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Educational Quotas and the Politics of the Native-Migrant Divide in Late Imperial China, 1720-1810

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in Late Imperial China, 1720-1810

Yongkang Li

History 101

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Key Events and Dates

Yongzheng Reign (1723—1735)

The Pengmin began to be allowed to participate in the civil examination in the new locales that they migrated to -----1724 (the 2nd year of the reign)

Additional designated quotas were established for the Pengmin in Jiangxi-----1731 (the 9th year of the reign)

Qianlong Reign (1735—1796)

Educational Commissioner Zhou Huang and Governor Tang Pin requested the elimination of Pengmin quotas -----1763 (the 28th year of the reign)

The first petition for the reinstatement of Pengmin quotas, by Xin Tingzhi, a native *juren*. The native participants in the civil examination began to be subject to a laxer pre-entrance screening requirement----1767 (the 32nd year of the reign)

Jiaqing Reign (1796—1820)

Xin Meichen, a Wanzai native, petitioned in Beijing ----1803 (the 8th year of the reign)

Governor-general Chen Dawen and Educational Commissioner Li Junjian's Debate on the issue of Pengmin quotas -----1803-1804 (the 8th and 9th years of the reign)

Governor Qin and Educational Commissioner Cao agreed to increase quotas without designating the new quotas as Pengmin-only. A boycott against the civil examination by the native students in Wanzai followed -----1805 (the 10th year of the reign)

Sun's Petition and Arrest in Beijing. The reinstatement of Pengmin Quotas followed ----1807 (the 12th year of the reign)

Chapter 1: Background

Introduction

This thesis aims at offering an anatomy of a dispute over educational quotas in Wanzai, Jiangxi that spanned over eight decades (1720-1810). By analyzing palace memorials and local gazetteers that were digitized by archives in mainland China and Taiwan, this thesis presents a microscopic view of the making and the untangling of an inter-community conflict in the mid-to-late Qing period that occurred between a migrant community and a native community, which had settled in Wanzai long before the founding of the Qing Dynasty. Over the course of three reigns, different emperors and different provincial officials approached the issue from diverging perspectives, while the Pengmin community grew and the inter-community tension ceaselessly rose without effective interventions from the provincial level.¹ It is a story of the native-migrant divide, the role of the state in local affairs in pre-modern China, with echoes in modern China.

This thesis will principally investigate the evolution of migrants-related educational policy in South China (Jiangxi) and analyze the dynamics of inter-community/inter-ethnic tensions in the Gan Yangzi macroregion.² The time period of focus includes the Kangxi reign, Qianlong reign, and the Jiaqing reign, coinciding with the transition from the High Qing to Late Qing Period. One collection of palace memorials compiled by the First Historical Archive of China and additional palace memorials digitized by the National Palace Museum in Taiwan will be the backbone of this thesis.

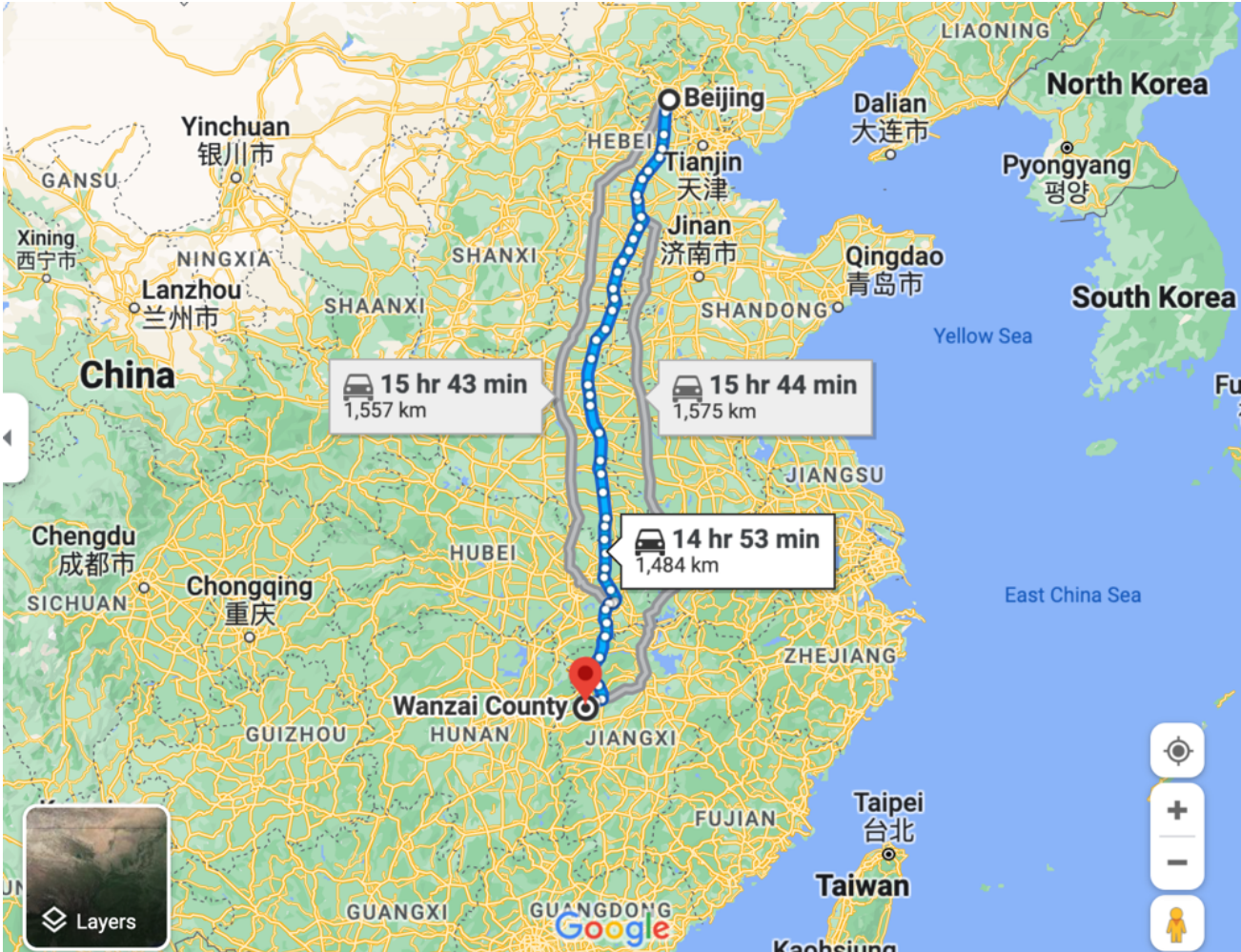
Understanding the distribution of educational quotas in South China during the Qing dynasty offers a glimpse into the politics of the native-migrant divide in a pre-modern country that had never formulated a national policy of migration. Inter-community disputes over the distribution of educational quotas, which were the numbers of students from a community that could be admitted into local government schools (官學), led to centuries-long tensions between native communities and migrant communities that persisted for generations. The natives in Wanzai, Jiangxi saw the Pengmin migrants from nearby provinces as existential threats to their limited and coveted educational quotas, which were assigned by the state and had tremendous sociopolitical implications for their community. The inter-community divide in Wanzai eventually morphed into a form of inter-ethnic tensions. I argue that the evidence of the struggles over the distribution of educational quotas in Jiangxi is an indicator of the Pengmin's emergence as a "proto-ethnic" group in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The struggles in Wanzai over educational quotas echo many stories in post-Mao China, where the native-migrant divide has long been institutionalized by the state and the urban natives are offered preferential treatment, including modern equivalents of Qing China's educational

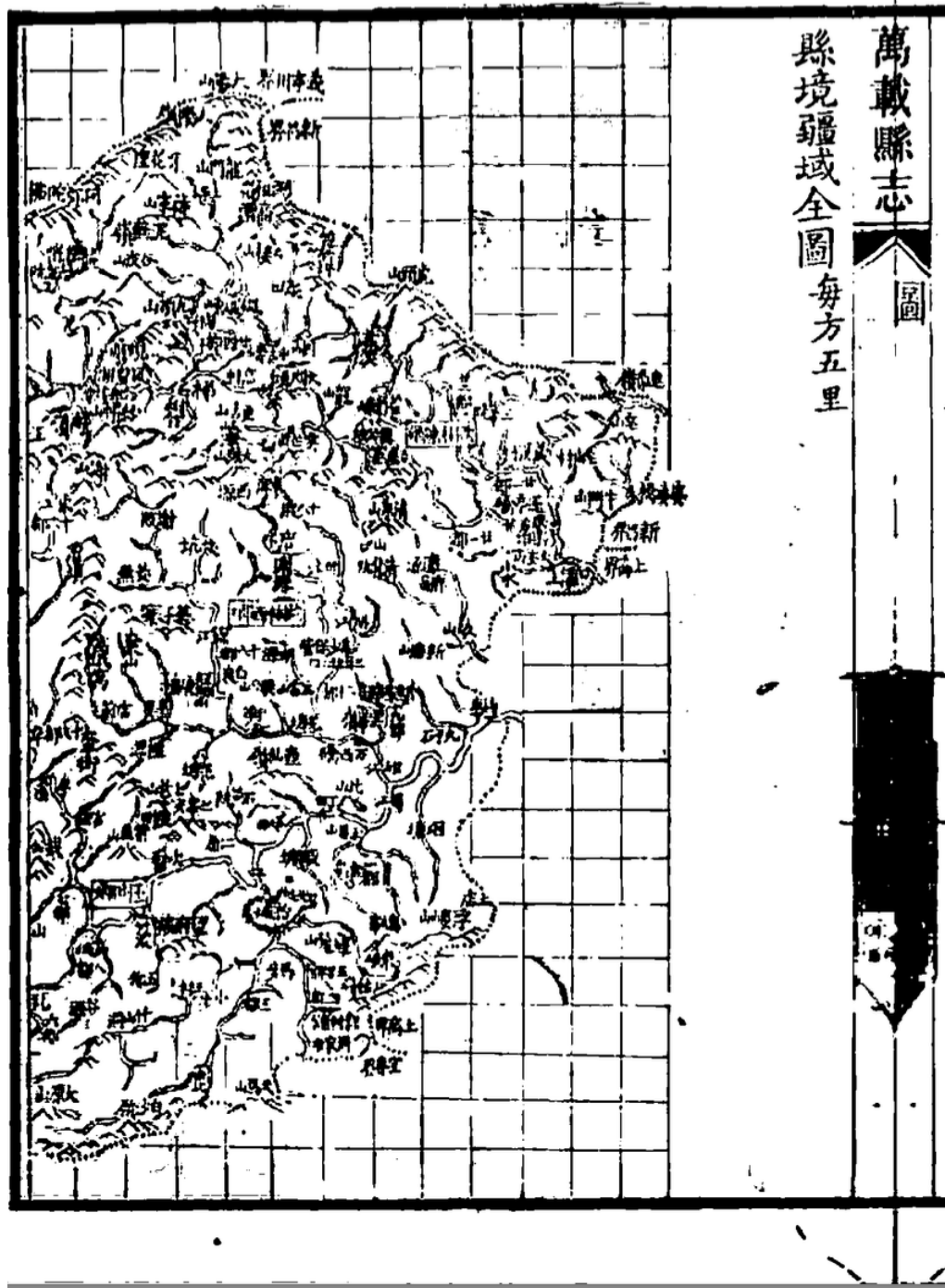
¹ Provincial officials who stayed in their positions for only 2-3 years before reassignments or promotions. A number of provincial officials and the emperors they served will make their appearances in this thesis.

² Sow-Theng Leong, *Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese History: Hakkas, Pengmin, and Their Neighbors*, ed. Tim Wright (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 22.

quotas. Few scholarly works in English have studied the Wanzai quota case in depth and some contain contestable claims, as this thesis will show in Chapter 2. I hope that this work will further our understanding of the native-migrant relationship and the role of the state in local politics in late imperial China.



Map 1: The distance between Wanzai County, Jiangxi, and Beijing is over 900 miles via highway. Generated by Google Maps.



Map 2: A Map of Wanzai, Wanzai Gazetteer, Daoguang Reign (1872).

道光萬載縣誌



Map 3: Wanzai County, Jiangxi (highlighted in red), ChinaMaps.org

Review of Existing Literature

Researchers have studied the politics of migrant management in Qing China since the 1980s and explored this issue by analyzing its connections to the integration of migrants into the pao-chia system (保甲), the most salient method of local social control in Qing China, and to the persistent conflicts of various scales between the native inhabitants and the migrants. The Hakkas (客家) and the Pengmin (棚民, literally “shed people” or “shack people”, who often spoke the Hakka dialect) were two major migrant groups in Qing China. Historical evidence has suggested that the two groups overlapped markedly and were both largely treated as domestic migrants by the Qing court and local officials, who made no sophisticated efforts to distinguish the two groups.

Liu Min’s article on the management of the Pengmin migrants, published in 1983, was one of the first attempts to analyze Qing’s migration policy toward the Hakkas and the Pengmin in China proper.³ With an emphasis on the Pengmin migrants in Jiangxi, it alludes to the regional differences between migrant policies that were implemented in Jiangxi and those in Zhejiang and Anhui. Similar articles published by historians in mainland China in the 1980s agreed that the migration issue in Jiangxi was first exposed at the end of the Kangxi reign, as the Pengmin migrants entangled themselves in a small-scale revolt that was initiated by their migrant counterparts in Taiwan. The Qing court’s attitude towards migrants in Jiangxi relaxed during the subsequent reigns, providing them an opportunity to fight for the right to local household registration.⁴ Local household registration was a precondition of an array of rights. In particular, local household registration and the length of residency entailed the right to participate in the county-level *keju*, the lowest level of the imperial examination. It is worth pointing out that researchers who studied migrant issues and the state’s responses in the 1980s were still heavily influenced by the Maoist-Leninist orthodoxy, which only started to crumble in 1976 after Mao’s death. They universally characterized the Qing state machinery as a “feudalistic” power and criticized it for its suppression of the migrant peasant class, regardless of their geographical focus.

A new generation of historians in mainland China and Hong Kong approached the field with renewed nuance and new methodology in the 2000s. Among them, Zheng Ruida’s monograph on the relationship between migration and the state’s effort to manage the new Pengmin migrants in Yuanzhou prefecture in Jiangxi in Qing and Republican China is the prime guide to the Pengmin migrants’ struggles to establish a foothold in Jiangxi.⁵ It details how

³ Liu Min 刘敏, “Lun qingdai pengmin de huji wenti” 论清代棚民的户籍问题 [On the question of the household registration of the Pengmin], *Zhongguo shehui jingjishi yanjiu* 中国社会经济史研究 [The Research on the Chinese socioeconomic history] 1 (1983): 17-29.

⁴ Zhang Guilin 张桂林, “Ganxi pengmin yu Fujian diannong” 赣西棚民与福建佃农 [The Pengmin in Western Jiangxi and the Peasants in Fujian], *Fujian shifan daxue xuebao zhexue shehui kexueban* 福建师范大学学报哲学社会科学版 [The philosophical and social scientific version of the academic newspaper of the Fujian Normal University] 3 (1986): 113-119.

