Local Self-Government in Zhejiang, 1909-1927

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During the late Qing and early Republican periods, local self-government (*difang zizhi*) became an omnipresent political catchword. It was a phrase used by liberal constitutionalists and centralizing authoritarians alike. For all its use and misuse, however, the term still represents one of the most highly significant political developments in early twentieth-century China.

This essay surveys the course of local self-government in the province of Zhejiang from its late Qing inception to its destruction with the coming of Guomindang [Kuomintang] control.[1] In addition, it looks at larger questions such as the nature of local institutional change from the imperial era to the Nanjing [Nanking] period and the nature of elite composition and activity during a period of rapid political change.

CONFLICTING OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Since the district government impinged more directly on the populace than any other level of the Chinese bureaucracy, its

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quality was a paramount concern. In theory, the nature of this local government was determined by the magistrate (Watt, 1972 82-88). Although serving primarily as the central government's representative in financial and judicial matters and as a local police agent, the magistrate was additionally responsible for administering public works, social welfare, and educational policy. To some extent, however, the character of local government also depended on the elite in the area, who either assisted the magistrate in his various duties or hindered his effectiveness. Restricted by the law of avoidance from serving in one post for a long period or from serving at all in his home province, the magistrate was necessarily dependent on the local elite to administer effectively.

Recognizing the significant role of the elite in local administration, the government had always been wary of any increase in elite power and had taken concrete steps to restrict degreed elite prerogatives as, for example, in the *baojia* system. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, due to central military weakness in the face of great social unrest, local leaders in many areas were allowed to assume control of defense functions. Taking advantage of widespread administrative deterioration which plagued the dynasty in its closing years, local elites continued to expand their power, appropriating more and more leadership roles in local government (Kuhn, 1970. 211-215)

When last-minute constitutional reforms were decreed by the imperial court from 1906 to 1911, a primary focus for reform was the local level of administration. A constitutional timetable, promulgated in 1908, called for the establishment of local self-government bodies in every district (*xian*), municipality *(cheng)*, market town (*zhen*), and township (*xiang*) by 1913 and 1914. The aim was to bring central control to the local level, incorporating elite leadership into officially-sponsored (and therefore controlled) councils and assemblies. Such a program would strengthen a rapidly-decaying political administration and, at the same time, limit the growing powers of the social elite.

In addition to an element of control, the new organs were to provide at least the semblance of elite autonomy. The Qing concept of elite autonomy was to allow the newly-institutionalized elite to perform those jobs which were often of secondary importance to local officials—public works, educational development, and social welfare. In other words, the purpose of the Qing system of local self-government was to bolster official rule (*guanzhi*) while granting the local elite only the trappings of self-rule (*zizhi*).

While the Qing perceived self-government as a method of regulating the polity more effectively from the top, some Chinese reformers contended that self-government should be primarily a system based upon local initiative and autonomy. These reformers suggested that a new China could be built from the bottom up by granting local autonomy, releasing elite energies and mobilizing the elite (in local assemblies) to assist in modernization. Zhang Jian [Chang Chien], whose local leadership reshaped the district of Nantong in Jiangsu province, provides a remarkable example of the potential that existed in elite reform. Using the term "self-government" (*zizhi*) to include many nonpolitical functions, Chang initiated industrial development, programs in social welfare, public works, and educational reform. In short, he sought to make changes which would lead to the strengthening and restructuring of the locality as a whole. He argued that "national strength [would be] based on local self-government" (Chu, 1965· 162-163).

Kang You-wei also believed that the adoption of local self-rule would contribute to China's national power. Elite mobilization, which he envisaged as taking place through the establishment of local political organs, would lay the foundation for a complete political transformation of the nation. Ultimately, he wrote, this change in polity was to be grounded in the people (Hsiao, 1975 214-216) The conflict between this concept of self-government as elite autonomy and the Qing concept of self-government as elite control remained a continual source of tension in the later years of the Qing and throughout the early Republican period.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT, 1909-1911

Qing regulations for local self-government bodies were published in January 1909. Municipality and market town councils (*yishihui*) and executive boards (*dongshihui*) as well as township councils (*xiangdong*) and deputies (*xiangzuo*) were to be established (Brunnert and Hagelstrom, 1912: 178-180). Many of these bodies were formed in early 1911, although some were not established until after the Qing collapse. Councils were to discuss local problems, including finance measures for public works projects. The executive boards and township deputies were to administer the councils' decisions (Tung, 1968: 14-15).

Analysis of the composition of these bodies is handicapped by notoriously irregular gazetteer coverage. One outstanding problem is that the recipients of lower degrees in the traditional examination system—the *shengyuan* and *jiansheng*—are not systematically included. Nevertheless, certain observations can be made on the basis of available material.

First of all, lower-degree holders, who had traditionally been excluded from official positions, composed a large portion of the new local representative bodies.[2] In Zhejiang's Suian district, for example, lower-degree holders dominated the councils and boards numerically, constituting 55% and 70%, respectively (Teraki, 1962: 18-19). In Shuanglin city in northern Zhejiang, 43% of the council was lower gentry (Shuanglin Zhenzhi, 1917. 8 5a).

