Land Issues in Shanxi Province before the War of Resistance against Japan

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Abstract

Using Gini coefficients of land distribution, the proportion of small landowners, and the size of landholdings of large landowners in rural Shanxi before the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, this article shows that, overall, land was not concentrated but rather fragmented among all classes and that small landowners (mainly owner-cultivator peasants and semi-owner-cultivator peasants) predominated. In addition, the data presented here indicate that tenancy relations were also relatively unproblematic. Most of the tensions and contradictions in rural Shanxi were between the government and the common people, who bore the dual burden of state oppression and heavy taxation. The intense population-to-land pressure also contributed to Shanxi's rural poverty.

Keywords

land ownership, Gini coefficient, system of small landholdings, contradiction between government and the people, population pressure on land

摘要

通过对山西部分农村地权分配基尼系数的测算和小土地所有者比例及大地户占地情况的统计，可知在抗战前的山西农村，土地在总体上是比较分散的分配在各个阶层的，以自耕农和半自耕农为代表的小土地所有制占据主导地位，在此基础上的租佃关系比较缓和。乡村社会的矛盾和冲突更多地体现在官民之间，即农民负担过重，受压榨太甚。此外，紧张的人地关系亦是造成农村普遍贫困的一个重要因素。

关键词

土地占有、基尼系数、小土地所有制、官民矛盾、人地关系

Because of limited data, there have been far fewer studies of the land problem in modern Shanxi than in Hebei, Shandong, and other provinces in North China. The earliest study concerning land issues in modern Shanxi was the 1990s *Agricultural Economy of Modern Shanxi*, under the general editorship of Xu Songrong, which discussed in detail the agricultural economy of Shanxi from 1840 to 1919. The book, believing that there was "great inequality in land distribution," underlined that rural Shanxi was characterized by a large number of owner-cultivators as well as middle and small landlords, with only a small number of large landlords and landless peasants. In the twentieth century, Xu argues, the proportion of large landholdings, including land owned by landlords, increased (Xu, 1990: 228, 233). Since the turn of the twenty-first century, with the discovery and application of a batch of data, great progress has been made in research on the land problem in modern Shanxi. One of the main studies in this regard is Yue Qianhou's analysis of rural society in northwestern Shanxi in the 1930s and 1940s, based on the rural surveys made by Zhang Wentian in Shanxi and Shaanxi during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. Yue concludes that, in terms of land ownership and land management, society was characterized by "middle peasantization," a pattern whereby owner-cultivators, mostly middle peasants, predominated, and that Land Reform under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) only strengthened this feature (Yue Qianhou and Zhang Wenjun, 2010: 97–107; Yue, 2014: 187–225). Another major study, by Hu Yingze, is also based on surveys, in this case surveys of rural Shanxi as a whole made by the Shanxi and Suiyuan Rural Construction Association and the Rural Education Improvement Society in the 1930s. Based on these data, Hu has calculated the Gini coefficient of land distribution in Shanxi on the basis of households, and come up with the figure of 0.556, leading him to conclude that land was unequally distributed among rural households in modern Shanxi, but ownership was fragmented, not concentrated (Hu,

2013).

The conclusions of these three scholars are inconsistent and thus warrant closer scrutiny. Xu's conclusion is paradoxical: it contends that Shanxi was characterized by a "system of small landholdings" while, at the same time, there was great inequality in land distribution and landlordism predominated (Xu, 1990: 228–30). As for Hu Yingze, because of a paucity of data, he calculated the Gini coefficient of land distribution on the basis of the household as the unit of analysis, regardless of the size of those households, but statistically speaking, the results of such a calculation cannot be very accurate. As Qin Hui has noted, measuring on the basis of households leads to an exaggeration of inequality (Qin and Jin, 2010: 78). Therefore, the facts of land ownership in Shanxi remain in doubt. This article seeks to provide a comprehensive and systematic analysis of land distribution in rural Shanxi and of related land issues, employing much of the same data used by the three earlier studies.

As previously noted, in the 1930s some groups conducted surveys of rural Shanxi, which were published mainly in the journals *Rural Construction* 农村建设 and *New Countryside* 新农村. The data from these surveys, which, as mentioned, have been used by earlier studies, still leave room for further exploration. The CCP also investigated land distribution in rural Shanxi in the same period, leaving another batch of data. There are also data from scattered surveys at that time. All the data mentioned above were gathered in the 1930s before the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1937–1945), politically speaking a relatively stable period in Shanxi, and thus they can be taken as representative of land issues in Shanxi before the war.

Inequality in Land Distribution Measured by the Gini Coefficient

Most studies of rural land rights in modern China have followed a research methodology of simply citing examples, with the obvious defect that only one or a few groups of cases fail to form a basis for a sound conclusion about the national, or even regional, distribution of land rights. Moreover, even when faced with the same facts, scholars have often reached different or even diametrically opposite interpretations. This is because they have followed different approaches to research or because they have had different values. The result is that their conclusions have failed to be objective and impartial.

Accordingly, this article relies on the Gini coefficient, a neutral index. As an accepted relative statistical index of inequality, the Gini coefficient has been applied many times to the study of land distribution (Chao, 2006: 56–63; Qin and Jin, 2010: 43–100; Zhang Xiaoling, 2014: 134–41; Hu, 2013). Generally speaking, a Gini coefficient under 0.2 corresponds to perfect equality; a value between 0.2 and 0.3 represents relative equality; 0.3 to 0.4 represents a reasonable amount of equality; 0.4 and 0.5 represents a relatively large gap; and a value above 0.5 represents a high level of inequality. The Gini coefficients of land distribution in rural Shanxi before the war are presented in Table 1. As the table shows, in each of the fifty-four cases, when the Gini coefficient is calculated on the basis of the household, the result is an average of 0.495 (value A)—in other words, a high level of inequality. In twenty of the fifty-four cases, we have been able to calculate the Gini coefficients both on the basis of the household per se and on the basis of the size of the household. The result is an average of 0.472 (value A) and 0.349 (value B) respectively. Of the twenty values on the basis of household size, two are above 0.5, and four are between 0.4 and 0.5, comprising nearly a third of the twenty cases; two-thirds of the twenty cases have a Gini coefficient below 0.4, that is to say, in these places, inequality in land ownership could be described as within a fairly reasonable range. What all this shows, in short, is

that if Gini coefficients are calculated on the basis of household size, not only are the values more accurate but also the overall picture of land distribution may change.

Table 1 about here

To further clarify the difference between the value on the basis of the household as the unit of analysis and that on the basis of household size, the Gini coefficients of land distribution in Xicun village, Yangqu county, on the two different bases are shown in Tables 2 and 3 respectively, and the inequalities represented by the two values are described by the Lorenz curves in Figure 1.

Table 2 about here

Table 3 about here

Figure 1 about here

Tables 2 and 3 show that the Gini coefficient for land in Xicun village was 0.587 on the basis of the household, expressing great inequality, but fell to 0.355, only 60 percent of the former, when calculated on the basis of household size.

The difference is clearly mirrored by the Lorenz curves (see Figure 1). Inequality in land distribution is represented by the area that lies between the curve and the line of perfect equality (the diagonal). The larger the area, the greater the inequality (Chao, 2006: 59–60). The Lorenz curve plotted on the basis of household size, in particular its left half, instead of bending downward, moves upward toward the line of perfect equality, in comparison with the curve plotted on a household basis, and is roughly parallel to the line, that is to say, fewer people with

less or no land.

Before we try to account for that difference, we must clarify what we mean by "households with little land." Here we refer to households with little land per capita, irrespective of the extent of the landholdings of the household as a whole. A simple example would be a household with four generations under one roof compared to a household consisting of a single person living alone. Both of them would have been registered as a "household," but there was a vast difference in the size of the households in question. As a rule, in traditional rural areas the size of the household was roughly directly proportional to the amount of land it held. A "landlord" household with hundreds of *mu* of land often had more than ten family members. Such was true for Xicun village: the household with the largest landholding—99.5 *mu*—had eighteen people, and thus the per capita landholding in this household was only 5.28 *mu*. The next two households in terms of size of landholdings with respectively 97 and 85 *mu* both had thirteen people (Liu, 1934d: 69). The story was the same in, for instance, Shijiagang village, Dingxiang county: the household with the largest landholding—260 *mu*—had twelve people (Liu, 1934a: 87), as well as in Anle village, Huoxian county, where the household with the largest landholding—180 *mu*—had ten people (Liu, 1934c).