⁵ Zheng Ruida 郑锐达, *Yimin huji yu zongzu: Qingdai zhi Minguo qijian Jiangxi Yuanzhoufu diqu yanjiu* 移民, 户籍与宗族: 清代至民国期间江西袁州府地区研究 [Migration, Household Registration, and Lineages: Research on Yuanzhou Prefecture during the Qing and the Republican Eras] (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2009), 66-77.

migrants outmaneuvered natives who competed with them for educational quotas, and the natives vehemently thwarted the migrants' attempts to be recognized by the local government.

Xie Hongwei, who completed exceptional doctoral and post-doctoral works on the native-Pengmin relationship, migrant management at the local level, and the evolution of major lineage organizations and the role of the local gentry in Wanzai, has remarkably advanced our understanding of the Wanzai quota case. Xie incorporated rare genealogies into his analysis to trace the development of the native-migrant divide and identified key narratives that were documented in genealogies, which was a first in the field of migrant management in South China. His post-doctoral work, *The Migrants, the Natives, and the State in Wanzai, Jiangxi during the Qing and the Republican period* is the most important secondary source used in this thesis.⁶

Major progress in the field of migrant management and native-migrant conflicts in South and East China also occurred outside of China. Sow-Theng Leong's monograph, *Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese History: Hakkas, Pengmin, and Their Neighbors*, is the seminal analysis of the temporal and spatial pattern of Hakka and Pengmin migration, the conflict-ridden interactions between migrants and natives, and the state's responses to a range of consequences of migration. Inspired by his teacher G. William Skinner, Leong has argued that "each of the major speech groups of southeastern China dominated one macroregional or subregional core ... Of all the major cultural/linguistic groups of South-Central China, only the Hakkas had no substantial drainage basin of their own."⁷

Meanwhile, Steven Averill has urged caution when dealing with historical evidence related to the Hakka migrants and the Pengmin migrants, citing the ambiguity of the terms "ke" (客) and "peng" (棚), as there was no singular origin of these migrants. In other words, the Hakka migrants ("ke") in one local gazetteer could be the Pengmin migrants ("peng") in a different local gazetteer, and the Qing court was largely indifferent to the distinction between the two, simply viewing them as "migrants" with/without local household registration for administrative purposes. As Averill has noted, "While it is important to be aware of the ambiguity and variety in the uses of the word, for our purposes here - concerned as we are with the broad pattern of settlement rather than with the details of migration into specific areas - they pose no particular problem."⁸

Other works that are related to the consequences of the divergence of approaches to migrant management include Philip Kuhn's *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China* and Xu Liwang and Xiao Yiyi's book on the new Hakka-Punti conflicts in Zhejiang after the

⁶ Xie Hongwei 谢宏维, "He er bu tong: Qingdai ji minguo shiqi Jiangxi wanzaixian de yimin, tuzhu he guojia" 和而不同: 清代及民国时期江西万载县的移民, 土著与国家 [Harmonious but different: The Migrants, Natives, and the State in Wanzai County in Jiangxi during the Qing and the Republican periods], (Post-doctoral Thesis, Xiamen University, 2008).

⁷ Sow-Theng Leong, *Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese History: Hakkas, Pengmin, and Their Neighbors*, ed. Tim Wright (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 3.

⁸ Stephen C. Averill, "The Shed People and the Opening of the Yangzi Highlands." *Modern China* 9, no. 1 (1983): 87-88.

Taiping Rebellion.⁹ Kuhn's classic on militarization and local organization in South China briefly discussed the forms of intense local militarization within Hakka migrant communities and native communities and subsequent inter-community violence, as a weakened Qing court mobilized its subjects in South China to counter rebellions and social disorder in the mid-to-late 19th century.¹⁰ The growth of the Hakka communities was only made possible by the Qing court's decision one century earlier to acquiesce to the presence of large established migrant communities and institutionalize the divide between the natives and the migrants.

Why Wanzai? What contributions will this thesis make?

The relationship between the natives and the Pengmin in Wanzai, Jiangxi has been examined relatively frequently in the field of Hakka/Pengmin study. The most obvious reason behind the frequent appearance of Wanzai in literature is the availability of historical sources. In 1994, a researcher at the First Historical Archive of China discovered 17 palace memorials related to the issue of the educational quotas in Wanzai Jiangxi during the Jiaqing reign (1796- 1820). These palace memorials involved county-level officials, provincial officials, the Ministry of Rites (the pre-modern equivalent of the Department of Education), and the throne. Additional palace memorials that were not included in the 1994 collection have been digitized in recent years in Taiwan, which allows me to present the ending of the Wanzai quota case (especially the results of legal proceedings) that has never been revealed. This thesis is consequently able to produce the most in-depth analysis of the Wanzai quota case so far.

This thesis has extracted rich historical information from palace memorials, local gazetteers, and legal testimonies, to trace the events that led to three boycotts against the civil examination in Jiangxi and the aftermath of the boycott over a span of eight decades. Examining the making of migrant policy in Qing China, where no national migrant policy had ever been formalized, contextualizes the struggles between native inhabitants who settled in Jiangxi before the Qing period and the Hakka/Pengmin newcomers and offers a glimpse into the ramifications of the persistence of the native-migrant divide and the institutional acquiescence of the state facing such a divide. The entire historical process did not explicitly involve “vocabularies of race and ethnicity,” as Wing-Kin Puk has astutely observed.¹¹ However, building on Sow-Theng Leong's conceptualization of the inter-ethnic rivalry in Wanzai and Fredrik Barth's theory of ethnic groups, I argue in Chapter 2 that the Pengmin were emerging as a proto-ethnic group in

⁹ Xu Liwang 徐立望, Xiao Yiyi 肖依依, *Jingdai zhouxian caizheng yunzhuang kunjing he tiaoshi: Jiyu Zhejiang tute zhi zheng de fenxi* 近代州县财政运转困境和调适: 基于浙江土客之争的分析 [The Difficulty and Adjustments of the Operation of Finances at Prefectural and County Levels: An Analysis Based on the Hakka-Native Struggles in Zhejiang] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2020).

¹⁰ Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 174-175.

¹¹ Wing-Kin Puk, “Reaching out for the Ladder of Success: ‘Outsiders’ and the Civil Examination in Late Imperial China,” in *Marginalization in China: Recasting Minority Politics*, eds. Siu-keung Cheung, Joseph Tse-hei Lee, and Lida V. Nedilsky (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 33.

the 18th century. In Chapter 4, I argue that the natives' success in protecting their educational quotas led to the *de facto* recognition of the Pengmin as a proto-ethnic group.

How does this thesis define “migrants”?

In this thesis, the term “migrants” is used to describe migrants who originated in Fujian and Guangdong, two provinces that shared borders with Jiangxi, where Wanzai is located, and settled in Wanzai. It is also used to describe the descendants of the migrants who settled in Wanzai. Chapter 2 will show why the descendants of migrants, generations after their initial settlement, remained “migrants” in terms of the legal framework (the household registration system in particular) and why the migrants and their descendants themselves failed to assimilate even a century after the initial migration.

Chapter 2: A Wanzai Petitioner in Beijing

In 1803, Xin Meichen, a second-ranked tribute student (副貢生) from Wanzai county in Jiangxi decided to embark on a long journey to Beijing to petition on behalf of his lineage, and probably all the natives in Wanzai. His surname, Xin, showed that he came from one of the most powerful lineage organizations in Wanzai. One scholar who studied the genealogies of the Xin lineage even compared it to the aristocratic families who dominated elite politics in medieval China, although the Xin lineage dominated only a tiny county in South China that was more than one thousand miles away from the capital of the empire. We are now fully aware of the reason behind Xin Meichen's months-long journey to the capital, because it would trigger a debate within the highest echelon of the Qing court with unforeseen ramifications. Xin's trip would also be documented in an array of historical documents, including local gazetteers and palace memorials.

When Xin Meichen arrived at the Censorate, he hoped that the officials at the Censorate would hear his complaint and change a local educational policy that the magistrate of his county had no power over. His lineage, along with other natives in Wanzai county, had been feuding with the Pengmin migrants. The Pengmin first appeared in Wanzai during the late Ming period as seasonal migrants from Fujian and Guangdong, and they began to settle in Wanzai permanently at the end of the Ming dynasty. The term "pengmin" literally meant "shed people," and the Pengmin certainly would not use this derogatory term to describe themselves. According to the Daoguang-era gazetteer of Wanzai:

Wan[zai] County did not have any Pengmin in the past. Ever since the Wanli reign (1573-1620) of the Ming dynasty, sojourners from Fujian and Guangdong migrated to Wan[zai] and made their living by working the fields. They came in Spring and left in Winter, and they scattered around. No Pengmin settled down permanently in Wanzai until the Chongzhen reign of the Ming dynasty. Since the Shunzhi reign and the Kangxi reign of our current dynasty, the Pengmin population has been gradually multiplying over time because imperial grace allowed the populace to rest and recuperate in peace.¹²

萬邑向無棚民。自明萬曆年間，閩廣流民來萬僑居，耕種為業。其始春集冬歸，寥寥散處。迨天啓崇禎時，乃有久居於萬者。國朝順治康熙以來，皇恩浩蕩，休生養息，丁口日久漸繁。

Xin's decision to petition the authority in Beijing was far from unique. People in imperial China conceptualized "justice" as something that only could be achieved in the capital of the Qing empire if they exhausted all available options that could theoretically deliver "justice" at the local and provincial levels, such as petitioning their county magistrates and provincial governors. The distance that a petitioner had to travel from their locale to Beijing was often astonishing, and petitioners across China understood that appearing in person at the Censorate or the Nine Gate's Infirmary was a last resort that required considerable investments.¹³ In Xin

¹² *Wanzai Xianzhi* 道光萬載縣誌 (Gazetteer of Wanzai from Daoguang reign, 1848), Vol 7, 5.

¹³ The Censorate and the Nine Gates Infirmary were two institutions in Beijing that were authorized to accept petitions. Petitions that they received would be sorted and selectively forwarded to the throne and relevant provincial officials. However, handling petitions was not

Meichen's case, Beijing was "4200 *li*" away from Wanzai.¹⁴ The faith in the value of bringing one's grievances to the capital was and still is a prevalent one in mainland China.¹⁵ Petitioning in Beijing was not a panacea that could fix every issue, but it gave petitioners an opportunity to make their case to the throne via legal institutions in the capital. However, an emperor of Qing China did not hand out "justice" freely and solely based on the testimony of one subject. He relied on information in memorials from his officials, who served in provinces across China proper. Ministerial involvements in the process of policy formulation were routine. Many petitions involving educational quotas were simply forwarded to the Ministry of Rites, and discussions were jointly carried out by officials at the Ministry of Rites and provincial officials under the supervision of the throne. In Xin Meichen's case, that was exactly what would happen.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of educational quotas (學額), the core of Xin Meichen's petition, in Qing China. Educational quotas were crucial to the making of the bureaucratic elite and the local gentry. If one performed well enough in the county-level civil examination and snatched an educational slot at the local county school, one would be eligible for the higher-level civil examinations from which scholar-officials were generated. A county school was the entry point of the pipeline. It was the first step towards higher degrees and higher status in any locale. But it was also difficult to excel: in Wanzai, only one out of fifty county-level exam participants would be selected to enter the county-level government school. Even if a student at a county school failed to advance, he would still be considered a member of the scholar-gentry class and a notable member of his community who could negotiate on behalf of his community with local officials, who themselves had been students at county schools once. In *Complete Treatise on Education* (欽定學政全書), the official guidebook to managing empirewide educational affairs, half of the content was devoted to the distribution of educational quotas from

the primary duty of the two institutions. The primary duty of the Censorate was supervising the conduct of bureaucrats nationwide, and the primary duty of the Nine Gates Infirmary was guarding the capital as well as the Forbidden City, where the emperor resided.

¹⁴ *Wanzai Xianzhi* 道光萬載縣誌 (Gazetteer of Wanzai from Daoguang reign, 1848). As a measurement of distance in pre-modern China, one "li" is roughly 0.3 miles. See Map 1 on page 7 for a visualization of the distance between Wanzai and Beijing.

¹⁵ To some degree, the experiences still resonate two centuries later in post-Mao China, where many petitioners believe that they can only find justice in the capital, and sometimes face arrest by the very local governments that they are complaining against before they can reach the "petition letter and visit offices" in Beijing. Local governments in post-Mao China are not the only villains in the story. The Party Center has also responded with policies such as "no petitioners can enter Beijing during sensitive moments 敏感時刻零進京" that are designed to deter petitioners from carrying out "illegal petitions" and disrupting important conferences of the Party. The pathology of the Chinese legal system and the legal view of the ordinary Chinese have been a paradox: the forms of the law and the legal system have evolved tremendously since the 19th century, but the search for justice remains similarly difficult. The term for "petitioning in Beijing and petitioning to the highest authority" has evolved (from "jing kong 京控" in classical Chinese to "shang fang 上訪" in modern Chinese), but the essence has remained intact. The imperial form of the Censorate died with the Qing dynasty, but it would be reincarnated in 1977 as the National Public Complaints and Proposals Administration, waiting for a new wave of justice-seeking petitioners with agendas like that of Xin Meichen.

provincial levels to county levels.¹⁶ The last version of the treatise was released during the Qianlong reign, after which the distribution of educational quotas remained largely intact between the Qianlong reign and the demise of the Qing Dynasty. However, the distribution of educational quotas, the crown among educational resources in Qing China, remained a dynamic process. A region could be awarded after its residents rose to the occasion and defeated bandits, as a palace memorial from the Late Qing Period shows.¹⁷ Educational quotas that a region or a social group was entitled to could also be taken away. *Complete Treatise on Education* was also a handbook for provincial educational commissioners (學政), whose duties were to manage educational affairs within their jurisdictions in accordance with the rules and the precedents in it. The literati, from the capital to the remote mountainous counties in Guizhou, from the Manchu Northeast to Taiwan, were eligible to compete for these quotas.

No historical evidence can pinpoint when exactly the Pengmin migrants started to arrive in Wanzai, but it is clear that the Pengmin community began to expand relatively constantly since the Kangxi reign (1661-1722). Although the term “pengmin” was associated with mobility since the stereotypical “shed people” could easily abandon one settlement and move on to the next, it is certain that the Pengmin migrants in Wanzai had largely established a permanent presence at the time when Xin Meichen visited Beijing. The Pengmin students now had been participating in the local civil examination, and they did well enough to compete with the natives for the highly coveted educational quotas.¹⁸

¹⁶ Shen Yunlong 沈雲龍 ed, *Qinding xuanzheng quanshu* 欽定學政全書 [Complete Treatise on Education] (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966), 293: 805-1263.

¹⁷ See Rui Lin 瑞麟, “Zouwei gezhouxian shenmin jiaofei shoucheng chuli yuan an qing jia xue’e” 奏為各州縣紳民剿匪守城出力援案請加學額 [A request for rewarding gentry and people that protected their prefectures and counties from bandits with educational quotas], National Palace Museum Digital Library of the Qing Archives 臺灣故宮博物院清代檔案檢索系統, 1871-04-17, #107904. Also see Tang Pin 湯聘 “Zhoubao zuogai pengji zhili zhe” 奏報酌改棚籍之例摺 [A palace memorial on changing the household registration of the Pengmin], 1763, 3rd month, 19th day, National Palace Museum Digital Library of the Qing Archives 臺灣故宮博物院清代檔案檢索系統, #040201.