In the second place, even though the power of lower-degree holders is prominent, Ichiko Chūzō's (1968: 302) contention that "most of the important posts in local self-government were virtually monopolized" by lower-degree holders does not appear to be borne out by the Zhejiang data. Upper-degree holders, specifically *zhuren* and *gungsheng*, controlled councils and boards in such districts as Xindeng, Shouchang, Changhua, and Zhenhai as well as in Puyuan, a town in the prefecture of Jiaxing

In the third place, even in the gazetteers which record the recipients of lower degrees there is always an additional large

percentage of council and board members who are not identified except by name, whose backgrounds are not included, and who were thus not traditional degree holders, rank holders, or modern school graduates. To be chosen by the elite to serve on an elite body, these men must have been powerful and/or prestigious local notables who had simply eschewed degrees or school. Whatever their social origin—merchants, landlords, relatives of traditional gentry, shopkeepers, secret society leaders—they must have served for a long time in local positions of unofficial power.[3] It was in the late Qing self-government movement, therefore, that their power, like the power of lower-degree holders, was officially legitimized and recognized. In Suian district, for example, 31% of the local councils were made up of men who held neither rank nor traditional or modern degrees, on the Shuanglin city council, the percentage was as high as 48%.

In this essay, I shall call lower-degree holders and those who had no degrees the "new elite." I must stress that this nomenclature reflects a new political and administrative reality, not a social change· these groups had been community leaders previously and were thus not a new social factor.[4] Their newness stemmed from official recognition of their participation in new political institutions. Although the upper-degree holders were also, perhaps in its strictest sense, "new" in this regard, they had previously enjoyed some degree of official recognition as organizers and leaders of militia units (*tuanlian*). More precisely, I have excluded them from this category of new elite for purposes of analysis, in order to demarcate more clearly a group whose newly-recognized power is a unique characteristic of this period.[5]

This new elite was assertive, determined to maintain the political status it had won in a peaceful revolution of local power in fact if not in name Almost immediately, antagonism developed between the established county bureaucracy and these newly-created local bodies. The Ruian city council, for example, vigorously defended the qualifications of one of its elected members against the questioning of a querulous official

(Shi Bao, Xuantong 3/8/18).[6] In Suian district, a *jiansheng* from the local council caused an uproar in the city by indiscriminate accusations against the police chief (Shi Bao, Xuantong 3/3/18). In this way, the elite surge for greater autonomy in local affairs clashed with an official attempt to extend local control.[7]

District gazetteers give none of the substance of council discussions; however, the *Shi Bao,* a Shanghai daily newspaper published after 1904 by a Jiangsu constitutionalist with great interest in self-government, contains good coverage of a few key Zhejiang self-government bodies. On the whole, they were reformist, trying to solve immediate community problems and discussing in some cases basic social and cultural reform such as abolishing footbinding and reducing the costs of marriage and mourning (Shi Bao, Xuantong 1/12/17).

The joint city council of the two districts composing Hangzhou city, for instance, met to discuss dredging the city's canals, increasing the number of street lights, expanding lower-level education, and building an institution for the aged and orphaned. The Jiaxing city council discussed the problem of prostitution, improving the condition of public privies, and methods of protecting crops from insects (Shi Bao, Xuantong 3/2/18, 3/3/21). These projects illustrate traditional elite concern on the local level for public works, education, and charity. However, unlike the traditional elite, the new elite did not finance its projects through voluntary contributions. Instead, new taxes were levied on items like salt, meat, fish, and bamboo, thus shifting the burden of finance, at least in part, to the masses (Nakamura, 1962 79). This increased tax burden exacerbated existing tensions between the elite and the masses.

Violence often erupted against reform projects and census-taking, which were considered by the peasants to be the harbingers of taxation (Yamashita, 1965· throughout). The construction of schools, a favorite elite project, did little to benefit the masses The majority of school-age children did not attend school because their families lacked money or desire, or

because the children had to work in the fields. In 1915 in the Yuhang district city, 38 schools existed, but only 10% of school-age children attended them (Qu Ying-guang, n.d. 4 11b). Riots against the construction of schools and school-related taxes were not infrequent.

Another source of social antagonism was self-government arrogance. The self-government leader in a Jiaxing township, for example, who had a reputation for being a notorious swindler, issued an unpopular decision in the name of the council banning certain exhibitions; in protest, a large crowd wrecked the self-government meeting hall (Shi Bao, Xuantong 3/3/27). A Ningpo council demanded that Buddhist monks allow the council to meet at a local temple. The monks' refusal to allow the meetings precipitated mob violence and the eventual destruction of the temple (Shi Bao, Xuantong 3/2/8-28). Most significantly, requests by the impoverished for aid were greeted with silence or suppression. In Jiashan district in early October 1911, farmers pleaded for help in the wake of an August typhoon and subsequent insect plague. When the self-government council refused to discuss their request, the enraged farmers destroyed the self-government office (Shi Bao, Xuantong 3/8/22-23).

Few self-government organs were in the vanguard of the 1911 revolution. In fact, the elite bodies of only three districts—Tangqi, Shouchang, and Xinchang—declared for independence, and all three of these came in haste to preempt particular military groups or lower-class disaffected elements from seizing power. On the other hand, elite bodies in districts such as Deqing, Xindeng, Jiaxing, Shouchang, Huangyan, and Taiping formed and supported militia units to keep the peace.[8]

In summary, the Qing local self-government bodies legitimized leaders who had been excluded from the officialdom, specifically lower gentry and those who had gained elite status from undisclosed sources. Although they were reformist, they exhibited arrogance in power, and this together with the change they stood for, made for increased disruption within society.