Yet Figure 1 shows that the right half of the Lorenz curve plotted on the basis of household size bends toward the right vertical axis and away from the line of perfect equality, which suggests that land was concentrated in the hands of a small number of people, or more precisely, less than 20 percent of the population in Xicun village held nearly 50 percent of the land, according to Table 3. However, Table 3 also shows that 17.29 percent of the population had less than 10 *mu* per capita. In addition, the households with more than 10 *mu* per capita held less than 10 percent of the total land, and per capita land in the village was below 20 *mu*, as Table 3 shows.

Thus Xicun village had neither large landowners nor great inequality in land distribution.

With a population of 1,180 on 3,584 *mu*, Xicun village had only 3 *mu* per capita. Thus it was the limited amount of arable land rather than a great inequality in land distribution that was the chief cause of the contradiction between population and land in Xicun village, which was exactly the problem that confronted rural society throughout Shanxi before the war. Since the inequality in the distribution of land, the main source of wealth in traditional rural areas, was within a reasonable range, the inequality in income distribution would be small, leaving aside extra-economic coercion (Qin and Jin, 2010: 53; Chao, 2003: 279), and thus one would expect a very slight degree of social stratification in Xicun village.

The example of Xicun village confirms that when the land Gini coefficient is calculated on the basis of the household, the result is an exaggeration of inequality in land distribution. In fact, it is the size of the family that is the key source of the difference between the value on the basis of the household and the value on the basis of size of the household, an issue that is well-known in economics. When the income Gini coefficient is calculated, it is an internationally accepted practice to calculate it on the basis of personal income (Cheng, 2013: 108). Hong Xingjian and Li Jinchang have pointed out in their study on the Gini coefficient of income that "statistically, it is best to calculate the Gini coefficient of the per capita income of households. Inequality in income in general cannot be measured by the Gini coefficient of the per capita income of the whole population nor the income per household" (Hong and Li, 2005: 53).

Researchers realized this as early as the Republican era. For instance, Wu Shouming, who conducted a survey in Guanjiabao village, Taigu county, wrote, "There is a very significant relationship between the number of people in a household and size of its landholdings—the positive correlation is on the order of 0.65" (Wu, 2009: 283).[1] Qin Hui has discussed this issue

in his study of land ownership in Guanzhong (central Shaanxi), but scholars who apply the Gini coefficient to the study of these issues have failed to pay sufficient attention to his work.

Based on the above findings, I have estimated the Gini coefficients on the basis of household size in thirty-four cases where the sources do not provide Gini coefficients (see Table 1). Since it is land per household that is the basis for the calculation of the Gini coefficients for the these thirty-four cases, I have selected the data for the three villages of Shijiagang, Anle, and Xicun (respectively, lines 12, 27, and 38 in Table 1), whose Gini coefficients are calculated in the same way, as points of reference. For these three cases, the Gini coefficients on the basis of household size are respectively 77.49 percent, 60.48 percent, and 61.98 percent of those on the household basis; the average of the three values is 66.65 percent, close to Wu's estimate. I have then multiplied the Gini coefficients for the thirty-four cases on the basis of the household by 66.65 percent. The results, listed in column B1 of Table 1, provide a measurement of the inequality in land distribution.

The last line of Table 1 shows that the average of the Gini coefficients for all the fifty-four cases on the basis of household size is 0.343, close to the value of 0.349 for the twenty cases (in column B in Table 1) on the same basis. Of the fifty-four values, twenty-eight are between 0.3 and 0.4 (above 50 percent), fourteen are below 0.3 (about a quarter), making a total of 42 (77 percent). Thus, it can be concluded that land tenure was fairly fragmented in rural Shanxi as a whole before the war. This is in line with the results of the CCP's rural surveys before the war: landlords and rich peasants, making up 10.03 percent of the total rural population, controlled 26.13 percent of the total land; middle peasants, 45.48 percent of the population, owned 56.22 percent; and poor peasants and tenants, 40.73 percent of the population, had 16.15 percent (Party History Research Center of the CCP Shanxi Provincial Committee and Shanxi Provincial

Archives, 1983: 11). The Gini coefficient on the basis of household size was 0.333, slightly lower than the value I have estimated.

Despite this overall fragmentation, part of Shanxi before the war was characterized by a concentration of control of land. Of the fifty-four values on the basis of household size, two are above 0.5. These cases were found in the twenty villages of nine counties in northwestern Shanxi studied by the CCP, and Heiyukou village, Xingxian county, studied by Zhang Wentian. Take the last as an example: a total of 126 people in nineteen landlord households had up to 2,853.56 *shang* of land (1 *shang* = about 3 *mu*), with 22.65 *shang* per capita, while 157 poor peasants in forty-three households had only 141.5 *shang* in total, or less than 1 *shang* per capita. Land per capita in the landlord households was more than twenty times as large as in the poor peasant households, a glaring inequality (Shanxi Provincial Archives, 1942c). In conclusion, the distribution of land rights was polarized in some of Shanxi's villages.

Predominance of Small Landowners

The conclusion that there was, overall, a fragmentation of land ownership in rural Shanxi before the war, having been drawn from the calculation of the Gini coefficients, can be fortified through data on the proportions of owner-cultivators and semi-owner-cultivators in sixty villages of Shanxi before the war based on the surveys by the Shanxi and Suiyuan Rural Construction Association and the Rural Education Improvement Society.

The *Chinese Industrial Gazetteer: Shanxi*, published by the Ministry of Industry in 1937, defines an owner-cultivator as one who cultivates his own land only, and a semi-owner-cultivator as one who cultivates both his own land and land rented from others (Bureau of Foreign Trade, 1937: 55). As small landowners, both of them, with sufficient means of production, were, for the

most part, free from exploitation by the landlord, or rather they had no relations of production with the landlord, and therefore the two were not in a relation of opposites. Yet semi-owner-cultivators, "essentially a class distinct from tenants in terms of relations of production," constituted a social group independent of landlords and tenants, and always made up a fairly large proportion of the rural population (Feng, 2010: 258–60).

The proportion of owner-cultivators was 50 percent or above in forty-one of the sixty villages (over two-thirds) listed in Table 4. If one includes semi-owner-cultivators, the percentage was reached in fifty-nine villages (almost 100 percent). The proportion of owner-cultivators was 60 percent or more in thirty-five villages (58 percent of all the villages). Including semi-owner-cultivators, the percentage was reached in fifty-five villages (91.7 percent). The proportion of owner-cultivators and semi-owner-cultivators was 70 percent or above in fifty-two villages (86.7 percent), and 80 percent or more in forty-two villages (70 percent). From these data it can be concluded that rural Shanxi was characterized by a predominance of small landowners, represented by owner-cultivators and semi-owner-cultivators, before the war. Most rural areas had a broadly equal distribution of land among all classes. The notion of "the dominance of landlords" simply does not reflect the reality of rural Shanxi.

Table 4 about here

cs published in *Agriculture Report* 农情报告 in the years 1931, 1932, 1933, and 1934 the proportion of owner-cultivators in Shanxi was 61 percent, 61 percent, 60 percent, and 66 percent respectively, and that of semi-owner-cultivators was 21 percent, 21 percent, 22 percent, and 20 percent respectively (Central Agricultural Research Institute, 1935: 88).[2] Adding the two together, we have a total of over 80 percent in each of the years, which roughly tallies with the results of the calculations in this article and serves as

another piece of evidence of the predominance of small landowners in Shanxi. As early as the 1980s, Zhang Youyi had pointed out the importance of studying the economic status of small landowners in the Republican era (Zhang Youyi, 1988), especially in research on land ownership in rural Shanxi.