¹⁸ Two terms, “棚額” (Pengmin quotas) and “棚籍” (*peng ji*), were used interchangeably in palace memorials. As migrants, the Pengmin were presumably registered separately, as the term “Pengmin household registry 棚民煙戶冊” in previous chapters suggests. The creation of Pengmin-only quotas necessitated the creation of a separate *ji* (a category of the household registration) for the Pengmin, and the divide between the natives and the Pengmin was officially institutionalized, since the natives were now native *ji* (土籍) and the Pengmin were “*peng ji*” (棚籍). Once the differences between the two populations were institutionalized, they reaffirmed the pre-existing local conceptualization of the native-migrant divide. “Feng kao 分考” and “feng’e 分額” both essentially meant granting separate educational quotas to the Pengmin. It is worth pointing out that the term “分考” (literally “testing separately”) can be misleading. Both the native students and their Pengmin counterparts took the civil examination in the same facility and were judged by the same panel of officials, but the Pengmin students’ papers were marked with the word “棚” (shed people) initially or with the more neutral term “客” (guest people) later. It did not entail the existence of a completely separate system of examination for the Pengmin

When Xin departed from Wanzai, the native community that he represented had to share 12 educational slots with the Pengmin. It had not always been like this. Four decades earlier, the Pengmin had 4 designated slots. According to one palace memorial, “The Pengmin did not encroach on the natives’ precious quotas, and all was well” 棚民不占土額, 民籍相安.¹⁹ What Xin wanted was to get the Pengmin quotas back and protect the natives’ 12 slots from the Pengmin. Xin’s complaint successfully made it to the throne after vetting by the Censorate. Months after Xin’s petition, in an imperial edict, the throne forwarded the case to two provincial officials who were in charge of Jiangxi Province, the governor-general of Jiangnan and Jiangxi, Chen Dawen, as well as the Educational Commissioner of Jiangxi, Li Junjian:

Concerning the petition from the second-ranked tribute Jiangxi student Xin Meichen: This case will be forwarded to the governor-general of Jiangnan and Jiangxi Chen Dawen, who will work with the Educational Commissioner of Jiangxi Li Junjian to investigate the situations regarding the natives and the migrants. The two officials should contemplate this matter in Jiangxi and memorialize all of their conclusions. [In the meantime], [the petitioner] second-ranked tribute student Xin Meichen has been ordered to return to his native place to await the verdict.

江西副貢生辛梅臣呈請另立棚額。此案著交兩江總督陳大文、會同江西學政李鈞簡，將該省土籍棚籍察核情形，悉心籌議，具奏所有。副貢生辛梅臣著飭令回籍聽候查辦。²⁰

Upon receiving the order, Governor-general Chen and Educational Commissioner Li diligently investigated the petition between 1803 and 1804, and they identified the evolution of the distribution of educational quotas in Wanzai over two reigns that had led to the current discontent among the natives. It is unclear whether Governor-general Chen and Educational Commissioner Li were aware of the long-existing struggles between the migrants and the natives in Wanzai, a county nearly 200 miles away from Jiangxi’s provincial capital, before the throne ordered them to investigate.

All parties who were involved in the Wanzai case, ranging from the Jiaqing emperor to the petitioner, understood that educational quotas were limited and therefore coveted. Otherwise, the *Complete Treatise on Education* would not have needed to painstakingly list the educational quotas that every county in or on the outskirts of China Proper was entitled to. First, Governor-

migrants. The term “cheating” requires clear definitions since it has two different meanings that have yet to be defined in prior literature: being hired to take the civil examination with a false identity (冒考), and pretending to be a registered resident of the county/prefecture where the civil examination takes place (冒籍).

¹⁹ Lü Xiaoxian 呂小鮮, ed., “Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue’e fenzhengan” 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang’an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 16.

²⁰ “Shangyudang Jiaqing ba’nian qiye” [Imperial Edict from the 7th month of the 8th year of the Jiaqing reign] 上諭檔嘉慶八年七月, National Palace Museum Digital Library of the Qing Archives 臺灣故宮博物院清代檔案檢索系統, #001113.

general Chen and Educational Commissioner Li recognized that the Wanzai natives had always been entitled to 12 educational slots. The four additional slots for the Pengmin, created in 1731, were a sign of the migrants’ increasing presence in Wanzai and Jiangxi. The decision from 1731 meant that all students, both the natives and the migrants, would “participate in the civil exam in the same facility and be admitted in accordance with the respective quotas” 同場考試, 分額以進.²¹ It is unclear whether the natives welcomed the four newly designated quotas for the Pengmin migrants or what prompted the four quotas to be set aside for the Pengmin migrants, but palace memorials from the Yongzheng reign suggested that the inclusion of the Pengmin migrants into the baojia system was crucial to the implementation of the baojia system in Jiangxi, thus making the migrant population visible. But in any case, the natives did not object to this new arrangement.

The arrangement was in effect from 1731 to 1762, seemingly without any protests. However, the status quo abruptly came to an end in 1763, when Educational Commissioner Zhou Huang, who had served in Jiangxi four decades before Governor-general Chen and Educational Commissioner Li did, proposed to the throne that the Pengmin quotas should be eliminated. The Qianlong emperor, who was the son of the Yongzheng emperor, agreed after the Ministry of Rites approved the plan. Table 1 offers a comparison between the 1731 and 1763 policies.

Year	1731	1763
Reign	The Yongzheng Reign	The Qianlong Reign
Proposers	Unknown	Educational Commissioner Zhou Huang Governor of Jiangxi Tang Pin
Outcomes	Established Four Pengmin Slots Native Quota (12 Slots)+ Pengmin Quota (4 Slots)	Eliminated Four Pengmin Slots The Native Quota (12 Slots) were made available to all

Table 1: The Distribution of Slots at the County Schools in 1731-1762 and in 1763-1805

The 1763 decision did not turn out to be a wise one. One wave of protest came after another, not by the Pengmin themselves but by the natives. In fact, in 1767, the natives argued

²¹ Lü Xiaoxia 呂小鮮, ed., *Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan* 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [“The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign”], *Lishi Dang'an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 16.

for resuming separate educational quotas for the Pengmin migrants merely four years after the migrants' educational quotas were eliminated.²² Then, just four years before Xin Meichen's petition, one *juren* (an intermediate-level degree holder) from the Xin lineage and two other tribute students brought the issue of the migrants to the magistrate of Wanzai, and nothing changed. Neither Governor-general Chen nor Educational Commissioner Li had difficulty reaching their diametrically opposed conclusions. Both proposed to resume the old arrangement, but to different degrees. Governor-general Chen argued for a full resumption of the "12+4" distribution of educational slots: 12 for native students and 4 for migrant students, which was identical to the decision from the Yongzheng reign. Educational Commissioner Li also agreed to return four slots, but the four slots would not be designated as "migrants only" and they would be open to all. Educational Commissioner Li believed that all students, regardless of their origins, should be eligible to compete for all of the 16 slots that Wanzai County was entitled to. As one researcher summarized it, Governor-general Chen stood with the Pengmin migrants while Educational Commissioner Li was on the natives' side.²³ They did pick sides, but not out of their allegiance with either community.²⁴

Two mysteries have emerged so far. First, as a landmark decision, the elimination of the four Pengmin-only slots (that had existed since the 9th year of Yongzheng reign) in 1763 (the 28th year of the Qianlong reign) was referred to in both Governor-general Chen's and Educational Commissioner Li's palace memorials. The elimination, which I will refer to as the 1763 decision, was the sole reason behind Xin Meichen's journey to Beijing. First, did Governor-general Chen and Educational Commissioner Li reach an identical understanding of the 1763 decision when the two traced the history of the issue four decades later? Second, what factors did the two provincial officials consider in the process of formulating their proposals? Prior literature has parsed the two palace memorials from Li and one from Chen²⁵, but the answers to these two questions are still hiding in plain sight.

I argue that the two provincial officials, Li Junjian and Chen Dawen, did not interpret the 1763 decision to eliminate migrants-only quotas in Wanzai identically, and their true intentions

²² *Wanzai xian tuzhuzhi* 道光萬載縣土著志 (A Native Gazetteer of Wanzai county from Daoguang reign, 1849), Vol.7.

²³ Luo Yanchun 罗艳春, "Jiaoyu, Zongzhu yu defang shehui: Qing zhongye Wanzai shuyuan zaikao" 教育, 宗族与地域社会—清中叶万载书院再考 [Education, Lineages, and Local Society — A Re-examination of Private Academies in Wanzai during mid-Qing], *Zhongguo shehui lishi pinglun* 中国社会历史评论 [Chinese Social and Historical Review] 9 (2008): 431-436.

²⁴ Neither Governor-general Chen nor Educational Commissioner Li was from Jiangxi. The rule of Avoidance required Qing officials to avoid serving in their home regions. They were neither members of "the natives" nor the Pengmin. No known conflicts of interest were involved.

²⁵ For a typical examination of the Wanzai quota case, see Luo's and Zheng's work, cited above, and Zheng Ruida 郑锐达, *Yimin huji yu zongzu: Qingdai zhi Minguo qijian Jiangxi Yuanzhoufu diqu yanjiu* 移民, 户籍与宗族: 清代至民国期间江西袁州府地区研究 [Migration, Household Registration, and Lineages: Research on Yuanzhou Prefecture during the Qing and the Republican Eras] (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2009), 66-77.

were concealed in their palace memorials. Two radically different understandings of migration assimilation now surfaced.

Li Junjian's First Palace Memorial: "I only judge essays, not identities"

In Li Junjian's first palace memorial, Li articulated his reasonings. First, he traced the history of the distribution of educational quotas in Wanzai from the two previous reigns and suggested that four additional quotas should be added in Wanzai, but the additional quotas should not be exclusive to the Pengmin as it was during the Yongzheng reign:

Your humble servant²⁶ found that the natives and the Pengmin had been participating in the civil examination together [and sharing the 12 slots] for more than four decades. If we separate the two populations and resume the old segregation policy, your humble servant will not be comfortable with this idea because the changes will be disorderly. In the past, the natives and the Pengmin were considered two distinct populations, and four additional slots were granted [to the Pengmin]. In the 28th year of the Qianlong reign (1763), someone proposed that the Pengmin should be incorporated into the native population and eliminated the four Pengmin-only slots. At the time, the issue of the four additional slots was not discussed, now your humble servant proposes that the four additional slots should be added to the 12 official slots.²⁷

臣查土棚合考, 已經四十餘年, 再為分籍考試, 殊覺紛更. 惟從前棚籍分考, 原準另額取進四名. 乾隆二十八年, 奏歸土籍. 時未經議及, 應請加作正額.

Li Junjian thought highly of the 1763 decision to eliminate the Pengmin quotas while acknowledging that new changes were needed again. Eliminating the Pengmin quotas, Li argued, was a way to encourage the Pengmin to assimilate and give up their practices so that they could get along with the Wanzai natives. Li also thought that the policymakers in 1763 hoped that the Pengmin distinctness would cease to exist in the future:

Your humble servant found that the Pengmin in Jiangxi had been allowed to take the civil examination in the locales where they currently resided since the second year of the Yongzheng reign (1724). Additional Pengmin-only quotas were granted in the ninth year of the Yongzheng reign (1731). The additional Pengmin-only quotas were eliminated [and the Pengmin were again sharing the natives' quotas] in the 28th year of the Qianlong reign (1763) due to the declining number of Pengmin exam participants. *Your humble servant interpreted this policy change as an attempt to induce the Pengmin to eliminate the long-standing backward customs among the Pengmin and subsequently the natives' prejudices against the Pengmin. The intention behind the new rule was quite profound. It has been a century since the new rule, and the Pengmin have been cultivating themselves*

²⁶ In palace memorials, officials referred to themselves as "your humble servant 臣" since the intended reader was the emperor.

²⁷ Lü Xiaoxian 呂小鮮, ed., "Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan" 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang'an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 12-13.

to become more learned and civilized. Thus the natives now start to allege that the Pengmin are taking up their educational quotas.²⁸

臣查江西各縣棚籍自雍正二年準其報縣收考,九年準其另額取進,乾隆二十八年以人數無多,年久合例,準其歸併土籍考試。所以潛化其愚頑之習,而漸消其畸域之見者。立法意至深遠。現今百有餘年,棚民讀書向學文風漸起,土籍多以佔去學額控告。

The departing Educational Commissioner Li Junjian also described what he learned from Governor-general Chen as well as local officials, who all proposed to grant Pengmin-only quotas and reverse the 1763 decision:

Your humble servant also discussed the Wanzai case with your other humble servant, governor-general Chen Dawen. He told me that Xin Meichen came to him to petition for separating the Pengmin from the natives for the purpose of civil examination. Xin Meichen also claimed that the Pengmin came and went without settling down in one place and did not speak the local dialect. If additional designated quotas are not granted to the Pengmin, the natives will be angered by the Pengmin students who use the natives' quotas and major conflicts might follow. Governor-general Chen proposed that Wanzai County and Yuanzhou Prefecture should carefully investigate the issue and hear from both sides before making a decision. The administrator of Yuanzhou prefecture and the county magistrate of Wanzai reported that the Pengmin in Wanzai county once entered the county seat to provoke troubles and killed a number of the natives in the 12th and 13th years of the Kangxi reign. Feuds between the descendants of the two groups thus surfaced and the two populations have been litigating and fighting ever since. The administrator of Yuanzhou prefecture and the county magistrate of Wanzai thought that adding additional Pengmin-only quotas was for the best.²⁹

旋據督臣陳大文飛諮,萬載一案,前經諮會定議,茲辛梅臣赴轅具呈,仍請分籍考試,並稱棚民去來無定,言語不通,若不分考,勢必黨同伐異,釀成大局。應傷該府縣詳細詢議,取具兩造確結,再行妥議。等語。又據袁州府知府王朝陽督同萬載縣知縣丁誠洲詳稱,萬載棚民曾於康熙十二、十三兩年有朱益吾等兩次入城滋事,焚殺土民甚多,嗣後世相仇作,屢有控評爭鬥之案,請分籍考試爲便。

Li Junjian also invoked his experiences as an Educational Commissioner. He strongly believed that the quality of one's essays should be the sole criterion for admission into government schools, and the geographical origin of a civil examination taker, the singular marker of the identity of a civil examination participant in the Wanzai case, should not be considered:

Your humble servant only considers the quality of one's essays when adjudicating. Therefore, the exam participants have no excuses [related to Pengmin quotas].³⁰

在臣考試時憑文公取,生童等原無所藉口。

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 14-15.

³⁰ Ibid.