THE HEYDAY OF THE SELF-GOVERNMENT MOVEMENT, 1912-1914

The revolution in 1911 solidified the position and intensified the politicization of the new elite. As administrative control from Beijing [Peking] and Hangzhou dissolved in the wake of the Qing collapse, local leaders clutched recently gained institutional power more tightly. In 1912 district assemblies (*xianyihui*) and executive boards (*canyihui*) were added to existing self-government bodies. According to central government regulations, the district assembly was to be composed of 20 men who would select their own chairman and vice-chairman. Its decisions were to be administered by an executive board composed of four men, chosen by the assembly and headed by the district magistrate.

In the period 1912 to 1914, both the board and magistrate seem to have been relatively unimportant.[9] In the first year-and-a-half of the Republic, the power of the magistrate was greatly diminished in relation to the local elite. In this period, the Qing objective of self-government for local control seemed to have disappeared with the Qing itself. The elite in at least five districts elected their own magistrates (Sungyang Xianzhi, 1926: 7 26a; Qu Xianzhi, 1929 10.26a, Changhua Xianzhi, 1924 8 9a; Jingning Xianxuzhi, 1933: 180).[10] The Jiaxing assembly rejected an appointed magistrate (Shi Bao, 1912/1/4). The Ningpo assembly was in firm control of most appointed officials, including the magistrate (Shi Bao, 1913/6/25). The Lungyu magistrate served chiefly as a referee between various different self-government bodies and as a conduit between the district and provincial spokesmen (Shi Bao, 1913/6/29). Until the aborted revolt against Yuan Shi-kai in 1913, the power of many district magistrates was superseded or seriously challenged by the institutionalized elite.

One significant problem facing the new elite bodies after 1911 was the division of labor The new district bodies established after 1912 coexisted with those self-government organs in the municipality, market town, and township which

had been established previously. Among these bodies there was no clear delineation of responsibilities both groups levied taxes, were involved in community welfare projects, and promoted education. Yet the district assembly apparently controlled the purse-strings of other self-government bodies (and of schools and district agricultural societies as well); a struggle over local budget control resulted in numerous battles. Since the men in these bodies were from the same social class, their fights seemed to stem from the inadequate delineation of function and the desire to preserve personal power. In Haiyan district, the city council clashed with the district assembly over the amount and control of school appropriations (Shi Bao, 1913/6/29). The Jiaxing assembly reserved the right to approve or disapprove all projects proposed by other self-government organs (Shi Bao, 1913/8/31). All Ningpo self-government bodies joined in a statement demanding that the civil governor render a clear ruling delimiting the powers among them (Shi Bao, 1913/12/18).

The composition of the assemblies, while difficult to analyze because of spotty data, was similar to that of prerevolutionary self-government organs. Table 1 shows that in those districts whose gazetteers cover the Qing self-government movement extensively—Shouchang, Xiangshan, Lishui, and Xindeng—many of those who had been representatives in the towns and townships apparently now moved up to positions in the district assembly. Traditional degree holders are still represented, but the largest group in the district assemblies is the new elite, on whom background information is not given. The number of modern school graduates is small—a total of nine in 14 assemblies. Gazetteers and biographies clearly describe a trend at this time for graduates to gravitate to provincial or extraprovincial urban positions Most assembly chairmen held traditional degrees, of 17 studied, ten were upper-degree holders (*gungsheng* to *jinshi*) and four held lower degrees. Only three held no degrees. (Two of these—who were from Zhenhai and Dinghai, coastal districts involved heavily in trade—were perhaps merchants.) Of the vice-chairmen recorded, eight held the

TABLE 1
Composition of District Assemblies, 1912-1914

	TOTAL	Upper Degree	Lower Degree	School Grad.	No Background Information*	Formed Militia Units	Participated in Ch'ing Self-Govt. Movement	Other+
Jingning	20	5	2		12			1
Shouchang	25	7				21	15	
Xiangshan	20	4		3	8		5	
Changhua	20	5			14			1
Zhenhai	29			2	27			
Xincheng	18	2	1		14			1
Qu	20	2			18			
Lishui	24	3	1		10		9	
Deqing	18	1			16			1
Yuyao	20	2	1	4	13			
Sungyang	21	1	2		18			
Xindeng	19	2			10	2	8	
Dinghai	28	1			27			
Tangqi	16		4		12			

*New elite described in text, pp. 5-6.
+These men had previously served in other capacities during the late Qing reform movement, e.g., *in* education or agriculture.

gungsheng degree, one was a modern school graduate, and eight were new elite.

Like the self-government bodies established before 1911, the assemblies levied taxes on commodities ranging from tea to tinfoil (used in making sacrificial paper money) and required corvee duty for the construction of public works (Shi Bao, 1913/4/5; 1914/1/10). In addition to relieving the elite from traditional financial obligations, assemblies promoted elite interests in the collection of rent. Before the Qing government collapsed, tenants had already started banding together to fight increased rents imposed by landlords. District officials had the authority to dispatch troops to crush any organized protest (Shi Bao, Xuantong 2/12/26). After 1911, however, self-government bodies took the problem in hand. As spokesmen for the landlord class, assemblies in Pinghu and Jiaxing set up rent collection bureaus to counteract a wave of peasant rent revolts. The Jiaxing assembly chairman headed a landlord organization to force rent payments at a time when the assembly was lowering taxes for property-owners (Shi Bao, 1913/2/13)