The conclusion that small landowners predominated can also be verified by data on the land ownership of households with large landholdings. The rightmost two columns in Table 1 show the largest landholdings and the number of households that held this land in thirty-six of the fifty-three cases (data on the rest of the cases are unavailable), which roughly covers most of the areas from the north to the south of Shanxi and thus mirrors the situation of the whole province. Among these thirty-six cases, no household had more than 700 *mu*; three households in two villages had more than 500 *mu*; six households in six villages had between 300 and 500 *mu*; forty-six households in twenty-five villages and townships had between 100 and 300 *mu*; and of the eight households in the remaining three villages, the largest landholding was less than 100 *mu*. If we define households with large landholdings as those with more than 500 *mu*, such households were found in only two of the thirty-six villages (5.56 percent), Beizhouzhuang village and Xiejiazhuang village, both in Shanyin county in northern Shanxi and both with a thin population and extremely low per *mu* yields; it was little wonder that there were households there with hundreds of *mu* of land (Hu, 2013). In addition, land per household was 59.63 *mu* and 65.21 *mu* respectively above average in the two villages, and thus households with more than 500 *mu* of land could be expected. Only six villages had landholdings between 300 and 500 *mu*, and four of these were also located in northern Shanxi. According to Fei Xiaotong, in his hometown of Wujiang, Jiangsu, a landlord needed about 400 *mu* of land to rent out in order to make a comfortable living (Fei, 2011: 425). In northern Shanxi, with its extremely low yields, a

landlord would have needed even more land.

Researchers found that in Guoxian county, also in northern Shanxi, "there are barely any peasants who are purely tenants and even few semi-owner-cultivators since there are only a small number of large landlords in the county" (Sun and Zhang, 2009: 497.449). In only one of the fourteen villages in central Shanxi was there a household with more than 300 *mu* (see Table 1). Traditionally, Shanxi merchants purchased land back home, and each tended to own about 100 *mu* (Shanxi Provincial Historical Research Institute, 1998: 180). Nevertheless, the data reveal that even in areas with many merchants, such as Dongzuodun village and Xizuodun village in Qixian county, Yangyi township in Taigu county, and Daobei village in Pingyao county, the largest landholding did not exceed 255 *mu*, and only seventeen households (1.97 percent of all the households in these four places) had more than 100 *mu* of land, a very slight degree of land concentration (Liu, 1935: 32, 39).[3] Households with large landholdings in central Shanxi were also found by Zhang Jiafu in his survey in 1933 to own no more than 300 *mu* (Zhang Jiafu, 1990: 380).

As regards southern Shanxi, with a dense population and insufficient land and thus a small area of land per household, Table 1 shows that the largest landholdings were mainly less than 300 *mu*. Wei Zezhi, after his survey in Shanxi, wrote, "There is no great concentration of land in Shanxi. My survey indicates there are only three rich households with respectively 1,500, 2,450, and 3,380 *mu* of land in Yishi county, twenty-four rich households with between 200 and 2,000 *mu* in Daning county, and thirty-four rich households with up to about 2,000 *mu* in Hongtong county. Notwithstanding its higher degree of land concentration, Xiangyuan county has no more than five households with a landholding of about 5,000 *mu*" (Wei, 1977b: 30158). All four of these counties were located in southern Shanxi. Similarly, after their surveys in southern Shanxi

in 1931, reporters for *Ta Kung Pao* wrote, “In other provinces there are still large landlords with hundreds or even thousands of *qing* of land [1 *qing* = 100 *mu*]. . . . [But] wherever we went in southern Shanxi, we found that few people have more than 10 *qing* of land” (“Surveys in southern Shanxi, 8,” 1931).

In sum, households with large landholdings, instead of being dominant, actually constituted a very small proportion of rural households in Shanxi before the war. Those with medium-sized or smaller landholdings (under 300 *mu*), in most cases composed of common people, were “neither privileged in the feudal system nor so economically superior to others as to enslave them” (Fang, 2013: 4), and instead lived a tolerable life on merely ten-odd *mu* of land per capita as a result of the generally large size of the households.

Roughly Equal Relationship between Renters and Rentees

Given the predominance of small landowners and a low proportion of large landowners, this section explores the relationship between renters and rentees, and that between employers and employees in rural Shanxi before the war. As regards the former, before the war, northern Shanxi, with its barren land and thus low yields, had rental rates below the average of 41.06 percent for Shanxi as a whole. In the Yanbei region, Shuoxian county, and Lanxian county, for instance, rates were 35 percent, 36 percent and, 30 percent respectively (Yue Qianhou and Zhang Wei, 2010: 89, 91). In the fourteen villages in two townships in Xingxian county, rates in the mountains were mainly less than 37.5 percent, and in Heiyukou village, which was marked by great inequality in land distribution, the rates in mountainous areas were 26 percent in both 1936 and 1937 (Editorial Group for the Selected Works of Zhang Wentian, 1994: 109–11).

Gao Wangling has argued that, as a rule, landlords in fact charged their tenants only 70

percent to 80 percent of the agreed rent (Gao, 2005: 75, 130). This has been confirmed for many areas. In Liuye village, Xingxian county, for instance, on average tenants paid a maximum of 80 percent to 90 percent of the agreed rent. In Yangjiapo village in the same county, after taking a long-term lease on land and paying rent at the full rate, tenants were allowed to pay 2 to 3 *dou* (1 *dou* = 10 liters) less, and when harvests were poor, they were allowed to pay even less (Yue Qianhou and Zhang Wei, 2010: 123). In sum, in Xingxian county paying rent below the stipulated amount was conventional. For example, if rent was set at 10 *dou*, tenants generally paid at most 7.5 *dou* when harvests were good and 3 *dou* after poor harvests (Zhang and Li, 2011: 6).

Furthermore, renting out land was often unprofitable because of the endless natural and man-made disasters as well as falling prices for land and grain since the 1930s. In Xixian county, for instance, rent fell by about 80 percent and was even not enough to cover the land tax, which led to a rapid decline in average landlords (Sun and Zhang, 2009: 497.452). Similarly, in Yangqu county, landlords had to adjust the rent collected to the size of the harvest in favor of the tenants. And the infertile fields of Yulinping village in this county were even available “rent-free” (Liu, 1933: 71–72). It appears that landlords were at little advantage.

In North China economic ties between landlords and tenants were loose (Qu, 2010: 170–72). The latter were more on equal terms with the former than subordinate to and dependent on them. One of the reasons for this was the dual identity of rural households as both renters and rentees. Those who rented out land included not only rich peasants and landlords who hired hands for farming and trade but also a large number of middle and lower peasants (Li Jinzheng, 2014: 183; Xia, 2005: 83; Yue Qianhou and Zhang Wei, 2010: 57). In the rural areas of central Shanxi, for instance, renters were, contrary to popular belief, the households with large landholdings, while

rentees were often small households in which there were only women and children, with the men probably away doing business (Zhang Jiafu, 1990: 380), a manifestation of the fact that rentees did not necessarily have a higher economic status than renters. Moreover, in many villages of northwestern Shanxi, all classes, except for landlords, rented land, and all classes, including landlords as well as rich, middle, and lower peasants, leased out land.

Another reason was that, in traditional society—a society of acquaintances—renters and rentees were often familiar with each other. "Most of the landlords are local people, and those who are not are rare, only 0.4 percent to 0.5 percent" (Sun and Zhang, 2009: 674.336), "and the landlords have a good knowledge of their tenants' names and moral qualities" (Zhang Weixiong, 1977b: 21456). As a rule, the renter-rentee relationship was built on blood or geographical relationships, and varied with the bloodline and clan (Yue Qianhou and Zhang Wei, 2010: 135). For instance, large households in Majiazhuang township, Linxian county, such as the Mas and the Zhaos, generally found tenants in people who were closely related to them; one party was likely to take care of or help the other in some way (Yue Qianhou and Zhang Wei, 2010: 34–35, 137). In Yangqu county and Wutai county, "the landlords bear the cost of improving arable land for the peasants who work for them." The landlords and the tenants "for the most part get along and have no bitter hostility, unlike their counterparts in Jiangsu and Zhejiang" (Zhang Weixiong, 1977b: 21457). Overall, before the war in rural Shanxi "there was no such thing as harsh treatment or hostility between landlords and tenants, and if there was any, it was not a serious social phenomenon" (Wei, 1977b: 30185).