Although his arguments were consistent in both palace memorials, Li Junjian's second palace memorial on the subject of educational quotas was longer and the reasoning was bolder than his first one. As he specified in the memorial, Li submitted this palace memorial in late 1804 when he was leaving his post in Jiangxi for a promotion in the capital. Seven days before the submission of the second memorial, he received the newest instructions from the court, which "ordered me to return to the capital immediately to assume the position of the vice minister of the Ministry of Work who is also in charge of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, without waiting for the arrival of my replacement" 又奉到廷寄, 傳諭臣現在奉旨兼署工部右侍郎管錢法堂事, 不必等候新任, 迅速來京供職.³¹

Governor-General Chen Dawen's Counterarguments: "the interests of the natives ultimately come first"

As a governor-general, Chen Dawen was two levels above Jiangxi Educational Commissioner Li Junjian. However, both were tasked with the handling of educational quotas in Wanzai, and their opinions were equally important in this case. Chen reiterated the 1763 decision to eliminate Pengmin quotas proposed by then-Educational Commissioner Zhou Huang and Li Junjian's position, then he mentioned a visit by Xin Meichen, the petitioner who took his complaint to the capital:

When I was corresponding with Educational Commissioner Li Junjian and writing this palace memorial, the second-ranked tribute student Xin Meichen and students Li Jingang, Wu Daoda, came to your humble servant one by one. They told your humble servant that the natives and the Pengmin had long been separated. Even if four additional slots are added without designating them Pengmin-only, the two communities would still not get along. They respectfully requested that the four Pengmin slots should be granted again, which could eliminate future quarrels. According to your humble servant's investigation, this case has not been fully discussed by the local officials, which makes future conflicts possible. Your humble servant has ordered the prefecture-level and county-level officials to collect information and discuss the case based on fair principles. The Provincial Administration Commissioner Xian Fu and the officials at the prefecture- and county-level summoned native students. After carefully considering their demands with fair judgment, your humble servant concluded that it was inevitable to re-grant the Pengmin quotas and admit the Pengmin separately.³²

正在會折具奏間, 複據該副貢生辛梅臣及該縣生童李錦岡, 吳道達等, 先後赴臣訴稱, 棚民與土著分類已久, 即蒙加額, 勢難強同, 呈請復還棚額, 庶弊絕訟消. 等情. 臣查, 此案本未據地方官詳加詢議, 難保不再滋事端. 又經批司, 飭令該府縣秉公集訊議詳. 復節次查催, 據藩司先福督同該府縣, 傳集土棚生童, 詳悉推求, 平心訊斷, 實有不得不復還棚額另取之勢.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Lü Xiaoxian 呂小鮮, ed., "Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan" 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang'an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 13-14.

Chen went on to explain what he had learned, and his assessment of the Pengmin population in Wanzai was far less rosy compared with Li Junjian's claim "the Pengmin have been cultivating themselves to become more learned and civilized":

Your humble servant has carefully investigated the case and the current situation. The Pengmin in Jiangxi migrated from Fujian and Guangdong in the past, settled on unoccupied mountains, and built sheds as well as farming on the mountains. The baojia system was set up among them due to fear of malignant associations among them as the population expanded. It has been a long time since their settlement, but the natives are still ashamed of being associated with the Pengmin. Ever since the Pengmin quotas were eliminated, attacks and litigations have been ceaseless, and the records from litigations are abundant. Pengmin exam participants have been fluctuating, and the Pengmin have not settled down permanently. In the 6th and 7th years of the Jiaqing reign, Pengmin students took up as many as half of the total slots (5-7 out of 12), which upset the native students. If only increasing the number of quotas without designating them as Pengmin-only, as the Ministry of Rites has suggested, the natives will continue to attack the Pengmin on this issue as the number of Pengmin students climbs. The troubles will not end.³³

臣復悉心確查案卷，察覈情形。緣江西棚民從前來自閩廣等處，棲止荒山，搭棚墾種。追滋生日衆，恐結黨爲害，另設客都、客圖、客保、客練稽查，由來已久，土著民人至今羞與爲伍。自裁棚歸土以後，歷年攻許不休，案卷累累。而棚童投考之人，忽增忽減，去來競屬無定。查嘉慶六、七兩年，取進棚童至五名七名之多，佔去土額之半，土童情實不甘。今若加額而不分額，誠如部議，將來棚童之數日多，土著之攻彌力，紛爭滋擾，仍不相安。

Chen's perspective was certainly colored by the discriminating information about the Pengmin that he received from local officials, who gathered them exclusively from the native students. Nonetheless, Chen was fully aware of the reasoning behind the natives' demand to increase the total educational quotas and designated them as Pengmin-only. If four additional quotas are granted and the policy from the Yongzheng reign returns, the Pengmin would not take up as many as "5 to 7" slots out of the 12 slots, since they would only be eligible for the 4 designated slots in a separate category. Therefore, Chen concluded, "The Pengmin only want to share the slots with the natives and they do not want to separate the quotas, so that they can take up as many slots as possible. The natives are upset and they accuse the Pengmin of not having a stable number of exam participants and taking up the slots randomly" 在棚民止愿合考，不愿分額，以便多占学額，在土民以棚籍人数无常，混乱占額，情实不甘。³⁴ Chen also concluded that "the interests of the natives, not the interests of the Pengmin, ultimately come first" 土民与棚民究有主客之分，and returning to the rule of 4 Pengmin slots could "persuade the Pengmin and eliminate their cheating activities." The rule of 4 Pengmin slots, established in the 9th year of the Yongzheng reign, "is appropriate to be implemented permanently" 雍正九年定例，自宜永远遵行。³⁵

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

Evaluating the Credibility of Xin Meichen's Testimony

Governor-general Chen Dawen and Educational Commissioner Li Junjian assigned very different weights to the credibility of Xin Meichen's testimony. It is obvious that Governor-general Chen concluded that the information regarding the Native-Pengmin divide was reasonably credible. Otherwise, he would not write "After carefully considering their demands with fair judgment, your humble servant concluded that it was inevitable to re-grant the Pengmin quotas and admit the Pengmin separately." In contrast, Educational Commissioner Li Junjian found Xin Meichen's testimony unconvincing. Xin Meichen claimed that no intermarriages were allowed between the natives and the Pengmin, yet Commissioner Li found that Xin Meichen's wife, Mrs. Luo, was the daughter of a Pengmin. Commissioner Li also found another case of intermarriage: a member of the Xin lineage, Xin Dingwang, married the niece of a Pengmin. Therefore, Commissioner concluded that "we can see that the so-called feuds between the natives and the Pengmin in this prefecture and this county and claims of no intermarriages were made up by the natives 是該府縣所詳土棚世仇, 不為婚姻所說, 皆屬土籍捏告虛詞, 已可概見."³⁶

The 1804 debate between Governor-general Chen Dawen and Educational Commissioner Li Junjian was temporarily suspended when both were promoted to positions in the capital. After Li Junjian's departure from Jiangxi, Chen Dawen was promoted to the position of Minister of Military within the same year and his attention shifted to military affairs such as building warships. Both officials relocated to the capital and no future appointments would require them to leave the capital ever again.

Re-examining the 1763 Decision to Eliminate Pengmin Quotas

The 1763 decision collectively made by Educational Commissioner Zhou Huang, the governor of Jiangxi, the Ministry of Rites, and the Qianlong emperor was the origin of the 1803-1804 debate in Chapter 1. Education Commissioner Zhou Huang was the one who initiated the discussion of eliminating the Pengmin quotas in Wanzai County by submitting a palace memorial to the throne in 1762. Zhou's original memorials have survived but are unavailable to the author³⁷, so the memorials from Zhou's superior, the governor of Jiangxi Tang Pin who supported Zhou's proposal, will be the basis of the following analysis.

The Decline in the Number of Pengmin students in the 1760s

First, the imperial edict from the Qianlong emperor after receiving Commissioner Zhou's proposal is available at the beginning of Governor Tang Pin's 1763 memorial:

³⁶ Ibid, 15.

³⁷ Benjamin Elman included two references to palace memorials submitted by Zhou Huang in his *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* from 明清檔案 at the Institute of History and Philology at Academia Sinica. I was not able to find the two palace memorials in 明清檔案: 中央研究院歷史語言研究所現存清代內閣大庫原藏明清檔案 (1986) at Stanford University's East Asia Library, the digital archive of Institute of History and Philology at Academia Sinica, or the digital archive of the National Palace Museum in Taiwan. It is likely that the two memorials have not been digitized or published.

On the 2nd day of the 11th month of the 27th year of the Qianlong reign, the Qianlong emperor allowed the Ministry of Rites to discuss the request from the education chief of Jiangxi Zhou Huang to eliminate the Pengmin quotas and the possible cheating activities that were associated with the Pengmin quotas. The Ministry of Rites ordered your humble servant [Tang Pin] to investigate the number of Pengmin exam participants with local household registration. If the number is indeed so low that the Pengmin quotas have not been necessary to invoke, then those quotas can be eliminated. If the number is similar to the past level, then the rule made in the 9th year of the Yongzheng reign regarding Pengmin quotas should remain in place.³⁸

乾隆二十七年十一月初二日，准禮部咨開議覆江西學政臣周煌條奏請，將江西棚民悉歸土籍考試，毋庸另立棚籍，定額取近，以杜僥倖，以清弊源等因。部議令臣查明現在棚童入籍江省應試者實有若干，如果為數無多，又係年久合例，則將棚民悉歸土籍，毋庸另立棚籍取進，若為數與原議不甚相遠，則應仍照雍正九年定例辦理。

Governor Tang Pin claimed that the Pengmin population had been declining, and he also agreed with Educational Commissioner Zhou Huang that possible cheating associated with the Pengmin quotas was a legitimate concern:

It has been more than three decades since the 9th year of the Yongzheng reign. We have not seen an increase in the Pengmin population. The Pengmin population has been dwindling. It is unavoidable that some exam participants might pretend to be Pengmin and engage in illicit activities, such as taking the exam for others, all of which were the basis of education Commissioner Zhou Huang's proposal of eliminating the Pengmin quotas.³⁹

歷今三十餘年，人數未見加增，轉自日漸減少，其中未免有湊數鼠名頂充冒考等弊，是以學臣周煌有併入民籍一體考試之請據。

Governor Tang Pin reiterated Educational Commissioner Zhou Huang's claim of the decline of the Pengmin population in even greater detail, as well as the rationales behind Zhou Huang's disagreement with the 1723 decision:

Zhou Huang memorialized that some Pengmin had been registered in Jiangxi for more than a century. Those who migrated later have also been here for about five to six decades. They have far exceeded the requirement of being registered for twenty years to

³⁸ See “Zoubao zuogai pengji zhili zhe” 奏報酌改棚籍之例摺 [A palace memorial on changing the household registration of the Pengmin] by Tang Pin, 1763, 3rd month, 19th day, 臺灣故宮博物院清代檔案檢索系統 National Palace Museum Digital Library of the Qing Archives, #040201. All citations of records from the National Palace Museum and the Institute of History and Philology at Academia Sinica in this thesis follow the Benjamin Elman's method in his *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*. “#040201” is the physical/digital reference number.

³⁹ Ibid.

be eligible for taking the civil examination locally. Moreover, the proposal [from the ninth year of the Yongzheng reign (1723)] stipulated that if there were fewer than 50 Pengmin civil examination takers, they should share the 12 native slots with the natives. Then why would it be necessary to give the Pengmin special treatment and give them the additional designated quotas? This may make them think that the unqualified students might be admitted with the designated quotas by chance. Plus, some places had 600 to 700 Pengmin civil examination takers when the 1723 decision was made, now (1763) there are fewer than 200. Places that had fewer than 100 Pengmin civil examination takers, now there are only 10 or more students. Sometimes the number can be as low as 2 to 3. Setting quotas aside for the Pengmin was already inconsistent with the common practice. If we re-categorize the migrants as members of the native category (*tu ji*) and admit them into the county school solely based on their performance on the civil examination, there will be no undue suppression or excesses.⁴⁰

周煌奏稱，棚民在江入籍，遠者百餘年，近者亦在五六十年上下，與入籍二十年以上之例較為過之。況原議不及五十名者，仍與本籍童生一體考試，何必於五十名以上獨寬另取之額，以開倖進之端，且查從前原議，有六七百名者，今止百十餘名。數十名者，今止十餘名至二三名不等。是棚籍入學已難符例，若令改歸土籍，憑文考取，即無屈抑，亦無泛濫。

The first fatal flaw in Zhou Huang's proposal, cited by Governor-general Chen Dawen and Educational Commissioner Li Junjian four decades later in Chapter 1, is now apparent. First, Zhou Huang's investigation showed that the Pengmin population and the number of Pengmin civil examination takers both decreased drastically from "600-700 civil examination takers to "fewer than 200" in certain locales. The Ministry of Rites expressed its skepticism by urging Zhou Huang and his superior Tang Pin to exercise caution before eliminating the Pengmin quotas altogether:

The Ministry of Rites said the number of Pengmin civil examination takers might have decreased temporarily. Or there might be specific reasons behind the population decrease that we are not aware of. If the Pengmin quotas are eliminated, the Pengmin might take up too many slots there were intended for the natives and cause inconveniences. The rule of Pengmin quotas has been in place for a long time, and changing the rule now must require extra caution.⁴¹

內部以應考人數或偶然減少，或該地方別有情節，若遽行議裁，恐客占主額，多有未便。亦因久定章程，酌請更改，不得不加慎重之意。

Unfortunately, the warning from the Ministry of Rites materialized in 1803. Zhou Huang's assumption that the trend of Pengmin population decline would persist turned out to be wrong.

The 1763 decision to eliminate Pengmin quotas was also included in the Qianlong version of the *Complete Treatise on Education* as a precedent. *Complete Treatise on Education* showed that the state during the Qianlong reign was aware that cheating among Pengmin students was an issue that it must address, and local officials must screen civil examination

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

participants diligently by cross-checking the populace registry.⁴² The 1763 decision was largely a summary of Tang Pin's palace memorial.

Can the development cycles theory explain the sudden decline in the number of Pengmin students in Jiangxi?

Prior literature mostly failed to provide a credible explanation to the precipitous decline in the number of Pengmin students, which was the ultimate rationale behind the 1763 decision to eliminate insufficiently utilized Pengmin quotas. We do not know the exact reasons behind the population decline that Zhou Huang and Tang Pin witnessed during the mid-Qianlong reign. Mobility, an inherent feature of the Hakkas and the Pengmin, meant that re-migrating or returning to native places within the resettled Pengmin community was possible.

In *Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese History: Hakkas, Pengmin, and Their Neighbors*, a landmark study of the migration of Hakkas and the Pengmin and its consequences in Chinese history, Leong characterized the Wanzai saga as part of the larger conflicts between the Pengmin and their native neighbors in the Gan Yangzi macroregion and used the developmental cycles theory to explain the renewed efforts by the natives to protect their precious quotas in the 1800s, but Leong was not aware of the decline in the number of Pengmin students in Jiangxi. Leong also attributed the struggle in Wanzai over educational quotas to a cycle of economic decline that began in the 1800s:

In 1730, at the request of the governor of Jiangxi, a separate quota was decided upon, whereby one place each was set aside for the Pengmin in the civil and military examinations...*The practice worked for 30 years without complications, which emboldened the government in 1763 to abolish the separate quota altogether.* Native and Pengmin candidates were to be examined on the native quota. *Over the next 40 years this caused no difficulty even with the natives of Wanzai, where the immigrants probably constituted more than half the population. This easy acceptance* stemmed from the recognition by both groups of imperial parsimony in these matters, from the impressive authority of the regime, and from the more relaxed intercommunal relations in the context of eighteenth-century economic expansion. When the Gan Yangzi developmental cycle went into a downturn early in the nineteenth century, however, conflict erupted again over the issue of the examinations. The increasing numbers and success of the Pengmin candidates excited native ill will. The natives of Wanzai successfully pressured the government in 1808 for the reinstatement of separate quotas, examinations, and lists.⁴³

⁴² Shen Yunlong 沈雲, ed., *Qinding xuanzheng quanshu* 欽定學政全書[Complete Treatise on Education] (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966), 293: 546-547

⁴³ Sow-Theng Leong, *Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese History: Hakkas, Pengmin, and Their Neighbors*, ed. Tim Wright (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 112, 134-135.