The assemblies served mainly to petrify the local social and political situation, consolidating the control exercised by the traditional gentry and new elite. From 1912 to 1914 they showed little evidence of national sentiment. In the assembly at Ningpo, which had been one of the key revolutionary centers in 1911, a member proposed in May 1913 that a protest be sent to Yuan Shi-kai regarding the "reorganization" loan. The motion was greeted by silence, whereupon the chairman suggested that such assembly action was a grave move and should only follow careful deliberation. When the issue was raised again by the same man, his motion died for lack of a second (NCH, 1913/5/17: 505). The only question of national concern vigorously discussed in assembly dealt with reducing the high rates of central government taxation on the districts (Shi Bao, 1913/12/31). The desire for better control of the locality, which was the basis for the central government's proposal of the self-government system, was lost in a rising movement for more local autonomy.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS, 1914-1921

Throughout 1913, the Zhejiang government was increasingly besieged by citizen complaints about locally imposed taxation and disputes between local self-government bodies. District assembly assertiveness was a growing threat that Hangzhou felt had to be contained. When the Haiyan assembly began discussing revolutionary matters, the provincial government promptly abolished it (Shi Bao, 1913/10/30). The Fenghua assembly tried to pursue the issue of national taxation and was curtly reprimanded for overstepping its jurisdictional limits (Shi Bao, 1913/12/31). Civil Governor Qu Ying-guang abolished all self-government bodies in Jiaxing because they had adopted new regulations through which they sought to appropriate more power (Shi Bao, 1914/1/12).

In early February 1914, Yuan Shi-kai abolished all self-government bodies in a move to rid the nation of local-elite opposition to central control (Shi Bao, 1914/2/6). Like the Qing before him, Yuan believed that tighter centralization was the key to China's modernization. At the time of his abolition decree, he promised new "self-government" regulations, which were finally promulgated in late 1914. The regulations stipulated that each district magistrate would appoint an upright gentry manager (*zheng shendong*) to serve as self-government deputy (*zizhi weiyuan*). This deputy and one assistant would oversee the management of district funds and all local public matters. Additionally, a new "self-governing ward" (*zizhi qu*) would be established and its deputy would be appointed by the magistrate. The ward deputy position was honorary, without stipend (Jingning Xianxuzhi, 1933: 209).

These "self-government" regulations brought important local changes both in elite power and in institutional development. In an attempt to reassert the power of the magistrate by subordinating the local elite to him, the regulations, in effect, de-institutionalized elite power. Gone, the thinking went, would be the embarrassing problems of dealing with assertive elite organizations, and in their place would be a government official

(the magistrate) superintending several deputies whom he had the power to dismiss at any time. Available records show that new "self-government" deputies were indeed subservient to the magistrate. In Linan district in 1915, for example, the district deputy felt compelled to request the civil governor to order magistrates of his and surrounding districts to use funds for road repair (Qu Ying-guang, n.d.: 3 6a). This situation contrasts sharply with the local power situation in 1912 and 1913—when self-government leaders often ignored the magistrate in decision-making. The deputy now had control over only certain minor financial items, such as the funding of foundling homes (Qu Ying-guang, n.d.: 3·72a).

District deputies held their positions for approximately one to three years and were, in many cases, former district assembly leaders and heads of merchant and agricultural societies.[11] Ward deputies were generally the same men who had served as township leaders (*xiangdong*) in the late Qing period (Zhenhai Xinzhi Beigao, 1924 *shang zhuan,* 76b-80a; Shuanglin Zhenzhi, 1917 8. 4b) In theory, the new wards were to serve as official institutions representing government power between the district and village level. These self-governing wards were to be large, with four to six in every district as opposed to as many as 40 townships in the old system (Kuhn, 1972· 38-39). However, in fact, only one district, according to the gazetteers, possibly adopted the new system (Changhua Xianzhi, 1924: 9· 22a) Changes were almost purely titular; the new ward was actually the old township in new nomenclature.

The most important aspect of the deputy system in relation to local institutional development was the formal linkage between new militia units (*baoweituan*) and the deputy-controlled self-government bureaus During the social unrest of 1911, haphazard collections of old-style militia units (*tuanlian*) began to appear in many areas To the detriment of central authority, the leadership of these units gravitated into the hands of the local elite and their assemblies, thus strengthening local control (Xindeng Xianzhi, 1922 1462, Shouchang Xianzhi, 1930· 367-373). Not only were these units singularly ineffective in dealing with the endemic problems of banditry and local

unrest, but in times of peace they often degenerated into roving bands of braves—as much disturbers as keepers of the peace (Shi Bao, 1913/4/27, 29).

For these reasons, the provincial government sought to reconstruct the militia system. Its aim was to control the militia better and to use it to police the local elite. In 1913 the government began to abolish the old militia units. It set up bureaus in each district (*qingxiangzhu*) to clear the countryside of unruly elements (Shouchang Xianzhi, 1930: 221; Shuanglin Zhenzhi, 1917. 32: 24a). These bureaus linked the traditional *baojia* principles to the concept of *tuanlian* The *baojia* system was a traditional social institution, organized in decimal divisions and designed to maintain surveillance in a given area; degree holding elite could not serve as *baojia* leaders. By the end of the nineteenth century the system had declined almost to the point of nonexistence, even though occasional efforts were made to resurrect it. The *tuanlian* or militia system, on the other hand, organized in natural divisions (not artificial decimal ones), flourished under local elite leadership during the mid-nineteenth century rebellions (Kuhn, 1970: 94-96).