This was also true of the employer-employee relationship in rural Shanxi. According to a study by Wang Xianming and Niu Wenqin, landless people were often "employed by owner-cultivators and tenants" (Wang and Niu, 2006: 116). A member of any rural class, as long

as he offered to pay, could hire hands and be free to fire them for reasons such as incompatibility. Such "a social relationship resulting from hiring hands was a complex network instead of a simple structure of opposites"; "employers and employees were not in clearly distinct classes, and the two parties had no bitter hostility" (Wang and Niu, 2006: 111, 117). In the social relationship, interests and affection were both valued. In conclusion, before the war, in rural Shanxi there was no obvious contradiction between renters and rentees nor between employers and employees.

Sharp Contradiction between Government and the People

In spite of the above, the rural society of Shanxi was not an idyllic peasant society, but instead was marked by a serious crisis of general poverty. Leaving aside northern Shanxi, even the rural areas of central Shanxi, in spite of their merchant tradition, were in a deep depression following a decline among Shanxi merchants. Business failures put 20 percent to 30 percent of the households in each of four villages of Pingyao county out of work (Liu, 1935: 58). In 1929, Liu Dapeng, a gentryman from Taiyuan, found that Yangyi township, in Taigu county, where rich households had abounded, "has no rich households now and most of the houses and yards have been destroyed. . . .Most of the people in Taigu make a living by selling wood and stone carvings." Even worse, in the 1930s not only did the villages in which his relatives and friends lived and which he visited suffer from "a food shortage for most of the people," but also he himself was so poor that he was dunned for not paying his land tax (Liu, 1990: 383–84, 401, 466, 489, 498). Of the 201 households in Guanjiabao village in Taigu county, nine were in debt and twenty-two had no property, making a total of 15 percent. Three-quarters of all the households were unable to save the 150 yuan needed to meet minimal annual living expenses, and instead

lived hand to mouth (Wu, 2009: 281). In the words of reporters for *Ta Kung Pao*, peasants in southern Shanxi "live an equal but equally poor life" ("Surveys in southern Shanxi, 8," 1931). General poverty, or an "equally poor life," was a fact of life in rural Shanxi before the war.

Such poverty cannot be fully explained by the traditional theory of class exploitation since, as stated earlier, the theory is at variance with the reality of rural Shanxi. One of the important causes of the rural poverty was the unbearable burden imposed on peasants by "the New Policies" reform of 1917 (Wang, 2012; Huang, 2013 [1986]: 234–42).

The first burden was an increased land tax, as detailed in Liu Dapeng's diary: "A tael of silver used as a substitute for grain to pay the land tax has been set as 2.5 silver yuan since the foundation of the Republic of China in 1912." In addition, in 1918, in accordance with the New Policies, "[sub-county] wards have been set up, and a fee of 0.1 yuan for paying the ward heads has been imposed." The net effect of these increases was that the land tax imposed on peasants "doubled in comparison with the Qing dynasty." To make matters worse, in 1936 the land tax jumped again: "A tael of silver has been set as 4.1 silver yuan this year, and every household is compelled to pay a militia fee" (Liu, 1990: 268, 495). The high land tax went way beyond the legal limit, set by the central government, that the regular land tax plus additional taxes should not exceed one percent of the value of the land. Take the years of 1932 and 1933 for example: The ratios of the land tax to land value in the plains and arid land of Shanxi were 3.09 percent and 3.35 percent respectively, three times as much as the maximum limit (Zhang Qiyao, 2009: 82–83). Statistically, from 1931 to 1935 the land tax, about 6.5 million yuan annually, all borne by the peasants, always constituted the largest part, or more precisely, half of the annual revenue of the Shanxi government (Uchida, 2001: 123).

Another burden on peasants was administrative fees. Studies have pointed out that as a result

of the introduction of "village-based governance" in Shanxi, warlord Yan Xishan (who ruled the province from 1911 to 1949) on one hand did improve public security dramatically, but on the other hand increased the burden on peasants by reorganizing existing villages and adding a large number of agencies and staff at the grassroots level. "The establishment of wards alone entailed an increase of hundreds of personnel and concomitant rise in administrative costs; the formation of village government administrative offices, along with the appointment of village chiefs and deputy chiefs, entailed another increase of tens of thousands of yuan" (Yang, 2015: 7). In 1933, for instance, administrative fees of the whole province amounted to 11,356,187 yuan—about twice as much as the land tax revenue—or about 5.21 yuan per household on average (Zhang Qiyao, 2009: 226).

Zhang Jiafu has observed that the peasants in central Shanxi bore a heavy tax burden in the name of "contributions." Rural households were obliged to pay all kinds of local taxes, temporary levies to cover military expenditures and temporary compulsory contributions, such as dispatch fees, field inspection fees, local incidental fees, and village public levies, and so on—all in addition to the land tax (Zhang Jiafu, 1990: 373–74, 380). Another researcher, Zhang Weixiong, was informed in his survey in one of the villages of Yangqu county by Li (a gentryman with 40 *mu* of land) that in addition to the land tax, there were countless varieties of levies: bandit suppression levies, temporary levies, and special levies on rich households. "Almost all the peasants agree that no suffering is comparable to 'contributions.'" In Dongshe township, "land per *mu* is burdened with 'contributions' of only about 0.4 silver yuan [a small sum compared to the burden in other areas], which is thus brushed aside by the people" (Zhang Weixiong, 1977a: 95042). Take the taxes on the households in twenty villages of Yangqu county for example. Table 5 shows that the tax burden on peasants in Yangqu consisted of the land tax

plus other levies, the latter comprising the majority. Of the twenty villages, with per household taxes between 5.914 and 26.143 yuan, three villages had less than 10 yuan in taxes per household, six villages 10 to 15 yuan, six villages 15 to 20 yuan, and five villages 20 yuan and above. In other words, on average households in over half the villages were burdened with taxes of 15 yuan and above; in Nanzhai village, the most heavily burdened, tax was 26 yuan per household. To explain the value of 15 yuan in Yangqu county, the table shows in the rightmost column that the annual salaries of twenty village chiefs were between 25 and 60 yuan. Fifteen yuan was roughly three to seven months' income of a long-term hired hand; thus on average a household paid taxes equivalent to a few months or even half a year of a laborer's wages.

Table 5 about here

The New Policies may have been intended to modernize China, but they drained rural society. As Zhang Ming wrote, "Only in his [Yan Xishan's] hands could the government exploit peasants so recklessly, and gather, through state power, the human, financial, and material resources scattered across the rural areas for military and industrial modernization" (Zhang Ming, 2013: 75). According to a survey of the incomes and expenses of 7,076 rural households in Shanxi in 1934, 35.59 percent of the households had an annual income of less than 49.9 yuan, and 47.84 percent even failed to earn an annual income greater than their expenses (Second Historical Archives of China, 1991: 5-1-7.34–36). "A wide variety of taxes required by the New Policies squeezed peasants and posed a serious threat to their survival" (Wang, 2012: 11).

Even worse, by showering the rural grass roots with bureaucrats, the New Policies added "a mounting number of village chiefs and deputy chiefs as 'Lords,' with great official power over the people, and thus deprived the gentry of their traditional role as the leaders of autonomous villages" (Yang, 2015: 7). These "Lords" as well as their subordinates in charge of dunning the

people to pay taxes abused their power and oppressed villagers. It is true that tax collection by the provincial government was made more effective, but this came at the cost of greatly intensifying the contradiction between government and the people in rural society. One of the reporters for *Ta Kung Pao* who carried out surveys in southern Shanxi in 1931 lamented the village chiefs' authority: "Under his direct rule, the peasants far more fear the village chief than the county magistrate and act in total obedience to his words. Even a slip of the tongue in the form of address may be deemed disobedience, and they'll be taken to the county yamen, arrested, and thrown in chains. If this were not so, how would they know how powerful the 'Lord' is?" The reporter once encountered a few world-weary peasants in a street market who initially were guarded in their comments, but when prodded told the reporter that they dared not return to their village because they were unable to pay the money the village chief tried to extort in a lawsuit over land ("Surveys in southern Shanxi, 2," 1931).