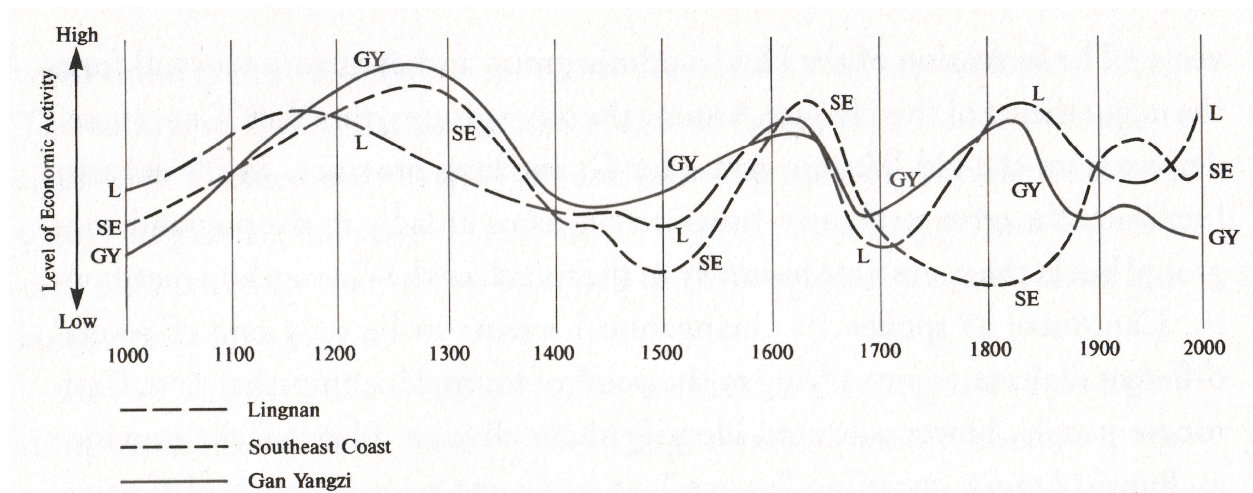


FIG. 2.1. Regional cycles of development: Lingnan (L), Southeast Coast (SE), and Gan Yangzi (GY), 1000–1995.

Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese history, Graph by G. William Skinner, pp. 42. Wanzai County is located within the Gan Yangzi macroregion (middle Yangzi), which experienced a developmental decline at the beginning of the 19th century. Such developmental declines could be caused by an array of events: climate change (i.e., colder temperatures), rebellions, etc.

Leong stated that Wanzai experienced two waves of Pengmin in-migration, one in the late Ming period and one in the early to mid-Qing period. The 28th year of the Qianlong reign, when Tang Pin submitted his palace memorial, was situated well within the mid-Qing period.⁴⁴ He concluded that:

From the last quarter of the seventeenth century onward, recovery and rehabilitation initiated a new cycle in the Gan Yangzi that was to last over a century, with a tremendous growth in population and economic development... This third cycle entered a downturn from the early nineteenth century owing to severe deflationary pressures, culminating in the Taiping Rebellion, the destructiveness of which was particularly felt in the Gan [Jiangxi] as well as the Middle Yangzi.⁴⁵

With a closer look at the 1763 decision to eliminate Pengmin quotas, two issues with Leong's analysis emerge. First, the Qing state was not "emboldened" to eliminate the Pengmin quotas. Leong made no mention of key actors behind the 1763 decision such as Zhou Huang, and the sources that Leong used did not cover the decline in the number of Pengmin students. The 1763 decision to eliminate the Pengmin quotas, as this chapter shows, was based on the careful observations of the provincial officials, who thought the disadvantages of such an arrangement outweighed the advantages.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 111.

Wanzai: An exception to the decline in the number of Pengmin students?

The population in Wanzai expanded constantly during the Qing period. In 1656 (the 13th year of the Shunzhi reign), the total population in Wanzai was over 51,000.⁴⁶ The number climbed to 195,000 in 1823 (the third year of the Daoguang reign).⁴⁷ However, according to *A Native Gazetteer of Wanzai*, the numerical difference between the size of the native population and that of the Pengmin was dramatic in 1795 (the 60th year of the Qianlong reign): out of 187,000 people in Wanzai, 185,000 were natives.⁴⁸ The accuracy of the figures from *A Native Gazetteer of Wanzai*, a version of local history that explicitly excluded the voices of the Pengmin and contained anti-migrant rhetoric, was fairly questionable and was most likely an undercounted version of the actual number. However, these figures are the only available ones that include the native/migrant breakdown. It is difficult to imagine how a community that only constituted 1% of the local population could take up as many as half of the 12 educational quotas for the 187,000 people in Wanzai, but it also indicates that the population decline that Educational Commissioner Zhou Yang cited in his palace memorials was not groundless.

New evidence from a Daoguang-reign gazetteer shows that contrary to Educational Commissioner Zhou Huang's claim in 1762, the number of Pengmin students potentially never substantially declined in Wanzai. In a county gazetteer, Wanzai was seemingly an exception to the province-wide Pengmin population decline:

However, there were still 240 Pengmin students in Wanzai. It seemed that the Pengmin quota rule was still applicable. But [the Pengmin in] the entire province were returned to the native *ji*. Wanzai should not be the only exception, which would lead to two sets of rules [within the same province]. After discussion, the Pengmin and the natives in Wanzai began to share the quotas of the natives.⁴⁹

惟萬載棚童尚有二百四十名，按之另額取進之例，似屬相符，但通省既歸土籍，未便獨存萬載一縣，以致兩歧，議准合考。

Leong claimed that the 1763 decision created no difficulty between the natives and the Pengmin in the four decades that followed, and the conflicts only erupted when “the Gan Yangzi developmental cycle went into a downturn early in the nineteenth century.” However, the same gazetteer from the Daoguang reign, which was not used by Leong, showed a number of petitions and litigations over the issue of educational quotas that occurred during the four decades between 1763 and 1803. The very first petition for reversing the 1763 decision occurred in 1767, merely four years later:

⁴⁶ *Wanzai xian tuzhuzhi* 道光萬載縣土著志 (A Native Gazetteer of Wanzai county from Daoguang reign, 1849), Volume 10, 80.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Wanxian xianzhi* 道光萬載縣誌, 1832, Vol.7, 6.

In the 32nd year of the Qianlong reign (1767), Xin Tingzhi⁵⁰, a native *juren*, and other natives petitioned to reverse the 1763 decision that allowed the Pengmin to share the natives' quotas because the Pengmin were taking up too many quotas. They hoped that the old rule of allowing the Pengmin to have their own quotas could be resumed.⁵¹

乾隆三十二年, 土籍舉人辛庭芝等以裁去棚額合考, 棚占土額, 請復舊例。

The relationship between the natives and the Pengmin during the four decades between 1763 and 1803 was far more tumultuous than what Leong called “easy acceptance” and “no difficulty.” There were reports of Pengmin-related cheating incidents in at least six separate years within the four decades: the 29th, 31st, 48th, and 55th years of the Qianlong reign (1764, 1766, 1783, and 1790), and the 1st and 2nd years of the Jiaqing reign (1796 and 1797).⁵²

These incidents prompted the natives to call for a reinstatement of Pengmin quotas, which was repeatedly rejected by county magistrates and provincial governors who did not see the need to memorialize the natives' discontent and present the issue to the throne again. In 1767, a county magistrate and a provincial governor decided to placate the natives by relaxing the pre-entrance screening policy that was designed to deter cheating for them. Traditionally, every participant in the civil examination at the county level must be in a group of five participants who guarantee the identity of each other.⁵³ If one person in the group turned out to be an impostor, the entire group would be punished. The new policy in 1767 allowed the natives to be in a group of three instead of a group of five, while the Pengmin continued to be subjected to the old “group of five” rule. Pengmin students petitioned against the policy change at the county level and the provincial level to no avail, and the preferential treatment for the native students would not be eliminated until 1804, after Educational Commissioner Li Junjian reexamined the case after Xin Meichen's 1803 trip to Beijing.⁵⁴

The saga that followed the 1763 decision was foreseen by the officials at the Ministry of Rites, who did not fight against the recommendation from the provincial officials. After all,

⁵⁰ Xin Tingzhi was almost certainly a member of the Xin lineage. Since Xin Meichen, the petitioner in Chapter 1, was also a member of the Xin lineage, the dominance of the Xin lineage in local affairs was evident.

⁵¹ *Wanzai xian tuzhuzhi* 道光万载县土著志 (A Native Gazetteer of Wanzai county from Daoguang reign, 1849), Volume 7, 7.

⁵² Lü Xiaoxian 吕小鲜, ed., “Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan” 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang'an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 22-23.

⁵³ Ichisada Miyazaki 宮崎市定, *Keju shi* 科舉史 [A History of the Civil Examination], trans. Ma Yunchao 马云超 (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2020).

⁵⁴ Lü Xiaoxian 吕小鲜, ed., “Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan” 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang'an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 14-15.

Wanzai was a small, remote county deep in South China, more than one thousand miles away from the capital, not the rich Jiangnan region or a strategically important location.

In summary, Leong's analysis based on Skinner's theory of developmental cycles is a valuable guide to the population growth in Jiangxi during the 18th century and was consistent with the Wanzai example. Yet it fails to explain why the number of Pengmin students was declining in Jiangxi at large. Leong's claim of a cycle of economic upswing could alleviate the Native-Pengmin tensions while a cycle of economic downturn exacerbated them is inconsistent with the evidence from the Daoguang-reign gazetteer.

The Pengmin and the Question of Assimilation

The second fatal flaw in Zhou Huang's analysis was the assumption that assimilation was an automatic process that only required time and coexistence. Again, as Leong and Skinner have shown, the Pengmin and the Hakkas were remarkably resistant to assimilation regardless of the length of time since their resettlement in new territories. But Zhou, who knew that the Pengmin had resided in Wanzai for at least half a century, did not see the need to see the Pengmin as a distinct community:

Subsequent investigations show that when the Pengmin first arrived in Jiangxi, the distinctions between the natives and the Pengmin emerged. However, the Pengmin have now been living in Jiangxi for more than half a century and sometimes more than a century. They have established a pleasant life here. Both the Pengmin and the natives are equal children of our dynasty, so why can there be differences in *ji* between the two? Furthermore, the universal rule in all provinces regarding migrants is that those who have been registered in their new locales for more than 20 years, and have land and ancestral graves in new locales with concrete proof, should be allowed to participate in the civil examination in their new locales regardless of their origins. So why do the Pengmin need additional designated quotas? The name *peng ji* should also be changed.⁵⁵

再查棚民初至江西,原有土著客籍之別,今住居五六十年,百餘年之久,安居樂業,同為聖朝赤子,既無彼此之分,安有主客之籍.況通行各省定例,入籍二十年,置有田糧墳墓,確有根據者,不論何省人民,皆得以住居地方入籍應試,何獨棚民必加另額,是棚籍之名所當更定也.

Educational Commissioner Zhou Huang, who worked in Jiangxi four decades before Li Junjian assumed the same position, did not see eliminating Pengmin quotas as an effort to promote Pengmin assimilation. Commissioner Zhou argued that the Pengmin migrant population in Wanzai County had been declining, and a declining population would not need designated quotas. Furthermore, Commissioner Zhou saw Pengmin quotas as an abnormality that was becoming a hotbed for cheating activities within his jurisdiction, where such designated quotas only existed in certain counties with Pengmin migrants. In any case, both Commissioner Zhou

⁵⁵ See “Zoubao zuogai pengji zhili zhe” 奏報酌改棚籍之例摺 [A palace memorial on changing the household registration of the Pengmin] by Tang Pin, 1763, 3rd month, 19th day, 臺灣故宮博物院清代檔案檢索系統 National Palace Museum Digital Library of the Qing Archives, #040201.

and Governor Tang agreed that the usefulness of Pengmin quotas had run its course and there were no good reasons to keep the quotas for the Pengmin migrants. Unfortunately, both severely underestimated the degree of the inter-community divide in Wanzai.

The Degrees of Inter-community Divide: Evidence from Poetry

Sow-Theng Leong and Liang Hongsheng both pointed to poetry as evidence of the native hostility toward the Pengmin in Jiangxi. In the poetry collection of Shi Yanzhang, a Hanlin academician reader-in-waiting (翰林侍讀) who was born at the end of the Ming dynasty and worked in Jiangxi as a mid-level official during the Kangxi reign, two poems revealed important information about the way of life of the Pengmin in contrast with that of the natives.⁵⁶

Shi's descriptions of the poor state of local administration and the level of poverty in Yuanzhou prefecture and Wanzai county were bleak. For Shi, Wanzai was a place where "city walls are short and are breaking down" 城高五丈半傾裂, "[so poor that] even thieves refused to steal out of sympathy" 盜賊哀憐不肯入, and "local officials are always in a hurry to collect taxes" 官吏倉皇徵稅急. Comparing the natives with the Pengmin, Shi implicitly criticized the natives for their "laziness"⁵⁷: "The natives rest their hands while the Pengmin are working the fields" 土人拱手客種禾. Yet Shi offered little sympathy to the Pengmin. In a note attached to his second poem that neither has been translated nor studied, he offered his observations of the relationship between the Pengmin and local officials, which was not recorded in local gazetteers or palace memorial:

The natives in Yuanzhou prefecture do not engage in hemp production.⁵⁸ They rent their land to migrants from Fujian, Hunan, and Hubei. The migrants set up sheds and they congregate based on lineages. They have taken over Changling mountain and harassed the natives. Local officials cannot ban them or their practices. The sheds of the migrants are called hemp sheds.⁵⁹

袁州民不藝麻，率賃地與閩楚流人，架棚聚族，立魁長陵轆土著，吏不能禁，謂之麻棚。

Shi also lamented, "the natives were intimidated by the Pengmin, did not dare speak...and for whom are the natives suffering for?" 主人膽落不敢語...此邦之人為誰苦, while "the migrants from faraway places came to enjoy this Garden of Eden" 嗟彼遠人來樂土. It is obvious that Wanzai, a

⁵⁶ Shi Lunzhang 施閩章, *Yin yin Wenxuange si ku quan shu ben* 影印文淵閣四庫全書本 [Complete Library in Four Sections] (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1986), vol. 1313, 538. The two poems and my translation are available in the appendix.

⁵⁷ Luo Yanchun's analysis of the poems is similar to Liang's interpretation. See Luo Yanchun 罗艳春, "Jiaoyu, Zongzhu yu defang shehui: Qing zhongye Wanzai shuyuan zaikao" 教育, 宗族与地域社会: 清中叶万载书院再考 [Education, Lineages, and Local Society: A Re-examination of Private Academies in Wanzai during mid-Qing], *Zhongguo shehui lishi pinglun* 中国社会历史评论 [Chinese Social and Historical Review] 9 (2008): 431-436.

⁵⁸ Hemp production and indigo production, both of which could be carried out on hills and mountains, were two of the most important sources of income for the Pengmin.

⁵⁹ See poem B in the appendix.

remote county in Jiangxi, was certainly not a “Garden of Eden” for the Pengmin migrants who initially lived in sheds, and palace memorials have shown that the Pengmin were not the only ones who were harassed. The natives, who were “ashamed of being associated with the Pengmin”, also reciprocated in the same fashion.