The bureaus set up in 1913 linked the two systems together, thus forming the basis for a new militia system (*baoweituan*). The bureaus forced militia organizations into an administrative boundary (the district) and organized them for purposes of defense and surveillance. District censuses were made, the results for each household being recorded on door placards (Deqing Xianzhi, 1923 353) Because the district was too large a unit for effective organization, however, the base unit soon became the self-governing ward. In late 1914 and early 1915 the new militia system was established in each ward with both surveillance and defense functions. Each new militia unit was nominally controlled by the self-government deputy, but in reality was controlled by the district magistrate.[12] A bold attempt to assert official control and undercut local elite power, the new militia system was an effort to insist, just as strongly as the Qing court of the mid-nineteenth century had, that the government control local military and political organizations, but *now* on a lower administrative level The plan failed,

however, because of the lack of government power and because of elite unwillingness to submit to official rule (*guanzhi*).

The elite, having tasted institutionalized power, smarted after 1914 under increasing magisterial authority and continued to assert themselves. Former self-government figures in Hangzhou persisted in meeting to discuss local problems (Shi Bao, 1914/2/22). In Jiashan district the police were ordered to destroy the meeting hall of the district assembly, apparently to stifle continued elite assertiveness (Shi Bao, 1914/3/7) Elite discontent was voiced clearly in an overwhelming outpouring of accusations against newly empowered magistrates.[13] Following the demise of provincial governors Zhu Rui and Qu Ying-guang in the spring of 1916, elite demands burgeoned for the reestablishment of assemblies (Shi Bao, 1916/8/27). The new military governor Lu Gung-wang, with support from Beijing, ordered assemblies not to meet because new self-government rules were yet to be promulgated (Shi Bao, 1916/8/27).

Assemblies in Chongde, Haining, Nantian, Hang, Jiaxing, and Wenling districts, however, met on their own initiative. After talks with Provincial Assembly leaders, Lu finally agreed to allow the assemblies to convene, but he ordered magistrates to limit their meeting time (Shi Bao, 1916/10/21). The determination of the local elite seemed irrepressible—Lu had acceded to their demands despite central government orders.[14] In December, Beijing ordered Lu to dissolve the assemblies. The Chongde assembly called on the Provincial Assembly to defy Beijing, arguing that present difficulties stemmed from lack of local self-government and that without such local institutions all provincial self-government organs were only a shell (Shi Bao, 1916/12/13). But the Provincial Assembly, confronted with the entrance of Beiyang forces into the province, could not and did not defy the central government

THE SELF-GOVERNMENT SYSTEM OF THE 1920s

After northern forces seized the province in January 1917, the elite continued to demand a permanent restoration of the

assemblies. Discussion groups in many localities called for the reestablishment of representative bodies (Zhonghua Xinbao, 1917/5/30, Shi Bao, 1919/4/23). Although the Peking government in September 1919 authorized the reestablishment of district assemblies, it was dilatory in setting down new election regulations.[15] Not until late 1920 could the Zhejiang provincial government begin to move toward carrying out the previous year's order; and new assemblies were not elected until late 1921, with terms of office beginning in 1922 (Shuntian Shi-bao, 1921/5/17).

The assemblies were to meet for a term of three years, with new elections to be held in late 1924. The eruption of war in 1924 between the Anfu-clique leader of Zhejiang, Lu Yongxiang, and the Zhihli-clique militarists Qi Xie-yuan and Sun Chuan-fang disrupted election plans. The assemblies which were elected in 1921 continued to meet into 1926 with varying degrees of effectiveness in each district. Apparently only two districts functioned for long periods without these elite bodies (Shi Bao, 1924/7/14).

In addition to the assembly (*xianyihui*) composed of ten men—a 50% reduction in size from the earlier district assembly—an executive board (*canshihui*) headed by the magistrate was established. It was composed of six other men two to be chosen by the assembly and four to be appointed by the magistrate. From among the latter, one would serve as an assistant (*zuoli*) who apparently functioned as secretary, and one as a treasurer (*nayuan*, Jingning Xianxuzhi, 1933. 207, 209).

This system differed notably from the system of self-government organizations which operated between 1912 and 1914 by considerably weakening nonofficial elite power—primarily through giving the executive board, controlled directly by the magistrate, preeminent power. The board had been relatively unimportant in the period 1912 to 1914, but in the 1920s it was the major administrative body in the district There is evidence that in some cases the posts of secretary and treasurer were held by men from outside the district (Shi Bao, 1924/3/16).

In Jiaxing the district finances were completely controlled by the executive board Although the assembly made decisions on taxes, budget allocations, and property rights, the board decided when and if to carry out these decisions. It is noteworthy that none of the decisions made by the assembly in 1923 were executed by the board (Shi Bao, 1924/5/10). The assembly was formed in April 1922 but did not meet until July 1923, and then its meetings were often fruitless, with many members failing to participate. In contrast, the board met every Monday and took the lead in such important decisions as repairing the city wall and opposing its demolition. On its own it authorized the borrowing of money for district use from a Shanghai bank (Shi Bao, 1923/7/22, 9/3, 1924/3/15, 1925/1/14; Shen Bao, 1926/8/31).

Relations between the executive board and the district assembly were strained in other districts as well. The board in Wenling refused to accept educational budget allocations made by the assembly until ordered to do so by the Zhejiang education commissioner After the Hang district assembly made budgetary decisions concerning public works, the board refused to act until authorized by the Ministry of the Interior at Beijing. The Shaoxing assembly had to petition the Guiji circuit intendant to force the board to carry out its decisions In Qunan district, antagonism between the district assembly and the executive board was open and sharp (Shi Bao, 1924/2/21, 3/30, 4/27, 1925/5/4). Frequent accusations against arbitrary magisterial power punctuated the mid-1920s (e.g., Shi Bao, 1923/2/10, 1925/5/22) In certain cases it was the assembly that provoked official displeasure the Tientai assembly refused to follow official regulations in electing a chairman and instead chose a five-member board of deputies. The magistrate and circuit intendant refused to ratify this arrangement (Shi Bao, 1925/8/10).