Zhang Jiafu also noted that in the villages of central Shanxi the most bitter hostility was that between the villagers and the village chief. Liu Dapeng also recorded in his diary many instances of tyranny at the grassroots level:

> [In] Yangyi township . . . the village chiefs constantly press the villagers to pay not only the land tax but also compulsory contributions. Anyone who cannot pay will be brought to the county government to be investigated. If he still fails to pay, he will be jailed. In all the villages of the township there are people who have died of disease while in detention or died after being seriously ill and released on bail. (Liu, 1990: 491)[4]

This can certainly be described as rural tyranny. There was a sharp contradiction between the people in the rural areas and the government, represented by the officials in control of the grass roots who imposed both the heavy taxes and the tyranny. Even before the war there were many cases in which villagers criticized or even attacked village chiefs (Liu, 1990: 485–88, 490). During the war in the Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei border region under the leadership of the CCP, peasants overthrew a vast array of village chiefs and deputy chiefs in the Yan Xishan regime (Zhang Ming, 2013: 160). A complete resolution to this contradiction had to await Land Reform in central Shanxi during the last three years of the civil war (1945–1949). During the Land Reform it was "despotic landlords," who had served at the grassroots level in the Yan Xishan regime, instead of common landlords, who were condemned by the people. These so-called "landlords" were in fact officials (Hao, 2014: 210, 215, 218–20).

The Population-to-Land Pressure

Studying the land-to-man ratio is an indispensable prerequisite for analyzing land ownership. A crucial factor in the general poverty in rural Shanxi before the war was the limited amount of arable land as opposed to a huge agricultural population, as in the case of Xicun village. Statistics show that in Shanxi in 1933, there was a total of 50,509,344 *mu* of cultivated land, and 9,745,266 people in 1,874,082 rural households: in other words, only 27 *mu* per household and 5.2 *mu* per capita (Shanxi Provincial Government Secretariat, 1933: 74).[5]

Even worse, there was a very unequal distribution of population as well of the quantity and quality of land among the regions of Shanxi. Broadly speaking, the sizes of landholdings per household were above average in northern Shanxi, with its barren land and a sparse population, and below average in southern Shanxi, with its dense population on insufficient land. Any

analysis of the man-to-land ratio in Shanxi requires looking at per capita landholdings of the various regions of the province (see Table 4).

William Hinton estimated that in the southern districts of Lucheng county in southern Shanxi it took about 6 *mu* to support one person (Hinton, 1966: 29), as opposed to 6 *shang* (18 to 30 *mu*) in northern Shanxi.[6] Table 4 indicates that all of the fourteen villages in southern Shanxi for which we have data had less than 6 *mu* of land per capita—here the pressure of population on land was obviously immense. In central Shanxi, with its slightly better land, if one supposes that it took 5 *mu* to feed one person, then fourteen villages (half of the twenty-eight surveyed villages in central Shanxi) failed to reach that standard, and eighteen villages (nearly two-thirds) also failed to meet the 6-*mu* standard. Northern Shanxi was no better: ten of the seventeen villages (nearly 60 percent) had less than 15 *mu* (3 to 5 *shang*) of land per capita. In many of the villages it was the shortage of land that necessitated renting in land and reduced a host of people to semi-owner-cultivators and even tenants. In Guanjiabao village in Taigu county, with 2,266.99 *mu* of arable land and 160 households engaged in cultivation, for instance, households on average had less than 15 *mu*, and were therefore compelled to rent land: 30 percent of the land for commercial agricultural production was rented (Wu, 2009: 283, 296). Similarly, researchers found that in northwestern Shanxi "as a result of poverty and barren land, few peasants own enough land to support themselves"; for example, owner-cultivators comprised only 13.5 percent of the total households of Bajiaobu village in Shenchi county (Liu, 1934b: 8). Overall, southern Shanxi had more population pressure on land than northern or central Shanxi, and therefore the masses, who found it hard to rely on crop farming alone, generally lived on other types of agricultural production and some industrial production related to agriculture. In Yangcheng county, for instance, "yields are low, so peasants earn a living from agricultural production other

than crop farming, such as planting mulberry and raising silkworms, and industrial production related to agriculture, such as mining, iron smelting and coal exploration" (Zhao, 1935). Another example is the city of Jincheng. According to reporters for *Ta Kung Pao*, land per capita was less than 3 *mu*, and yields were "50 catties of grain per *mu*, or 149 catties per capita; yet that would not be enough to sustain a person for more than half a year, assuming one eats a catty of grain a day" ("Surveys in southern Shanxi, 3," 1931). Thus, "although the city was a wealthy region in southern Shanxi, its wealth was based entirely on minerals" ("Surveys in southern Shanxi, 2," 1931; "Jincheng gongshangye gaikuang," 1931). During a disastrous drought in Lu'an county in 1931, "peasants eked out a living through agricultural production excluding crop farming, and through sidelines" ("Surveys in southern Shanxi, 7," 1931). A final example is Zhangzi county, where "life is the hardest because only a few women weave cloth" ("Surveys in southern Shanxi, 7," 1931). The low income from crop farming, as a result of the limited amount of arable land, meant that peasants in many regions had to survive on other sources of income.

In sum, the widespread imbalance between population and land throughout rural society in Shanxi, whether in the north or in the south, was a major cause of the acute crisis in the province. "At the same time, the thin margins above subsistence that the state as well as the rural populations had to work with aggravated the tensions between the two" (Huang, 1990: 333). Consequently, when the state engaged in primitive accumulation of capital on a large scale in order to modernize rural society, the peasants came under an even graver threat to their survival.

As early as the 1920s and 1930s, the famous rural sociologist Qiao Qiming conducted a wide-ranging survey that recognized the existence of serious overpopulation in China. Reckoning that an average rural household in the North China Plain had 20 *mu* of land—less, in other words, than the 25 *mu* needed for subsistence—he lamented "a dense population on too

little land," and pointed out that "the heavy pressure of the rural population on the land is beyond doubt the most serious, but not the only, cause of the recent chaos, decline, and calamities in rural China." In addition, he attributed virtually all of China's social, political, and economic problems to overpopulation (Qiao, 2012: 129, 111, 109, 130). His proposal to overcome the problem of overpopulation, however, never entered the mainstream. Instead, the long prevailing fear of inequality rather than fear of poverty only became more dominant in people's minds as rural China declined.

However, the problems with the so-called unequal distribution of land should not be exaggerated. Such a widespread fear of inequality in land distribution had its social origins in the increasing imbalance between population consumption and means of production. Overpopulation was so serious that even a minor inequality in land distribution was viewed as a threat to survival and thus raised concerns, a mirror of the hidden but real pressure of population on land. Take Yangqu county for example. Researchers were shocked that 69 percent of the total land was occupied by 152 landlord households, and thus called for a more equal distribution of land. However, a more careful study shows that so-called landlords owned only 3.54 *mu* per capita on average. "A landlord occupied down to 3 or 4 *mu* and up to 100 *mu* of land. Fragmented land rights turn out to have been true" (Zhang Weixiong, 1977b: 21442–44). As Ping-ti Ho wrote, "had landed property been more equally distributed and tenurial terms more reasonable in modern China, there would have been much less of the social misery so familiar to students of twentieth-century China, although the national standard of living would still have steadily deteriorated. Land tenure must therefore be regarded as a significant, though not basic, factor relating to population change" (Ho, 1959: 226). In spite of its focus on population, his conclusion is helpful for research on land in view of the close link between population and land in

traditional society. It can be said that in modern Shanxi, arable land was so limited that, as the population grew, it became very difficult to feed the surplus rural population. Had a "land-to-the-tillers" program of ensuring every peasant an equal area of land been carried out in Shanxi, many of the province's regions (most notably those in the south) might have faced a food shortage for everyone.[7] The real problems were the inadequacy of farm technology, the failure of the government to promote agricultural improvement (Myers, 1970), and a surplus of agricultural population.