Evidence from Local Gazetteers

A number of examples that demonstrated the inter-community divide can be found in local gazetteers. One example of the Pengmin's resistance to assimilation in Wanzai from a local gazetteer is particularly informative, as noted by Xie Hongwei. Four years into the Jiaqing reign, two small struggles over the civil examination broke out between the native students and their Pengmin counterparts. Receiving an inquiry in the fourth year of the Yongzheng reign (1799, 6 years before the debate over educational quotas) from the then-governor of Jiangxi, who adjudicated the two incidents, the magistrate of Wanzai county replied that “the people who are called the Pengmin are not those who are freshly registered at the local populace registry and are planning to take the civil examination for the first time. The Pengmin imagine that their ancestors migrated to Wanzai as early as the Ming and Yuan dynasties, and they have been multiplying for more than ten generations, but they still belong to the *peng ji* category and they are subject to stricter verification policy” 而所谓棚籍者，又不仅指甫经入籍、初次应试之人，虽其远视自元明迁移至此，相传十数代之久，亦仍称为棚籍，必用互结。⁶⁰ It is clear that the Pengmin's resistance to assimilation was remarkable since their identity remained intact generations after the initial settlement, but why? An answer can be found in a county gazetteer:

If we only examine the established rule of local registration and the customs in other counties, a Pengmin person who has lived in Wanzai for at least 20 years should be allowed to register locally as a local, and there should be no differences between him and a native-born local for the purpose of the civil examination. However, the boundary between the natives and the Pengmin remains sharp. There are thousands of differences that the two communities need to overcome before they can integrate together. Although the Pengmin have resided in Wanzai for generations, they do not speak the same dialect or wear the same style of clothing as the natives. Their dialect and clothing remain identical to those of their forefathers who migrated from Fujian to here. The natives have long discriminated against the Pengmin. The natives do not allow intermarriages between the two communities, and the Pengmin have not been allowed to reside in the county seat [since 1755].⁶¹

若以入籍定例及他邑民俗而论，凡年例已符准其入籍者，即与土著无异，自应一律考试，无如卑县习俗相沿，本籍之与棚籍界限截然，万难混合。棚民虽住居数代，其言语服饰尚袭闽之旧，并不同于本籍。本籍民人向存歧视，从无缔结婚姻且不令其入城居住。

The origin of prohibiting the Pengmin from purchasing properties or residing inside the boundary of the county seat was also documented in local gazetteers. Two attempts by the

⁶⁰ *Wanzai xian tuzhuzhi* 道光万载县土著志 (A Native Gazetteer of Wanzai county from Daoguang reign, 1849).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Pengmin degree holders to purchase properties to establish private academies in the county seats, one in 1754 and one in 1755 (the 19th and the 20th years of the Qianlong reign), were derailed by the native degree holders who appealed to the county magistrate.⁶² The Pengmin were only allowed to establish private academies outside the county seat during the rest of the Qing period. The fieldwork conducted by Xie Hongwei in the 2000s in Wanzai showed that the prohibition lasted from 1754 to the Republican period, and it only came to an end after the communist takeover. One descendant of the Pengmin, who resided in the county seat in 2006, said in an interview that his grandfather filed a lawsuit when he was prohibited from purchasing a store in the county seat before 1949, and the matter was not resolved even after the “liberation.”⁶³

The lack of linguistic assimilation meant that the two communities could not effectively communicate verbally. As Chen Dawen’s palace memorial shows, Xin Meichen, the petitioner, complained that “the Pengmin came and went without settling down in one place and did not speak the local dialect 並稱棚民去來無定, 言語不通.” The observation from a county magistrate in the last paragraph also supported Xin Meichen’s claim. “Although the Pengmin have resided in Wanzai for generations, they do not speak the same dialect or wear the same style of clothing as the natives. Their dialect and clothing remain identical to those of their forefathers who migrated from Fujian to here.” These differences between the two communities have been the basis for the discussion on whether the Hakka Chinese, whose variants included the Pengmin, should be considered an ethnic group. We do know that the Wanzai natives did not characterize the Pengmin as “barbarians” or non-Han people, since the Pengmin originated from nearby provinces within China proper. But we do know that the Wanzai natives saw the Pengmin as a distinct social group that they did not want to be associated with, and the Pengmin reciprocated with hostility. In 1849, the natives took an extraordinary step to assert their control over the history of Wanzai. They decided to compile a gazetteer with the title *A Native Gazetteer of the Wanzai County* 萬載縣土著志.

Furthermore, the issue of “coexistence” in Wanzai was also a complicated one. Prior literature often cited the banning of the Pengmin from residing in the county seat as a manifestation of native hatred against the natives, but the larger implications of the residential segregation were left unexamined. The residential segregation between the two communities was institutionalized by a county magistrate with support from the natives, which restricted the level of interactions between the two communities and made assimilation more difficult by excluding the Pengmin from the central place of the county. The Pengmin were relegated to the outskirts of the county seat, where they created a parallel community. Private academies were also built

⁶² Xie Hongwei 謝宏維, “Wanzai Xianzhi dutujia huji guance jieshao yu jiedu” 萬載縣志都圖甲戶籍貫冊介紹與解讀 [An introduction to the household registration (baojia) documents in Wanzai gazetteer and interpretations], *Tianye yu wenxian: Huananyanjiu ziliao zhongxin tongxun* 田野與文獻: 華南研究資料中心通訊 [Fieldwork and documents: South China research resource station newsletter], 2008:52, 33.

⁶³ Xie Hongwei 謝宏維, *He er bu tong: Qingdai ji minguo shiqi Jiangxi wanzaixian de yimin, tuzhu he guojia 和而不同: 清代及民國時期江西萬載縣的移民, 土著與國家* [Harmonious but different: The Migrants, Natives, and the State in Wanzai County in Jiangxi during the Qing and the Republican periods], Post-doctoral Thesis, (Xiamen University, 2008), 149.

along the native-migrant line, which excluded students from the other community and perpetuated the native-migrant divide by seeding it in the minds of school-age children.

The State and The Making of a Proto-ethnic Group

To discern the policy differences between the proposal of Governor-general Chen Dawen and the proposal of Educational Commissioner Li Junjian, we must probe the anthropological nature of the Pengmin. I argue that whether viewing the Pengmin as an ethnic group (an anthropologically distinct population) in comparison to the natives in Wanzai was the key to understanding the differences between the two proposals. Fredrik Barth, a Norwegian social anthropologist, offers the most widely used definition of an ethnic group. Barth summarizes that an ethnic group:

1. is largely biologically self-perpetuating
2. shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms
3. makes up a field of communication and interaction.
4. has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.⁶⁴

Barth adds that “This ideal type definition is not so far removed in content from the traditional proposition that a race = a culture = a language and that a society = a unit which rejects or discriminates against others.”⁶⁵ Now we can attempt to compare the characteristics of Pengmin with Barth’s definition of an ethnic group. First, the Pengmin shared “fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms,” since their cultural norms manifested as their linguistic nonconformity and culturally distinct clothing. Both were markers that distinguished them from the natives and made up “a field of communication and interaction.” As a county magistrate said, “Although the Pengmin have resided in Wanzai for generations, they do not speak the same dialect or wear the same style of clothing as the natives. Their dialect and clothing remain identical to those of their forefathers who migrated from Fujian to here.”⁶⁶ Given the sharp distinction between the natives and the Pengmin, whose alienness persisted even generations after the initial settlement, it is certain that the Pengmin had “a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.”

The only characteristic of the Pengmin in Wanzai that might be inconsistent with Barth’s definition is whether the Pengmin was “largely biologically self-perpetuating.”⁶⁷ Pengmin were

⁶⁴ Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 10-11.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Wanzai xian tuzhuzhi* 道光萬載縣土著志 (A Native Gazetteer of Wanzai county from Daoguang reign, 1849).

⁶⁷ It is worth noting that Barth does not argue that ethnic groups are biologically determined. Barth lists examples of identity changes that were induced by non-biological factors. For example, he discusses the Yao people in South China, where non-Yao children could be

never characterized as a race. They were also never described by the Wanzai natives as “barbarians,” a term that was traditionally associated with non-Han people in Han Chinese culture. The Pengmin migrated from nearby provinces, not foreign countries or the western frontiers like Xinjiang, to Wanzai. The natives themselves were also aware that they were migrants once when Wanzai was uninhabited. Linguistic nonconformity of the Pengmin was to be expected given the extreme linguistic diversity in South China, where hundreds of dialects that were and are still not mutually intelligible exist. Initially, the primary identity markers of the Pengmin were their native places (Fujian and Guangdong) and their way of life (working in hemp production in the mountains and living in sheds). These markers of one’s identity are still prevalent in contemporary China, such as “migrant workers from Province A who worked on an iPhone assembly line.”

Barth’s framework renders the complexity of the Native-Pengmin relationship visible. First, educational, demographic, and ecological segregation existed between the two communities. Private academies that trained students to be well-versed in Confucian classics and prepared students for the civil examination were universally segregated in Wanzai. The ban on intermarriages between the two communities indicated the rigidity of the segregation. The Pengmin and the natives also monopolized separate territories, since the Pengmin were banned from residing or establishing private academies in the county seat. One typical sign of economic interdependence (i.e., migrants renting hills or mountains from the natives of a locale to plant hemp or indigo) was available in evidence from Wanzai. Instead, as Shi Runzhang’s poems show, Wanzai had no shortage of wasteland that had agricultural potential “There was nothing to do about the wasteland everywhere 滿眼蕪田奈爾何”, and the Pengmin established a formal economic relationship by renting undeveloped hills and mountains from the natives.⁶⁸ However, there is also evidence against economic interdependence in Shi’s poems. Hemp that the Pengmin produced in Wanzai, raw materials for clothing and an array of other products in pre-modern China, were not sold locally in the markets. The Pengmin found outside buyers to estimate the value of their hemp and reaped a considerable amount of profit from selling hemp 剝麻如山召估客, 一金坐致十擔黍, in a poverty-ridden county.⁶⁹ We do not know whether the two communities traded with each other at all or the extent of Pengmin presence in local markets, but there seemed to be only one indicator of economic interdependence between the Pengmin and the natives in Wanzai.

If the Native-Pengmin divide in Wanzai, Jiangxi fits relatively neatly into Barth’s framework, then there seems to be little need for the prefix “proto” in the term “proto-ethnic” that I use to describe the Pengmin. Other scholars who have worked on ethnicity in China have not hesitated to use the terms “ethnic” and “ethnicity” when studying a distinct social group created by migration. My concern with the terms “ethnic,” “ethnicity,” and “ethnic group” is that

purchased or adopted by Yao house-leaders and the non-Yao children would experience a change in membership after ritual assimilation. Changes in one’s ethnic identity could also be achieved via uxori-local marriages in the Yao case. See Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 22.

⁶⁸ See poem A in the Appendix.

⁶⁹ See poem B in the Appendix.

they do not have a perfect conceptual equivalent in China. An ethnic group is translated as “*zuqun* 族群” in Chinese, a concept that did not exist in Chinese literature until recently. A “*zuqun*” is certainly not a “nationality/*minzu* 民族,” the official term for an ethnic minority recognized by the Communist state. Therefore, I hope that the term “proto-ethnic” can capture the ephemeral nature of the Pengmin (since it did not survive as a recognized ethnic minority) and the potential of developing into an ethnic minority.

Furthermore, Leong’s translation of another poem “The Vagrants” by Shi Runzhang vividly showed the deterioration of the Native-Pengmin relationship and the economic “decoupling” over time: The Pengmin, who “accumulate cash from the land,” gradually “became arrogant,” “organized as a formidable force ready to aid one another,” “abscond with rent and humiliate the natives,” “killing oxen and burning houses,” and eventually became “an uncontrollable force” that was “impossible to expel.”⁷⁰ It is obvious that the initial economic relationship between the two communities deteriorated once the Pengmin refused to fulfill their obligations to pay rent for the previously undeveloped hills and mountains and began to show signs of ethnic solidarity within their community. “Killing oxen and burning houses [of the natives]” was telling evidence of growing inter-ethnic tension according to Shi Runzhang, a local official observed at the time.

In a bi-ethnic society like Wanzai, segregation was not state-sponsored and was enforced locally with the backing of county magistrates, who came and left, knowing that they would not reduce the level of inter-community hostility in Wanzai. I use the term “proto-ethnic” to describe the anthropological nature of the Pengmin as a community, and I argue that the making of a proto-ethnic group was an essentially localized process. The relationships between the natives and the migrants heavily depended on the size of each community as well as the extent of assimilation. Hostility was not the default mode of the native-migrant relationship. Even within Jiangxi province, Wanzai was an anomaly. Based on the limited size of the Pengmin population and the particularity of their ethnic consciousness, I will refer to the Pengmin in Wanzai as a “proto-ethnic” group, an “ethnic group” that did not *fully* satisfy the common anthropological definition of an ethnic group but had the potential of becoming one.

All of these made the civil examination an exceptionally interesting moment. The civil examination required students from both communities to take the examination in the same facility at the same time and be judged by the same panel of bureaucrats. This was probably the only occasion when both communities were on equal footing because both were “equal children of our dynasty” and paid taxes in accordance with the same tax code. However, were the Pengmin really different from the natives? Should the Pengmin be viewed as a socially distinct (proto-ethnic) group? Educational Commissioner Zhou Huang, Governor Tang Pin, and Educational Commissioner Li Junjian from Chapter 1 did not think so. They saw little evidence that could characterize the Pengmin as a proto-ethnic group and therefore perceived no issues with quotas sharing. It is possible that Governor-general Chen Dawen, who met with petitioner Xin Meichen to hear the grievances of the natives, realized the severity of the inter-ethnic tensions and saw the emergence of a proto-ethnic group. The most compelling evidence of

⁷⁰ Sow-Theng Leong, *Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese History: Hakkas, Pengmin, and Their Neighbors*, ed. Tim Wright (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 133.

Chen's stance came from his palace memorial: "...the second-ranked tribute student Xin Meichen and students Li Jingang, Wu Daoda, came to your humble servant one by one. They told your humble servant that *the natives and the Pengmin had long been separated*. Even if four additional slots are added without designating them Pengmin-only, the two communities would still not get along."⁷¹ Provincial officials, as representatives of the state, were probably engaging in the making of a proto-ethnic group without fully realizing it.

The civil examination became the main battleground where unambiguous ethnic boundaries surfaced. Quotas and the number of slots transformed the ethnic boundary into something numerical. The battles over the available slots at the county school constantly reinforced the ethnic boundary. The provincial officials and the throne became the setters of a quantitative ethnic boundary.

The natives and the elites among them would not stop until they achieved their goal: protecting their 12 educational slots from the encroachment of the migrants. Their discontent would be ignited when after following "due process" to escalate the issues to county magistrates and provincial governors and eventually to Beijing, the throne failed to deliver the justice they wanted. After two petitions, the Jiaqing emperor and his provincial officials still failed to protect *their* quotas, both old and new, from the Pengmin. With the implicit blessing of the county magistrate, who was probably not capable of stopping such a defiant act, several members of the native elite decided to organize a boycott against the civil examination. Within the native gentry, some argued against organizing a boycott, but those who were for the boycott had the final say.⁷² Xin Congyi, a presented scholar (*jinshi*, a holder of the highest degree) who was caring for his mother in Wanzai at the time, attempted to dissuade the naïve gentry but failed.⁷³ On one day in September 1805, no native students showed up at the scheduled county-level civil examination.