The district self-government system of the 1920s was an uneasy hybrid between nonofficial autonomy and official control It satisfied neither official nor nonofficial elite and stimulated continuing intraelite antagonism In another sense, however, the two elites were joined more closely in the new

TABLE 2
District Assembly Composition, 1922-1926

	Total	Upper Degree	Lower Degree	School Grad.	No Background Information*	Participated in Ch'ing self-govt. movement	In 1st district assembly or executive board 1912-1914	Other+
Lishui	10			2	6	1		1
Qu	18	1		2	15			
Zhenhai	17			2	11		4	
Dinghai	16				13		3	
Xiangshan	11			2	9			
Sungyang	10			2	8			
Jingning	10	5		3	2		2	
Changhua	10	1		3	6			
Tangqi	10	1		3	6			
Shouchang	10		2	5	1	1	1	1

*New elite described in text, pp. 5-6.
+These men had previously served in other capacities during the late Qing reform movement, e.g., in education or agriculture.

TABLE 3

District Executive Board Composition, 1922-1926

	Total	Upper Degree	Lower Degree	School Grad.	No Background Information*	Participated in Ch'ing self-govt. movement	In 1st district assembly or executive board 1912-1914	Other+
Lishui	5			3	2	1		
Qu	7	1			5			1
Zhenhai	8				6		2	
Xiangshan	6	1		2	2		1	
Sungyang	7				4		3	
Jingning	6	1	1	2	1		2	
Changhua	12		1	2	6			3
Tangqi	8	1		2	3			2
Shouchang	7	1		2	1	3		1

*New elite described in text, pp. 5-6.

+These men had previously served in other capacities during the late Qing reform movement, e.g., in education or agriculture.

system than they had ever been before. During the monarchy, magistrates, moving into an unfamiliar area had had to rely informally on the local elite for support and assistance. From 1912 to 1914, when district assemblies had generally been the strongest local force, the magistrate and the executive board he headed were only somewhat peripherally involved in making decisions. In the 1920s, however, the magistrate and executive board were necessarily active institutional partners/antagonists to the assembly.

An examination of the composition of ten assemblies and nine boards from this period (see Tables 2 and 3) reveals little specific continuity with assemblies and boards created during the Qing period and/or during the 1912-1914 self-government movement. Eighteen percent of the board members and only 9.8% of the assemblymen had previously served in self-government bodies. Many assembly chairmen and vice-chairmen in the 1920s held traditional degrees although, as would be expected, the number of degree holders in the assemblies greatly decreased. Several assembly leaders were modern school graduates who constituted fully 20% of both assemblies and boards taken together. The relatively large number of these graduates participating on the local scene contrasts greatly with the Provincial Assembly, where the number of graduates dropped sharply from the second assembly (1918-1921) to the third (1921-1926). This phenomenon reflects a trend apparent by 1920: many elite began to seek positions in the locality where opportunities offered greater material rewards and where competition for positions of power was less.[16]

The number of self-government participants in the 1920s on whom no background information could be found is still high, suggesting the availability of a large reservoir of new elite from which local self-government leadership came. Although the individual men themselves differed from those involved in early self-government activity, the social groups from which they came were largely the same. This new elite sought political opportunities in a society of increasing population and of acute economic and social competition.

Many of the new elite participating in the district assemblies and executive boards were merchants, whose power in the assemblies (and outside) was often an important factor in local decision-making. In 1925 the Jiaxing assembly, already in regular session for more than 40 days, had met only three or four times because many members had returned to their silk businesses to deal with pressing problems (Shi Bao, 1925/5/19). At least two district assemblies—Lishui and Shouchang—had Chamber of Commerce chairmen as members (Lishui Xianzhi, 1926· 8 58b, 62b; Shouchang Xianzhi, 1930: 581, 592).

When merchants did not figure prominently in assemblies, they could sometimes thwart assembly decisions. The Chongde assembly in 1926 enacted a merchant opposed surtax on cigarettes, but the merchants fought the tax so vigorously that the circuit intendant ordered the assembly to reconsider (Shen Bao, 1926/7/27). In many areas, merchants dominated the landed elite in the assemblies. The Fenghua assembly levied a graduated tax on the number of *mu* owned (Shi Bao, 1924/4/13), and the assemblies of Yongjia and Lungchuan levied land surtaxes (Shi Bao, 1924/7/15; 1923/8/21). If the landed elite had controlled these assemblies, it surely would have blocked such action To be sure, the landed elite in some assemblies evidenced their power by advocating the reduction or abolition of the land tax or by defeating proposals for land surtaxes (Shi Bao, 1924/2/12, 8/9; Shen Bao, 1926/7/2). But merchant power on the local level seemed omnipresent.