Conclusion

To get around the defects inherent in simply focusing on examples in the study of land ownership, this article calculates the land Gini coefficients for numerous cases in rural Shanxi, and argues that in that calculation the sizes of rural households should be taken into account, because calculating the Gini coefficient with the household as the unit of analysis results in inaccuracy. This fact has been ignored by previous scholars such as Hu Yingze, whose conclusion, built on the household as the unit of analysis, fails to reflect the real situation with respect to land distribution in the rural areas of modern Shanxi and thus needs correction.

The calculations in this article show a land Gini coefficient of 0.343 for rural Shanxi on the basis of household size before the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, which indicates a reasonably equitable distribution of land, or more precisely, that before the war land tenure was fragmented in rural Shanxi as a whole but concentrated in rare cases. A data analysis of households with large landholdings as well as the proportions of small landowners in sixty villages of Shanxi also shows that there was a predominance of small landowners, with a very small proportion of large landowners, and that land was fragmented among all classes in rural

Shanxi. As Wei Zezhi wrote, “because a large proportion of peasants are owner-cultivators and there is only a slight degree of land concentration, the contradiction in land distribution is much less serious or complicated in Shanxi than in southern China; peasants are not polarized in terms of class, nor aware of any antagonism between classes” (Wei, 1977a : 56994–95). The sharpest contradiction in Shanxi’s rural society was instead between the government and the people, as opposed to a minor one between renters and rentees. Peasants were not only heavily taxed by the government but also tyrannized as a consequence of the addition of a large number of rural grassroots government organs. The people called for a more equal distribution of land, which to a large extent resulted from the high pressure of population on land. Land shortages resulted not only in peasants having a low income but also in a fragile peasant economy in which the threat to peasants’ survival grew as the state’s exploitation deepened, resulting in an intensification of the contradiction between the two parties. Accordingly, rural poverty cannot be simply attributed to class exploitation. As some scholars have pointed out, land concentration and class polarization cannot adequately explain the lingering poverty and backwardness in rural China in the decades after the equalization of land distribution and the elimination of class divisions (Cao and Liu, 2014: 52–53). The changes that were really needed were, first, to cut the taxes levied by the government in the rural areas, and then to create a system that would promote farm technology and the movement of agricultural population to non-agricultural industries. Clarifying this point is crucial in understanding the essence of modern China’s rural problems.

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Table 1. Land Gini Coefficients & Largest Landholdings in Selected Areas of Shanxi before the War

Region		Gini coefficient			Size of largest landholding	No. of households
		A. On the basis of the household	B. On basis of the size of the household	B1. Estimate (A × 0.6665)		
1	20 villages in 9 counties in northwestern Shanxi	0.617	0.521			
2	101 villages in northern Shanxi	0.387	0.310			
3	Renjiawan village, Xingxian county	0.377	0.300		126 *shang* (378 *mu*)	1
4	Tangjiaji village, Xingxian county	0.423	0.375		106 *shang* (318 *mu*)	1
5	Sang'e village, Xingxian county	0.838	0.458		99 *shang* (297*mu*)	1
6	Xiping village, Xingxian county	0.382	0.294		51.9 *shang* (155.7 *mu*)	1
7	Heiyukou village,	0.681	0.604			

	Xingxian county					
8	Gaojia village, Xingxian county	0.512	0.435			
9	Zhaojia Chuankou village, Xingxian county	0.549	0.446			
10	Liuye village, Xingxian county	0.487	0.351			
11	Gaojiagou township, Xingxian county	0.528	0.378			
12	Shijiagang village, Dingxiang county	0.502	0.389		260 *mu*	1
13	Lijiazhuang village, Fanshi county	0.570		0.380	400 *mu*	1
14	Shanhui village, Fanshi county	0.560		0.373	312 *mu*	1
15	Anjiazhuang village, Guoxian county	0.418		0.279	100–150 *mu*	3
16	Lancun village, Guoxian county	0.333		0.222	200–220 *mu*	2
17	Louzhaiban village, Guoxian county	0.521		0.347	100–120 *mu*	2

18	Nanzhuangtou village, Guoxian county	0.467		0.311	150–200 *mu*	4
19	Qiuyu village, Guoxian county	0.458		0.305	100–110 *mu*	2
20	Beizhouzhuang village, Shanyin county	0.511		0.341	500–700 *mu*	2
21	Xiejiazhuang village, Shanyin county	0.619		0.413	550 *mu*	1
22	Xichang village, Guoxian county	0.472		0.315	150–200 *mu*	5
23	Yanggao county	0.616		0.411		
24	Zhongzhuang village, Xingxian county	0.482		0.321		
25	123 villages in southeastern Shanxi	0.267	0.190			
26	20 villages in southern Shanxi	0.272	0.162			
27	Anle village, Huoxian county	0.313	0.194		100–185 *mu*	3
28	Mafangtou village, Changzhi county	0.527		0.351	50–100 *mu*	4
29	Xinzhuang village,	0.498		0.332	50–84 *mu*	2

	Changzhi county					
30	Fengyi village, Tunliu county	0.627		0.418	210 *mu*	1
31	Shiquan village, Tunliu county	0.65		0.433	300 *mu*	1
32	Goucun village, Tunliu county	0.619		0.413	170 *mu*	1
33	Nanfengliu village, Yongji county	0.612		0.408	200–270 *mu*	2
34	Pingshun county	0.579		0.386		
35	Tunliu county	0.452		0.301		
36	Some villages in Pingding county & Yuxian county in eastern Shanxi	0.452	0.406			
37	Some villages of 5 counties in central Shanxi	0.485	0.226			
38	Xicun village, Yangqu county	0.587	0.355		95–100 *mu*	2
39	152 households in Yangqu county	0.348	0.254			

40	Jian’gou village, Yuxian county	0.413	0.275	181 *mu*	1
41	Beiquangou village, Yushe county	0.577	0.385	120 *mu*	1
42	Haobi village, Yushe county	0.485	0.323	200–300 *mu*	2
43	Heping village, Yushe county	0.393	0.262	100 *mu*	2
44	Jinzang village, Yushe county	0.443	0.295	100–150 *mu*	5
45	Nanwang village, Yushe county	0.577	0.385	340 *mu*	1
46	Tuncun village, Yushe county	0.525	0.350	250 *mu*	1
47	Jiangtang village, Yushe county	0.427	0.285	240 *mu*	1
48	Daobei village, Pingyao county	0.448	0.299	150–155 *mu*	1
49	Dongzuodun village, Qixian county	0.344	0.229	125–129 *mu*	1
50	Xizuodun village, Qixian county	0.451	0.301	250–255 *mu*	1

51	Yangyi township, Taigu county	0.583		0.389	250–255 *mu*	1
52	Guanjiabao village, Taigu county	0.531		0.354	173.6 *mu*	1
53	Shanxi (surveyed by the GMD)	0.515		0.343		
54	Shanxi (surveyed by the CCP)	0.428	0.333			
Average Gini coefficient		0.495	0.349	For the 54 cases on the basis of household size: 0.343		

Sources:

1. The seven cases in lines 1, 2, 25, 26, 36, 37, and 54 are from the land surveys conducted by the CCP throughout Shanxi before the war (Party History Research Center, 1983: 11–15).

The ten cases from lines 3 to 11 and in line 24 are from the survey carried out by Zhang Wentian in northwestern Shanxi (Shanxi Provincial Archives, 1942a, 1942b, 1942c, 1942d, 1942e, 1942f, 1942g, 1942h, 1942i, 1942j).

For the three cases in lines 12, 27, and 38: Liu, 1934a; Liu, 1934c; Liu, 1934d.

For the case in line 39: Zhang Weixiong, 1977b.

For the case in line 52: Wu, 2009: 283.

