where they suffered terms of work life that in some ways resembled those of the militaristic labor regime of the late 1950s. This chapter is about the *apartheid* system engendering this suffering, about its unstudied link back to the Great Leap era, and about the forms of everyday resistance to which migrant workers turned to defend themselves from the abuse and injustice of this system. This chapter examines migrant worker–crafted forms of contention in rural places spatially separated from the native villages of migrants and their urban job sites, some of which unfolded outside the formal channels of the Central government.

Chapter 10 is about the rise of the so-called rural mafia in Da Fo and scores of sister villages during the reform period, considering "mafia" from the vantage point of the rural people who became its foot soldiers. This chapter traces the group's origins in a network of friends sporting martial art skills. Focusing on why the key leaders of this network took up martial arts training in the decades following the Great Leap famine, it helps us understand why they were attracted to *Water Margin* legends of marginalized desperados. It explicates the complex link between the need of villagers for protection against local party leaders who were fond of using force in the Great Leap and the attempt of villagers to rely on martial skills to fulfill this need in the late Mao to early Deng period. In asking whether it was the local mafia system or the system of CCP rule that posed the greatest threat to villagers and their preferred way of life, this chapter digs into the complex nature of the Da Fo area martial brotherhood, revealing that its leaders were connected with powerful trans-village and trans-county party leaders and police operatives but also with village social forces opposed to CCP rule. This chapter scrutinizes how Da Fo area "mafia" leaders saw the party-state they occasionally colluded with and, on the other hand, examines why they were attracted to notions of political justice that historically shaped rebellions against imperial tyranny.

In all of these chapters, the book shows how the Great Leap Forward, including the famine it produced, has influenced the way rural people think about life and politics. It also shows that the missing variable of memory is critical to understanding why and how ground-level contention has unfolded in the countryside. This book is about individuals in rural China, about their memories, and about the ways in which those memories affect how they go about life and resist authoritarian rulers who attempt to exercise power on them.