Assemblies and executive boards in the 1920s were primarily concerned with local financial, educational, and control problems. In many districts, these bodies became primarily concerned with collecting rents and maintaining order. They often joined forces with local government officials in waxing fat on what little the majority had.[17] In northern Zhejiang, for example, they worked together in establishing rent collection agencies.[18] At the same time, corruption was rampant. The inordinate corruption of the local assembly in Changxing, notoriously concerned only for the property and money of its members, compelled local citizens (*gungmin*) to organize in protest (Shi Bao, 1923/9/17)

Local control, the sine qua non of elite policies, had always been linked with self-government, informally before 1914 and formally in the new militia system after 1914 Such control insured safety of property and preservation of the status quo. Yet increased taxation to pay for local defense usually meant greater hardships for the people and sometimes social disruption. In late summer 1925, for example, the magistrate and assembly at Ningpo clashed with citizens over such a tax. Originally meant to be a one-year levy, the tax was extended by the elite in the face of much opposition (Shen Bao, 1925/9/8).

Despite this attention to immediate interests, the self-government organs of the 1920s were not completely nearsighted. They gave considerable evidence of a strong national and provincial outlook as well. Nationalism seemed to grow steadily and rapidly following the demonstrations and strikes of the May Fourth period. After 1919, though often dormant, national feelings were easily stimulated. The Yongkang assembly, in the summer of 1923, issued a statement condemning central government traitors and contending that power in the nation belonged to the people (Shi Bao, 1923/7/5). Other assemblies called for upholding the respectability of the nation by resisting the fraudulent presidential election of Cao Kun in 1923 (Shi Bao, 1923/10/11). Twenty-three assemblies and boards sent telegrams to the *Shen Bao* demanding prompt Chinese action in the aftermath of the May Thirtieth incident (Shen Bao, 1925/6/7-13). These messages came not only from districts dominated by important cities, but also from those in the hinterland, in poor and mountainous districts such as Wuyi, Qunan, Shouchang, and Suian. District assembly-executive board nationalism of the 1920s provides an index of the growth of nationalism on the local level since 1912-1914—when the district assemblies gave little, if any, evidence of national concern.

Indications of greater provincial cohesion had also developed by the early 1920s. Largely in response to the control of the province by non-Zhejiangese since 1917, this provincial spirit was more openly and widely expressed by district assemblies than in the opening years of the Republic.[19] A Federation of

District Assemblies (*xianyihui lianhehui*) was organized to deal with provincial problems and concerns It was active in calling for a provincial constitution, in working for provincial peace in 1924, and in attempting to get the central government to restrict the power of Sun Chuan-fang (Shi Bao, 1924/7/28-11/19). The leaders of this provincewide organization were consulted in decision-making and included in conferences at times of crisis by the military governor Lu Yong-xiang (1919-1924). In 1925, the Provincial Assembly even voiced the fear that the federation might threaten its own power (Shi Bao, 1925/4/29). The establishment of the federation indicated discontent on the local level with the Provincial Assembly, whose leadership had apparently become too far removed from district concerns or issues.

Throughout the 1920s opportunity-seeking local elite continued to demand expanded self-government organs in townships, towns, and in the larger cities of Hangzhou, Ningpo, Jiaxing, and Wuxing. In Wuxing, the municipal self-government movement ran into stiff opposition from those involved in district self-government. The district elite revealingly argued that such a scheme was simply one way of extorting more money from the people (Shi Bao, 1925/4/10-5/22). The established elite in this case was seeking to protect its own profitable position from interlopers.

The self-government mania penetrated to the lowest levels of society, in 1923 a citizen (*gungmin*) of Jinhua district established his own village self-government system with two deliberative bodies (Shi Bao, 1923/8/10). This rapid expansion of the self-government idea may be interpreted as an example of the elite's desire for institutionalization and quasi-official status, the early Republic, it was reported, was a period in which everyone in Zhejiang wanted to become an official (*zuoguan shidai*) (Shi Bao, 1914/12/20). In another sense, the substantial number of self-government organs (including the self-government deputies who had been retained for both district and ward since 1914) and demands for more such bodies reveal the depth of elite sentiment in Zhejiang for self-control and local autonomy.

CONCLUSION

Local self-government in Zhejiang offered political opportunities for traditional gentry and especially for the new elite, whose leadership in traditional society had not yet been officially recognized. Institutionalized in self-government bodies, these two groups were able to undertake traditional and modernizing reforms but, in large measure, passed the cost of these projects on to the people. This policy resulted in increased social tension and disruption which in turn brought self-government bodies and participants into militia leadership, a role formalized in 1914.

The history of local self-government institutions reveals that, with the exception of the years 1912 to 1914, official control over individual localities remained firm though varied in form. From 1909 to 1912, the elite bodies were subordinated but became increasingly threatening to government officials; from 1914 to 1922 government officials predominated in the self-government deputy system; and from 1922 to 1927, reestablished assemblies quieted elite demands while the elite itself was effectively bureaucratized under the official control of the magistrate in executive boards which were more powerful than the assemblies. On the local scene, there is little of the institutional turmoil seen on the national level during the "warlord" period. One is more impressed by the continuum and, indeed, the increase of official control from 1914 on.

By the 1920s the new hybrid "self-government" institutions and common goals brought official and nonofficial elite together in a united front, however turbulent and at times antagonistic that front may have been. In a sense, official rule (*guanzhi*) won the day, as the proponents of self-rule (*zizhi*) became adjuncts to the magistrate in self-government organizations. By the 1920s, then, *zizhi* had become a part of *guanzhi*—a profitable union for both elites. Thus, although the Qing aims of developing *zizhi* to assist and supplement *guanzhi* had been frustrated from 1912 to 1914 by the temporary triumph of elite autonomy, in the 1920s the Qing goals of increased official control were posthumously fulfilled. The

Zhejiang self-government experience of the 1920s also suggests that the Nanjing government's policy of local bureaucratization in the 1930s was merely an extension of what had already begun.