2. For the twenty-four cases from lines 13 to 22, lines 28 to 33, and lines 40 to 47s: *Nongcun jianshe* 农村建设 (Rural Construction), vol. 1 (1935) (listed by issue number followed by page number): 3: 97; 3: 98; 4: 98; 4: 95; 3: 96; 4: 97; 4: 99; 3: 100; 3: 99; 4: 96; 3: 94; 3: 93; 3: 90; 3: 89; 3: 91; 3: 28; 3: 95; 4: 89; 4: 28; 4: 91; 4: 94; 4: 92; 4: 88; 4: 93. Some of the Gini coefficients on the basis of the household as the unit of analysis are from Hu, 2013.

3. For the eight cases in lines 23, 34, 35 and 53, and from lines 48 to 51: Fan, 1935; Sun and Zhang, 2009: 497.423, 497.438–39, 937.301; Liu, 1935. The Gini coefficients on the basis of the household are from Hu, 2013.

Notes:

1. In figuring the Gini coefficient for the twenty cases on lines 1–11, 23, 24, 25, 26, 35, 36, 37, 39 and 54, the calculation has been based on class, while for the remaining thirty-four cases, the calculation has been based on the household.

2. The twenty-four cases from lines 1 to 24 are roughly all in northern Shanxi, the eleven cases from lines 25 to 35 are broadly in southern Shanxi, the seventeen cases from lines 36 to 52 are in central Shanxi, and the two cases in lines 53 and 54 refer to the entire province.

3. Regarding the case in line 26, there is an error in the original table: The land occupied by poor peasants and tenants should be 304,658 *mu* rather than 30,487 *mu*. See Party History Research Center, 1983: 15.

Table 2. Land Distribution among 240 Households in Xicun Village, Yangqu County, on the Basis of the Household

Land per household (*mu*)	No. of households	Proportion of households (%)	Total land area (*mu*)	Proportion of total land area (%)
0	55	22.19	0	0
1–4	31	12.92	87.15	2.43
5–9	37	15.42	259.15	7.23
10–14	27	11.25	322.3	8.99
15–19	23	9.58	385.4	10.75
20–24	16	6.67	343.1	9.57
25–29	15	6.25	408.9	11.41
30–34	8	3.33	262.3	7.32
35–39	4	1.67	151.5	4.23
40–44	9	3.75	372.1	10.38
45–49	4	1.67	191.5	5.34
50–54	2	0.83	108	3.01
55–59	1	0.42	56.3	1.57
60–64	1	0.42	61	1.70
65–69	1	0.42	68	1.90
70–74	1	0.42	70	1.95
75–79	1	0.42	76	2.12
80–84	1	0.42	81	2.26

85–89	1	0.42	85	2.37
95–99	2	0.83	196.5	5.48
Total	240	100	3,585.3	100
Gini coefficient	0.587			

Source: Liu, 1934d.

Table 3. Land Distribution among 240 Households in Xicun Village, Yangqu County, on the Basis of Household Size

Per capita land of households (*mu*)	No. of people	Proportion of people (%)	Total land area (*mu*)	Proportion of the total land area (%)
0	162	13.73	0	0
1–4	787	66.69	1,897	52.93
5–9	204	17.29	1,351	37.70
10–14	21	1.78	243	6.78
15–19	6	0.51	93	2.59
Total	1,180	100	3,584	100
Gini coefficient	0.355			

Source: Liu, 1934d.

Table 4. Proportions of Owner-Cultivators and Semi-Owner-Cultivators and Land Per Capita in 60 Villages of Shanxi before the War

Region		Proportions of owner-cultivators and/or semi-owner-cultivators (%)			Land per capita (*mu*)
		Owner-cultivators	Semi-owner-cultivators	Total	
1	Liujiashan township, Shenchi county	44.5	33.3	77.8	56.65
2	Nanshuiquan village, Shenchi county	74.1	11.1	85.2	24.57
3	Wushouju village, Shenchi county	69.6	13.0	82.6	30.68
4	Xiaoma Junying village, Shenchi county	73.0	10.0	83.0	34.88
5	Shijiazhuang village, Shenchi county	52.0	18.0	70.0	24.99
6	Hongyazi village, Shenchi county	67.5	11.6	79.1	21.0
7	Wanjiagu village, Shenchi county	67.5	7.5	75.0	27.18
8	Bajiaobu village,	13.5	40.6	54.1	7.27

	Shenchi county				
9	Lijiazhuang village, Fanshi county	31.0	0	31.0	5.69
10	Shanhui village, Fanshi county	27.3	28.0	55.3	4.52
11	Anjiazhuang village, Guoxian county	47.27	27.2	74.47	6.81
12	Lancun village, Guoxian county	60.0	30.0	90.0	3.92
13	Louzhaiban village, Guoxian county	40.9	32.8	73.7	3.30
14	Nanzhuangtou village, Guoxian county	50.0	30.0	80.0	4.94
15	Qiuyu village, Guoxian county	66.6	29.2	95.8	5.08
16	Beizhouzhuang village, Shanyin county	63.0	25.0	88.0	7.81
17	Xiejiazhuang village, Shanyin county	65.0	19.0	84.0	10.95
18	Xichang village, Guoxian county	70.0	18.0	88.0	Unknown
19	Mafangtou village,	56.3	43.7	100	2.57

	Changzhi county				
20	Xinzhuang village, Changzhi county	39.7	53.4	93.1	2.20
21	Fengyi village, Tunliu county	16.4	58.4	74.8	2.88
22	Shiquan village, Tunliu county	17.7	35.5	53.2	4.41
23	Goucun village, Tunliu county	22.8	39.2	62.0	5.60
24	Nanfengliu village, Yongji county	75.0	16.7	91.7	3.48
25	Gaoshimo village, Gaoping county	63.6	11.3	74.9	3.30
26	Beishiwu village, Gaoping county	84.0	12.6	96.6	1.93
27	Changzhen village, Gaoping county	89.1	0	89.1	2.56
28	Xingdong village, Gaoping county	91.7	0	91.7	3.58
29	Wutongpu village, Lingchuan county	100	0	100	2.90
30	Shuangquan township,	70.3	29.5	99.8	3.55

	Lingchuan county				
31	Fucheng township, Lingchuan county	88.1	6.6	94.7	2.41
32	Hedong village, Lingchuan county	69.9	19.9	89.5	1.74
33	Jian’gou village, Yuxian county	68.4	26.1	94.5	2.60
34	Beiquangou village, Yushe county	22.5	55.0	77.5	4.16
35	Haobi village, Yushe county	96.0	3.8	99.8	5.44
36	Heping village, Yushe county	45.0	46.0	91.0	6.46
37	Jinzang village, Yushe county	64.3	34.4	98.7	6.29
38	Nanwang village, Yushe county	85.1	9.2	94.3	4.86
39	Tuncun village, Yushe county	65.0	32.6	97.6	7.60
40	Jiangtang village, Yushe county	70.0	27.0	97.0	9.16
41	Yulinping village,	93.44	0	93.44	9.07

	Yangqu county				
42	Heitugang village, Yangqu county	12.12	45.46	57.58	3.57
43	Chenjiayu village, Yangqu county	27.27	54.55	81.82	10.82
44	Mazhuang village, Yangqu county	76.70	14.20	90.9	2.82
45	Songzhuang village, Yangqu county	0	87.1	87.1	14.14
46	Laojunying village, Yangqu county	70.0	13.33	83.33	9.7
47	Qinxian village, Yangqu county	80.0	10.9	90.9	2.97
48	Wangcun village, Yangqu county	39.7	47.05	86.75	4.47
49	Qianbeitun village, Yangqu county	35.5	50.98	86.48	5.92
50	Beihan village, Yangqu county	79.36	12.70	92.06	4.6
51	San’gei village, Yangqu county	65.64	22.07	87.71	3.36
52	Ruicheng village,	46.08	35.49	81.57	4.37

	Yangqu county				
53	Huyan village, Yangqu county	21.26	40.33	61.59	4.84
54	Shanglan village, Yangqu county	60.61	14.24	74.85	4.01
55	Xiangyang township, Yangqu county	57.07	12.40	69.47	4.0
56	Nanzhai village, Yangqu county	57.14	32.66	89.8	4.98
57	Huanghoutun village, Yangqu county	75.9	21.69	97.59	5.08
58	Qinglong township, Yangqu county	59.37	21.35	80.72	3.58
59	Huangzhai township, Yangqu county	67.15	30.55	97.7	5.98
60	Dayu township, Yangqu county	72.76	2.72	75.48	7.03

Sources:

For the sixteen cases from lines 1 to 8, and from lines 25 to 32: Liu, 1934b.