⁷¹ Lü Xiaoxian 吕小鲜, ed., "Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan" 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang'an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1994.1: 13.

⁷² Xie Hongwei 谢宏维, *He er bu tong: Qingdai ji minguo shiqi Jiangxi wanzaixian de yimin, tuzhu he guojia* 和而不同: 清代及民国时期江西万载县的移民, 土著与国家 [Harmonious but different: The Migrants, Natives, and the State in Wanzai County in Jiangxi during the Qing and the Republican periods], Post-doctoral Thesis, (Xiamen University, 2008), 86.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3: The Three Strikes Against the Civil Examination

Before the First Examination Strikes

A new duo of provincial officials, the governor of Jiangxi Qin Chengen and the new Educational Commissioner of Jiangxi Cao Zhenyong, took over the handling of the Pengmin quotas. In 1804 (the 9th year of the Jiaqing reign), Jiaqing emperor ordered the new duo to discuss the quota issue. Educational Commissioner Cao, who had been an Educational Commissioner twice, said in a palace memorial that he met with his predecessor Li Junjian who was leaving Jiangxi:

Your humble servant met your other humble servant Li Junjian during my journey to Jiangxi and we discussed the quota issue. Li Junjian told your humble servant that the natives and the Pengmin had been sharing the quotas for a long time. “If we separate the two populations and create new quotas for the Pengmin only, this arrangement will not be consistent with the policy in other counties within Jiangxi. The natives have always been humiliating the Pengmin. If we revise the established policy and add to the existing feuds between the two, I [Li Junjian] am afraid that the natives might escalate their conflicts with the Pengmin and humiliate them even more.” Your humble servant has been an Educational Commissioner three times and has supervised the civil examination twice, and [based on my experiences,] Li Junjian’s opinions seem to be valid.⁷⁴

臣於九月十日途次見臣李鈞簡，即論及此事。據云，萬載縣土著、棚民合考已久，今分籍考試，實與通省各州縣兩岐。素來土著即凌辱棚民，若考試復因其私衅，更張定例，恐將來愈加藉端凌辱，启衅更大。臣李鈞簡在任三載，經歲科兩考，似屬確有所見。

Three months later, Governor Qin and Educational Commissioner Cao submitted a palace memorial collectively. Their palace memorial followed the format that Chen Dawen and Li Jianjun used: articulating the history of the issue and then offering their proposal. First, they offered a positive portrait of the Pengmin community, which was crucial to the formulation of their policy. They saw the 1724 decision to create Pengmin ji as a decision to promote Pengmin assimilation, echoing former Educational Commissioner Li Junjian’s conclusion:

When our dynasty was first founded, the poor people in Fujian and Guangdong sojourned in Wanzai county, Jiangxi. They built sheds for a roof over their head and reclaimed mountainous land for agricultural use. The natives called them Pengmin (shed people). The Pengmin population has been expanding as well as the number of households. In the second year of the Yongzheng reign, the Pengmin began to be allowed to be registered where they sojourned. Those with a strong body and military skills, and those who were learners of the classics, were allowed to participate in the county-level civil examination. Subsequently, the Pengmin enjoyed the gracious blessing from the emperor. Many

⁷⁴ Lü Xiaoxian 呂小鮮, ed., “Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue’e fenzhengan” 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang’an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1994.1: 16-17.

learned the classics and purchased properties, and the Pengmin now look like the natives. Nowadays, The Pengmin's situations are very different from those from their shed days.⁷⁵

窃照我朝定鼎之初, 闽粤穷民流寓江西万载县境内, 搭棚棲息, 墾種山地, 土人呼為棚民. 滋生年久, 户口日增, 雍正二年, 始各就流寓地方, 編入冊籍, 其有膂力技勇及讀書向学者, 准其收考. 迨后涵濡圣化, 户习诗书, 置产立业, 儼同土著, 較之昔日棚棲情形迥異.

The duo dismissed the natives who argued that the schism between them and the Pengmin could be traced back to a major rebellion led by Wu Sangui during the Kangxi reign. The natives claimed that the Pengmin cooperated with the rebels and attempted to take the county seat, and the two officials refuted by pointing out the remote temporality of the rebellion and citing Kangxi emperor's leniency. "The descendants of the Pengmin rebels cannot be tracked down anymore... If the court could treat all subjects equally, the little natives should respect and follow the court's decision. How come the rebellion is being used as an excuse more than a century later in only one county [Wanzai]?" 要之现在棚籍的系何人, 子孙皆已无从追溯. 夫朝廷既已一视同仁, 无所区别, 土著小民自应敬谨遵守, 何独万载一县于百余年后, 藉为口实, 致生嫌衅.⁷⁶

Li Junjian, Qin Chengen, and Cao Zhenyong all appeared to be dismissing and minimizing the divide between the two communities. Cao, a man who was famed for advancing his career by avoiding disagreements with his fellow bureaucrats, chose to agree with Li Junjian while framing the decision in a way that acknowledge Chen Dawen's rationale. However, all three severely underestimated the degree of tension between the two communities. Despite Qin and Cao's dismissal, the Revolt of the Three Feudatories, led by Wu Sangui, and its connection to the Pengmin in Jiangxi was significant enough to be recorded in multiple gazetteers. Liang Hongsheng's work has shown that the Pengmin in Yuanzhou prefecture who cooperated with the rebels were evicted by the military and deported back to their native places (驅棚) during and after the rebellion.⁷⁷ The hostility of the Wanzai natives towards the growing Pengmin community was apparently deeply rooted in their historical memories.

Qin Chengen and Cao Zhenyong acknowledged the debates between former Governor-General Chen Dawen and former Educational Commissioner Li Junjian, as well as the natives' main complaint:

[Former] Governor-General Chen Dawen opined that the original total quotas for both the Pengmin and the natives were 16. When combining the types of quotas, the 4 Pengmin quotas were eliminated. The consequence is that admitting one Pengmin student into the county school means that the natives lose one spot. In the 6th and 7th years of the Jiaqing reign (1801 and 1802, three to four years before the submission of this palace memorial), the county school admitted as many as 5 to 7 Pengmin students, which was half of the

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ See Liang Hongsheng 梁洪生, "Chongping qupeng—jianlun yunyong difangxing shiliao dui Qingshi yanjiu de tantao" 重评驱棚—兼论运用地方性史料对清史研究的检讨 [Re-evaluating the "Eviction of the Pengmin"—A discussion on investigating the history of Qing using local historical evidence], *Shehui kexue* 社會科學 [Social Sciences] 5 (2013): 155-163.

natives' original quotas. It is reasonable for the natives to complain about the unfairness. We implore that your majesty follows your humble servant Chen's proposal and grants the Pengmin 4 spots in the county school to resume the balance and avoid taking up too many spots for the natives. It will also show the fairness of your majesty.⁷⁸

督臣陳大文因土棚學額本共十六名，從前歸併考取之時，裁去棚額四名，以致棚童入學一名，即佔土著一名之額。嘉慶六、七兩年取進棚童多至五、七名，佔去土額之半，土童未免偏枯，實屬公正之論。應請仍如督臣原議，仰懇聖恩，賞還棚童原額四名，免佔土額，以昭平允。

Despite agreeing with Chen Dawen on the issue of fairness, the new duo recommended Li Junjian's proposal. They also suggested that the local officials and local gentry should educate the natives not to dwell on the past. "We still recommend that 4 additional quotas to be added to the original 12 quotas. All quotas will be open to the entire county and no reserve for neither the natives nor the Pengmin. They will take the civil examination in the same facility, and they will be admitted solely based on the quality of their essays" 將原額十二名，加額四名，合為萬載縣學額，不分土籍，棚籍，同場考試，憑文進取。⁷⁹ One additional quota for military apprentice would also be granted. Like Educational Commissioner Li Jujian, the duo apparently did not see the Pengmin as a proto-ethnic group and failed to acknowledge the inter-ethnic tensions in Wanzai.

Jiaqing emperor forwarded the palace memorial to the Ministry of Rites for further discussion. It is apparent that the proposal, advocated by Li Junjian, Qin Chengen, and Cao Zhenyong, was adopted based on subsequent memorials. Jiaqing emperor and the Ministry of Rites also ordered Governor Qin to visit Wanzai county and audit the population registry of the Pengmin (棚民煙戶冊) in April, and the audit was completed in August.⁸⁰ The case was officially closed, and the natives in Wanzai would not have all 12 quotas protected from the Pengmin.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Lü Xiaoxian 呂小鮮, ed., "Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan" 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang'an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 16-17.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ It is worth pointing out that Xun Chengen was a governor, not a governor-general whose jurisdiction would include both Jiangxi and Jiangnan (present-day Jiangsu and Anhui). The new governor-general Tie Bao, a famed Manchu calligrapher who would become Chen Dawen's successor, would be involved later when the situation in Wanzai took an eventful turn.

The First Suspension of the Civil Examination and The Quest to Identify the Masterminds

In the fall of 1805 (the 10th year of the Jiaqing reign), the civil examinations, both the prefectural and the county levels, were underway in Jiangxi. In July, Educational Commissioner Cao Zhenyong departed from the provincial capital Nanchang and began to travel county by county to supervise the prefecture-level civil examinations. In Fuzhou prefecture, two exam participants were found to be impersonating others. One impostor in Ganzhou prefecture was also caught. According to a palace memorial from Educational Commissioner Cao, “All other exam facilities were orderly and quiet” 其餘各守場極為安靜.⁸² Wanzai’s county-level civil examination was scheduled to be carried out in September.

However, just before he visited Yuanzhou prefecture, where Wanzai county was located, stunning news came. Cao said in a palace memorial, “When the magistrate of Wanzai county hung the sign of county-level civil examination [to notify the exam participants] in September, no native students attended the examination. They were obviously attempting to force our hands and overturn our previous verdict” 至九月萬載縣知縣懸牌縣考，該土童竟不赴考，顯系有心挾制翻案。⁸³

The duo understood the gravity of the situation in Wanzai and knew that the best course of action was to follow the playbook written by the Yongzheng emperor. They initiated an investigation immediately and recommended a suspension of the civil examination in Wanzai County, which was approved by the Jiaqing emperor.

The playbook that the Yongzheng emperor wrote can be traced back to 1734 when he issued a stern warning against the literati who dared to boycott the civil examination.⁸⁴ The Yongzheng emperor said, as the first among the four people 四民, the literati were supposed to be learned and reasonable and were expected to follow the law. The state set up the civil examination in order to better treat the literati and promote social mobility, and now the students failed to show their gratefulness to the state. The literati, who acted like street gangsters (市井無賴), threaten to boycott civil examinations to force the hands of the officials 借罷考為脅制官長 due to their own dissatisfaction with local officials, whose cowardness and desires to avoid troubles means no severe punishment for exam boycotters. “[If a boycott occurs,] the civil examination in the locale will be fully and immediately suspended. There is no shortage of talents under heaven. Why would we need people who are so flippant and arrogant?” 亦即全停考試，天下人才眾多，何須此浮薄乖張之輩。Even for those who have legitimate complaints against local bureaucrats who illegally humiliated the literati 不公不法凌辱士子, they should follow due process by complaining

⁸² Lü Xiaoxian 呂小鮮, ed., “Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue’e fenzhengan” 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang’an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 19.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉, Yinxiang 胤祥 eds., *Yongzheng shangyu* 雍正上諭 [Imperial Edicts of the Yongzheng emperor], 1734, the 9th month, the 16th day (雍正十二年九月十六日).

to the superiors of their local officials rather than organizing a boycott against the civil examination.⁸⁵

Another important background of handing out severe punishments to the literati, including both the degree holders and non-degree holders, was literary inquisition, which criminalized any writers whose writings were deemed subversive. Literary inquisition was by no means unique to the Qing dynasty, but the degree of the mania during the Qing period was stunning. Poems with no political references were deliberately misinterpreted by the emperor and his confidants as evidence of treason or subversion. The reigns of Yongzheng and Qianlong were the high point of the literary inquisition during the Qing dynasty. For example, Hu Zhongzao (1712-1755), a governor of Gansu during the Qianlong reign, was executed for literary crimes after his political patron Ortai's death. Since Hu was from Jiangxi, Grand Secretariats argued that the handling of the Hu case required suspending all levels of civil examination in Jiangxi in order to serve as a warning to the literati in Jiangxi, where "both the literati and the ordinary people have long been flippant and arrogant"江西士習民風浮薄囂凌, 已非一日. The Qianlong emperor ultimately decided against the suspension because, in the words of another governor who was from Jiangxi, the emperor "did not want to let a rebel Hu Zhongzao be the obstacle to the upward mobility of the literati in the entire Jiangxi province"不忍因逆犯胡中藻一人而阻通省士子上進之階.⁸⁶ Although the mania of literary inquisition died with the Qianlong emperor and few cases like Hu Zhongzao occurred during the Jiaqing reign and in late Qing in general, the literati in Jiangxi and elsewhere were in no position to negotiate with a pre-modern Chinese state, albeit one on the cusp of becoming modern, not to mention staging a boycott against the civil examination.

The native students in Wanzai were not humiliated. Their opinions were collected and evaluated in palace memorials. Governor Qin and Educational Commissioner Cao were determined to contain the fallout by identifying and prosecuting the leaders of the boycotts. They soon found their targets.

Long Yuanheng's Confession in 1806

Long Yuanheng, a native student from Wanzai, brought the complaint over Pengmin quotas to the Censorate in Beijing. Similar to Xin Meichen's demands, Long petitioned in Beijing for separating the Pengmin from the natives and creating Pengmin quotas in order to "avoid cheatings 土棚不分, 易滋槍冒", which was the exact reason behind the four-month effort to clean up the Pengmin population registry.

Auditing the Pengmin populace registry was a response to Xin Meichen's complaint of rampant Pengmin-related cheating, and the second petition filed by Long cast their efforts in a bad light. The natives did not seem to have faith in Qin and Cao's efforts since Long went to Beijing before the audit was even completed. Qin and Cao insisted that carrying out an audit of

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Beiping Gugong bowuyuan wenxianguan 北平故宮博物院文獻館 [The Institute of Historiography at the Palace Museum in Beijing], *Qingdai Wenziyu dangdi yi juan* 清代文字獄檔卷一 [A collection of documents related to literary inquisition during Qing dynasty, Vol.1] (Beijing: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 1932), 23.

the population registry was not an easy task. It involved more than 10,000 Pengmin households residing in Wanzai, who migrated from several different provinces. Some Pengmin left Wanzai to study or to do business without settling down in Wanzai. The entire process, Cao and Qin argued, took time. But once the audit was completed, the possibility of Pengmin cheating was drastically reduced and the native students should have no more excuses. Yet the natives were still using the same excuses, according to Qin and Cao:

The students insisted that they dared not to boycott the civil examination. They claimed that it was because the Pengmin population registry still included people who were not Wanzai residents, and the Pengmin would continue to take up more quotas than they should. So the natives chose not to attend the examination.