NOTES

1. This essay does not attempt to deal directly with the problem of the relative power of local self-government and other local organizations. It is certainly possible that educational, agricultural, or commercial institutions were equally or even more powerful than self-government bodies, or that an unofficial leader who had the trust of the community wielded the greatest power Sometimes, of course, the leadership of various institutions–commercial, educational, industrial–was in the hands of the same people as local self-government organizations were. Just as Zhejiang has 75 districts and many more townships, so there were undoubtedly many different power configurations in these areas.

Although my purpose is not to study local power relations but rather to probe the history of the self-government movement, on the basis of my research a few observations can be made concerning relative local power. Self-government bodies were always influential in local decision-making and were generally the most powerful local organizations–controlling the budget and making substantive decisions affected other organizations. Chambers of Commerce were usually second in importance, but sometimes they dominated the local scene. Only infrequently in Zhejiang were agricultural or educational societies or their leaders key figures.

2. Teraki (1962) has shown the composition of pre-1911 self-government bodies in Hubei to be 98.6% gentry (*xiangshen*), among which lower-degree holders held an approximate three to one edge over officials and upper-degree holders. Kuhn (1972) stresses the significance of the role of lower-degree holders.

3. On the existence of this nondegreed elite, see my study (Schoppa, 1973) of nineteenth century Sichuan [Szechwan] Cao Zhu-ren (1971: 102-103) gives an example of an uneducated shopkeeper who was a member of the social elite in his community He was the type of individual who often became involved in the self-government movement

4. This "new elite" seems to be somewhat similar to what Marianne Bastid has called the "agrarian bourgeoisie," an elite composed of local men (as opposed to men with treaty port and urban ties) with interests in commerce, handicraft industry, moneylending, and landholding. It was this social elite which became politicized and influential in the self-government movement

5. Whereas the upper-degree holders had been recognized as *tuanlian* leaders, the category of new elite had not I have argued (Schoppa, 1973) that the new elite did indeed join in militia formation, but this action would not have been officially sanctioned–as participation in local self-government was

6. Dates of the *Shi Bao* until January 1, 1912 are given according to reign title (Xuantong), followed by reign year, lunar month, and day

7. Self-government assertiveness was not simply a Zhejiangese phenomenon; Edward Rhoads (1975: 174) has described the attempts of the Swatow council in Guangdong to acquire more financial authority at the expense of local government officials.

8. See gazetteers of Deqing, Xindeng, and Shouchang; for Jiaxing, see Shi Bao (Xuantong 3/9/22); for Huangyan and Taiping, see *Minli Bao* (1911/12/20)

9. In five of the 16 gazetteers which included information on district assemblies the compilers failed to mention the executive boards at all—indicating, I believe, a less important role for them.

In the text, when specifying gazetteer sources, I give the name of the district rather than the complete title. The date following is the original publication date; those gazetteers with only arabic numerical pagination (i.e , without traditional Chinese pagination) are 1970 reprints of Chengwen chubanshe in Taibei.

Regulations for the formation and operation of local assemblies are cited in *Jingning Xianxuzhi* (1933: 207-208).

10. Such elite assumption of official prerogative also occurred in Guangdong (Rhoads, 1975: 250).

11. These generalizations are made from information in the gazetteers of Zhenhai, Deqing, Xinchang, Changhua, Shouchang, Tangqu, Xindeng, Jiande, Sungyang, Lishui, and the *zhenzhi* of Shuanglin.

12. *Shouchang Xianzhi* (1930: 371 ff.) and account in *Jiande Xianzhi* (1919). See also Qu Ying-guang (n.d.: 4: 23a), where Qu describes the close connection between *baojia* and *baoweituan*.

13. Examples are found in Shi Bao (1914/3/7; 12/20; 1915/1/18, 20, 26; 3/2, 3, 5, 18; 1915/11/28, 30; 1916/4/12) and Qu Ying-guang (n.d : 3:28b and 61b).

14 Such insubordination no doubt provoked Beijing's move, in early 1917, to oust Lu and install Beiyang control

15. See Tung (1968: 86). A "Local Administrative Conference" which was convened in the late spring of 1920 drafted procedural and electoral rules for the new district assemblies. These regulations were not published until June 1921; they are reprinted in Dongfang Zazhi (18: 13, 127-132)

16. Cao Zhu-ren (1971) describes one such man who in 1911 had been allied with the revolutionary party but who, instead of joining the provincial government, returned to his home area to become an autocrat, a local emperor (*tu huangdi*). More practical power could be wielded in local assemblies than at Hangzhou.

Another reason for student disaffection from the Provincial Assembly of 1918-1921 was its conservative reaction to May Fourth actions in Hangzhou. For an extended discussion of the Zhejiang Republican provincial assemblies, see chapter 6 of my dissertation (Schoppa, 1975).

17. See the critique in *Dongfang Zazhi* of local self-government bodies; Hua Lu (1922).

18 See Shi Bao (1917/12/7; 1920/1/15, 20, 27; 3/5; 1924/8/12; and 1926/3/5) The rent collection bureau established January 2, 1924, noted 1,046 households in arrears. By August, 597 had paid a total of 5,776 *yuan* (Shi Bao, 1924/8/12).

19. For this growing provincial spirit and a discussion of Zhejiang provincial and warlord politics, see chapters 5 and 7 of my dissertation (Schoppa, 1975).

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