For the twenty-four cases in lines 9 to 24, and in lines 33 to 40: *Nongcun jianshe* 农村建设 (Rural Construction), vol. 1 (1935) (listed by issue number followed by page number): 3: 97, 109; 3: 98, 110; 4: 98, 109; 4: 95, 107; 3: 96, 108; 4: 97, 108; 4: 99, 110; 3: 100, 112; 3: 99, 113; 4: 96;

3: 94, 105; 3: 93, 106; 3: 90, 101; 3: 89, 102; 3: 91, 103; 3: 92, 104; 3: 95, 107; 4: 89, 102; 4: 90–100; 4: 91, 103; 4: 94, 106; 4: 92, 104; 4: 88, 101; 4: 93, 105.

For the twenty cases from lines 40 to 60: Liu, 1933.

Notes:

1. The first eighteen cases are roughly in northern Shanxi, the fourteen cases from lines 19 to 32 are broadly in southern Shanxi, and the remaining twenty-eight cases are in general in central Shanxi.

2. The data show that in some of the regions it was tenants (for example in Lancun village, Guoxian county) or semi-owner-cultivators (in Beizhouzhuang village, Shanyin county, for instance) that had the largest landholding per household. The reasons for this require further research.

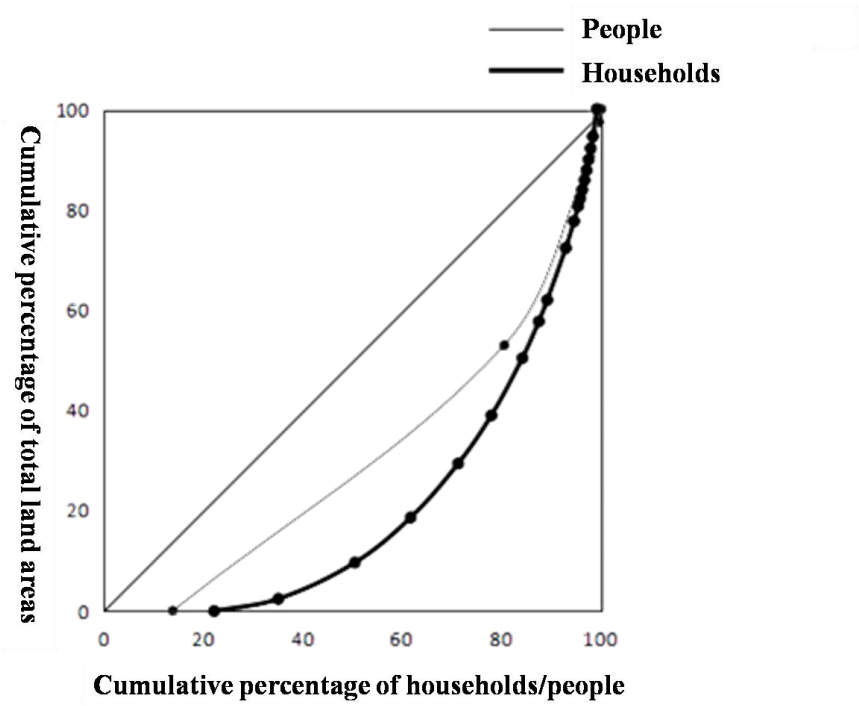
Table 5. Taxes on Households in 20 Villages of Yangqu County in 1933 (Unit: Silver yuan)

Region	Land tax	Levies (other than the land tax)	Total	No. of households	Tax per household	Annual salary of village chief
Yulinping village	114	330	444	61	7.279	42
Heitugang village	916	1,550	2,466	417	5.914	40
Chenjiayu village	651	1,500	2,151	111	19.378	None
Mazhuang village	1,759	1,846.6	3,605.6	178	20.256	40
Songzhuang village	517	354	871	55	15.836	25
Laojunying village	174	144.9	318.9	32	9.966	40
Qinxian village	871	1,450	2,321	110	21.1	60
Wangcun village	365	1,180	1,545	76	20.329	40
Qianbeitun	267	862	1,129	51	22.137	30

village						
Beihan village	408	1,050	1,458	126	11.571	25
San'gei village	1,143	4,140	5,283	342	15.447	50
Ruicheng village	700	2,210	2,910	221	13.167	50
Huyan village	117	5,230	5,347	393	13.606	40
Shanglan village	1,362	1,950	3,312	331	10.006	60
Xiangyang township	1,607	3,680	5,287	498	10.616	30
Nanzhai village	422	2,140	2,562	98	26.143	50
Huanghoutun village	605.24	1,150	1,755.24	93	18.874	25
Qinglong township	939	1,430	2,369	200	11.845	60
Huangzhai township	1,988	3,800	5,788	377	15.278	30
Dayu township	1,928	3,760	5,688	285	19.744	50

Source: Liu, 1933.

Figure 1. Lorenz Curves of Land Distribution in Xicun Village.



NOTES

[1] The proportion of the households without land was also an important factor in the calculation of the Gini coefficients. For example, of the 201 households in Guanjiabao village, 151 owned land while 50—or about 25 percent of the total—did not (Wu, 2009: 282–83). However, of the village men who worked, 68.9 percent were engaged in agriculture, 17.9 percent in commerce, and 13.2 percent in other occupations such as handicrafts (Wu, 2009: 278). Of the 160 out of 201 households that were "rural households working the land in commercial agricultural production," 9 consisted of landless peasants who cultivated land for others (Wu, 2009: 282–83, 293). Thus, the proportion of the households without land should have been 9 ÷ 160 = 5.63% and hence the Gini coefficient on the basis of the household would be 0.531 rather than 0.626.

This deserves attention particularly with regard to the rural society of central Shanxi, where merchants formed a large proportion of the population. Take the four villages from lines 48 to 51 in Table 1 as examples: The proportions of households without land should have been respectively 5.25 percent, 0 percent, 1.2 percent, and 15.54 percent, instead of 14.46 percent, 1.56 percent, 2.99 percent, and 23.3 percent.

In addition, a high proportion of households without land in some of the villages might have been the result of a huge proportion of households that had emigrated from other areas. Take as an example Yangyi township in Taigu county in line 51 of Table 1: Up to 15.54 percent of all households had no land, but 163 households (a third of the total) had come from other areas, and 30 of them consisted of landless tenants or peasants who were working in industry. These

households accounted for 77 percent of the 39 households without land in the township (Liu, 1935).

Because of limited data, only a few cases are analyzed in this article in terms of the proportion and origin of the households without land. If every case were analyzed, the Gini coefficients would be more accurate, or rather, smaller.

[2] In addition, the proportions of owner-cultivators and semi-owner-cultivators in Shanxi were respectively 72 percent and 15 percent in 1933 (Shanxi Provincial Government Secretariat, 1933), and respectively 57.67 percent and 21.64 percent in 1935 (Bureau of Foreign Trade of the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of China, 1937: 56). These two sources and *Agriculture Report* presented similar results.

[3] Generally speaking, merchants accounted for 30 percent to 40 percent of the households in each of the four areas.

[4] Similar phenomena were recorded in Liu, 1990: 485, 492, and 497.

[5] Land per household was 32 and 31.2 *mu* respectively in 1932 and 1935 (Bureau of Foreign Trade of the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of China, 1937: 9).

[6] 1 *shang* was equal to 3–5 *mu* in northern Shanxi. For instance, 1 *shang* was equal to about 5 *mu* in Shenchi county (Liu, 1934b), and about 3 *mu* in Xingxian county.

[7] The fact that the CCP repeatedly infringed on the interests of middle peasants later in Land Reform to win the support of poor peasants and tenants also demonstrates that there was not enough land to distribute (Huang, 2007; Li, 2005).