惟现讯该生童等坚称，并非敢于罢考，实因棚籍烟册尚有影射冒混，将来必多占额，是以未考。

After the audit, the students in this county dared to use the same excuses and refused to attend the civil examination. They intentionally defied the imperial edict, and they should be severely punished in accordance with the precedence. These thugs then will have nothing else to complain.⁸⁷

此次复查之后，该邑童生复敢借词支饰，抗不赴考，则是故违谕旨，自外生成，即照罢考例严行治罪，刁徒亦无可置喙矣。

Governor Qin and Educational Commissioner Cao were frustrated. Long's ignorance of Cao and Qin's efforts made him not just an annoying nuisance but also a criminal. After Long filed a complaint with the Nine Gates Infantry Commander (提督衙门)⁸⁸, another institution that could accept complaints from petitioners who traveled to Beijing, the Jiaqing emperor and the Ministry of Rites referred the case to Qin and Cao. Qin and Cao then summoned the former prefectural magistrate who managed Wanzai County and two provincial commissioners to jointly interrogate Long. In Long's testimony, he sought to downplay the nature of the boycott that occurred one year ago. Long implied that it was not really a "boycott." It was more of a "waiting game." Long went on to explain, "During last year's county-level and prefecture-level civil examinations, we native students had yet received the imperial edict [that decided against granting separate Pengmin quotas], so we hesitated and decided to wait and see what other people would do" 我们万载县上年春间县府考试时，因复奏合考章程，尚未奉到谕旨，俱观望不前。⁸⁹

Long also admitted that Sun Xinzu, a former county magistrate, who was from Wanzai but had served in Fujian before retiring, was the mastermind behind the boycott. His testimony

⁸⁷ Lü Xiaoxian 吕小鲜, ed., "Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan" 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang'an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 18-19.

⁸⁸ The Nine Gates Infantry's (九门提督) core duty was guarding the capital and the Forbidden City, where the throne resided. The name "Nine Gates" came from the nine checkpoints of the inner city (內城). See Chapter 2.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

included an important detail: those who were behind the boycott might have also tried to enrich themselves in the process:

The former county magistrate Sun Mingjian (a.k.a. Sun Xinzu), and government students Bao Menggao, Guo Ziqiang (a.k.a. Guo Yuanmen), were the ones who arranged my petition trip to Beijing to request separate Pengmin quotas. My travel expenses were provided by Bao Menggao. As for whether they had enriched themselves illegally in the process, I have no idea.⁹⁰

有勒休知县孙明荐即孙馨祖，生员鲍梦篙，郭自强即郭垣们，主使我上京告状，仍求分考。所有上京盘费是鲍梦篙付给，他们有无敛钱，实不知道。

The vernacular nature of Long's testimony, in contrast with the formality of classical Chinese that dominated this collection of palace memorials, was a sign of authenticity. Here, Sun revealed an alleged crime that the masterminds behind the boycott were accused of: "enriching themselves illegally by receiving money from other people" 敛钱. Unfortunately, the exact nature of the crime was not detailed in subsequent palace memorials. But given that Long's travel expenses were paid for by one of the masterminds, who was a low-level degree holder and presumably a member of the scholar-gentry class, the masterminds probably elicited donations from their fellow natives to support their cause.

Governor Qin, who was seemingly furious, decided to personally test Long's scholastic aptitude. If Long dared to petition on behalf of the native students in Wanzai, his essay "must be excellent." Long did not perform well in front of the governor. His answer to a question from *Mencius*, as Governor Qin documented in a palace memorial, was deemed "laughable" by the Jiaqing emperor, who wrote down his comment in vermilion ink on the palace memorial. Long was placed under arrest and was returned to Wanzai in custody.

Governor Qin and Educational Commissioner Cao's response to the boycott was consistent with the imperial edict from the Yongzheng emperor. They concluded that "these disobedient native students in this county conspired collectively, thinking that they could freely manipulate our imperial system. This type of behavior must stop" 則是該邑不安本分之生童互相勾結，竟欲將朝廷制度操縱自由，此風尤不可長。The Jiaqing emperor wrote approvingly next to Qin and Cao's conclusion, "Exactly" 甚是.⁹¹

A Public Apology, in Public, by the Public

The news of the arrests and the first suspension of the civil examination were indicators of the gravity of the situation that students in Wanzai understood, regardless of their identities or allegiance. The people in Wanzai thought that the examination would not be held until both sides

⁹⁰ Lü Xiaoxian 呂小鮮, ed., "Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan" 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang'an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 20.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 22.

controlled the damages by showing their repentance. The gentry from both sides immediately took action, according to Educational Commissioner Cao:

The gentry led the students from their communities to come to the office of the county magistrate to petition. They were on their knees, imploring that the civil examination be resumed. The prefectural and county officials observed the situation and concluded that those were obedient students of letters. The gentry and the students appreciated the importance of law, and their words were the sincerest ones. The officials also reported the names of more than 1,400 students from both the native community and the Pengmin community who appeared at the petition.

該邑紳士紛紛率領生童，環跪籲求允准考試。察看情形，實皆安分讀書之人，感恩畏法，情詞極為真切。並據開報土棚二籍童生共計一千四百餘人姓名，請示前來。⁹²

The public apology, staged by the local gentry, worked as well as they could expect. The natives also decided to show their appreciation for the four-month-long audit of the Pengmin populace registry, which they previously thought was ineffective and borderline futile, claiming that they were now fully convinced of the accuracy of the new registry. They claimed that they now understood that Pengmin-related cheating activities, such as hiring an impostor to take the civil examination or taking the civil examination in Wanzai without establishing residency, would be eliminated after the new registry was put to use.⁹³

In the same palace memorial from 1806 (the 11th year of the Jiaqing reign), Educational Commissioner Cao reported that the new Governor of Jiangxi Wen Chenghui investigated the boycott and concluded that Sun Xinzu, a former county magistrate, who was from Wanzai but had served in Fujian before retiring, was one of the masterminds behind the boycott. Governor Wen, who secretly conducted an investigation in Wanzai in 1806, found that some students wanted to participate in the civil examination when Sun was organizing the first boycott, including two members of the Xin lineages. However, Sun's accomplices slammed them and threatened to stop them from teaching their students. According to Governor Wen's palace memorial from 1806:

After the new governor Wen Chenghui took office, he and your humble servant Xianfu re-investigated why the students in this county [Wanzai] were hesitating to sign up for the civil examination. They found that the retired magistrate Sun Xinzu, shengyuan Bao Menggao, Guo Ziqiang and others were inflaming [the sentiments in Wanzai] and trying to block [students who wanted to take the civil examination from doing so]. They capitalized on this opportunity to enrich themselves. If there are people who do not agree with them, they slam the dissents publicly and forbid them from accepting and teaching students, which led to students' reservations and unwillingness to sign up for the civil examination.

⁹² Ibid, 19.

⁹³ Ibid, 19.

嗣抚臣温承惠到任后,与奴才先福复加体察该邑生童观望不即报考缘由,访有勒休知县孙馨祖,生员鲍梦篙、郭自强等煽惑阻挠,藉端敛钱肥己,有不附和者,即聚众斥辱,不许授徒教读,以致各怀疑阻,不即报考。⁹⁴

The result of Governor Wen's investigation was corroborated by the testimony of Long Yuanheng, the second petitioner who went to Beijing. Since the former magistrate Sun Xinzu and his accomplices were en route to Beijing after conspiring with Xin Meichen to petition for a second time, Governor Wen requested the commander of the Nine Gate Infirmary and the prefect of the Shuntian prefecture to arrest Sun and his accomplices and return them to Jiangxi for investigation.⁹⁵

In the summer of 1806 (the 11th year of the Jiaqing reign), Educational Commissioner Li reported that the county-level civil examination was carried out normally in Wanzai, one year after the initial boycott in the summer of 1805. According to a palace memorial from Educational Commissioner Cao, "All other exam facilities were orderly and quiet" 其餘各守場極為安靜。⁹⁶ Most importantly, 12 native students and 4 Pengmin students were admitted into the county school this year. The result was certainly not a coincidence. Although the Qing court did not formally reinstate the "12 native students + 4 Pengmin students" arrangement, the newly admitted 12 native students and 4 Pengmin students symbolized a *de facto* return of the 1731 decision. As soon as former county magistrate Sun Xinzu and his accomplices were arrested, all should be well. However, the public pleading for the resumption of the civil examination in Wanzai turned out to be only a show, and no officials seemed to expect a second boycott to come.

The Second Strike

In the second month of the 12th year of the Jiaqing reign (1807), a new county-level civil examination was scheduled to take place. It might have felt like a replay of Summer 1805 for the county magistrate, the prefect, and the provincial officials: a boycott against the civil examination happened again in Wanzai. The second boycott brought a set of new questions. Why would the native students go on strike again after experiencing the gravity of the situation firsthand merely two years ago? Were they not satisfied by the *de facto* return of the "12 native students + 4 Pengmin students" configuration? Were they worried that the Pengmin could encroach on their slots again? The most intriguing question then becomes: if Sun Xinzu and the other alleged masterminds behind the first boycott all went to Beijing, who organized the second boycott?

Unfortunately, those questions might forever remain unanswerable. Details of the second boycott were scant, and we do not know whether only the native students participated in the boycott. In the collection of palace memorials that this thesis relies on, A large information gap existed between Long Yuanheng's 1806 confession and the second boycott in Wanzai early 1807. It is possible that the native students were emboldened to stage the second strike after seeing only a few members of the native elite were arrested and none seemed to be punished severely. However, one detail from *A Conspectus of Judicial Cases* (刑案匯覽) and a palace

⁹⁴ Ibid, 19.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 20.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 19.

memorial from Governor-general Tie Bao implies that Sun Xinzu might have led the second strike without being physically present in Wanzai. According to *A Conspectus of Judicial Cases*:

Sun Xinzu is a degree holder and was a county magistrate. He dared to plot a boycott because he discussed the matter with Tang Hui, hoping that they could use the strike to force a return of the Pengmin quotas. Sun also collected money to travel outside of Wanzai and plot the boycott in secret. He was indeed completely ignoring the laws. He also wrote an encrypted message that he gave to Zhou Juxian to relay to the *tongshengs* [in Wanzai]: The poison has penetrated [the bones]. The doctors in the provincial capital still insist on the old treatment plan [that does not work]. If [one] does not take the medicine, the wound will soon recover. The meaning of the encrypted message was that an examination strike could naturally lead to a separation of educational quotas. Sun was no doubt the main mastermind of the strike.⁹⁷

孫馨祖身列科名，曾任知縣，乃因唐暉向其商議，輒敢主使罷考，以圖挾制分額。復斂取盤費，潛逃境外，暗中主謀，殊屬目無法紀。其編寫“惡毒已穿，省醫猶執陳方，只不服藥，自可收口”隱語給周鉅先寄回轉付童生閱看，隱寓罷考自能份額之意。其為主謀為首無疑。

The tale of Sun's secret message was also documented in a palace memorial from Governor-general Tie Bao.⁹⁸ A public notice of denunciation, written with presumably threatening language and posted by the prefect of the Yuanzhou prefecture following the second boycott, caused panic among the residents of Wanzai. One account from the alleged leader of the boycott recalled the situation with exaggeration: “Hundreds of thousands of residents who were living in harmony [in Wanzai] were petrified. They left town and went on a run [to avoid possible punishments]” 使數十萬安居樂業之人，驚怖逃散，道路流離之狀。⁹⁹ Although the Pengmin were not to be blamed for the suspension of the civil examination, the prefecture magistrate threatened to send in the military in the post, followed by a metaphor for “indiscriminate destruction” 玉石俱焚, according to the confession of the county magistrate Zhou Jishi.¹⁰⁰

Long's confession was already credible enough for the Jiaqing emperor to authorize an arrest warrant for Sun Xinzu, who was hiding in Wanzai and later left for Hubei. When he realized that officials in Hubei were also searching for him after the second boycott occurred in Wanzai, he took the last gambit in his life. He went to Beijing to petition for reinstating the Pengmin quotas in 1805.¹⁰¹ This time, he was going to Beijing to ask the throne to be the judge of his alleged crimes.

⁹⁷ Zhu Qingqi 祝庆祺, Bao Shuyun 鲍书芸 eds., *Xing'an huilan sanbian* 刑案汇览三编 [A Conspectus of Judicial Cases] (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 2004): 406-409.

⁹⁸ *Wanzai Xianzhi* 道光萬載縣誌 (Gazetteer of Wanzai from Daoguang reign, 1848), Vol.7, 19.

⁹⁹ Lü Xiaoxian 呂小鮮, ed., “Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan” 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang'an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 21-22.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 21-22.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 21-22.

Determining the Total Number of Examination Strikes

One detail in the textual evidence that has been overlooked in prior literature is that the very first “refusal” to participate in the civil examination occurred in the second month of the 10th year of the Jiaqing reign (1805), seven months before the first official examination strike in the same year and two months before the beginning of the audit. Governor Qin and Educational Commissioner Cao first defined this strike in early 1805 as an examination strike. However, they revised their conclusion after discussions and decided that the strike in early 1805 was justified. In a palace memorial, they mentioned how the nature of the first strike was re-determined in light of new information:

[An examination-related incident occurred] in the second month of the current year [the 10th year of the Jiaqing reign, 1805]. After discussions, we humble servants concluded that the reason behind the *tongshengs*’ refusal to participate in the civil examination in this county [Wanzai] was that [the quota situation was still in limbo and] they were waiting for the imperial edict that could decide whether the quotas would be separated. Their decision to wait for the imperial edict was not necessarily illegal.¹⁰²

本年正二月间, 万载土棚考试一案, 甫经臣等会议具奏, 应分应合未经奉到谕旨, 该邑童生不愿赴考, 系属候旨遵行, 尚无不合.

After the second strike in the 9th month of Jiaqing 10th year, Governor Qin and Educational Commissioner Cao decided that only a more complete audit of the Pengmin registry that would include those who were not physically in Wanzai could convince the native students. Therefore, they recommended that a second audit and a suspension of the civil examination should be carried out simultaneously. Long Yuanheng was already arrested, and other low-level degree holders involved in the second strike would lose their degrees as well.

In the same memorial from 1805, Governor Qin and Educational Commissioner Cao made it clear that once the veracity of the Pengmin registry was verified, those who would organize the next strike (the third one) would pay a heavy price:

After this audit [of the Pengmin registry], if the *tongshengs* in this county dare to come up with excuses to refuse to attend the civil examination, they will be deliberately violating the imperial edit and should be prosecuted in accordance with the rule for punishing participants of an examination strike. The criminals among them will have nothing to say then.¹⁰³

此次復查之後, 該邑童生復敢借詞支飾, 抗不赴考, 則是故違諭旨, 自外生成, 即照罷考例嚴行治罪, 刁徒亦無可喙矣.

After a seemingly normal year, the third boycott in 1807 was unambiguously defined as an examination strike in official communication and certainly brought attention to the Wanzai quota case again, forcing local officials to ramp up the pressure and search for Sun, who was the

¹⁰² Ibid, 18.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 18.

prime suspect in organizing the second boycott. Therefore, three collective actions occurred in Wanzai, two in 1805 and one in 1807. The first strike was not defined as an examination strike, while the other two were.

If we count the boycott in early 1805 as a boycott (Governor Qin and Commissioner Cao did not), the timeline of major events changes.

1805 (the 10th year of the Jiaqing Reign)

The 2nd month --- First Boycott

The 4th month -----Imperial edict arrived. Added four undesignated slots without recreating the Pengmin category (16 slots at the county school in total). Ordered an audit of the Pengmin registry.

The 8th month -----The first audit was completed.

The 9th month ----- Second Boycott. The native students claimed that the audit was ineffective. Governor Qin and Educational Commissioner requested the first suspension of the civil examination in Wanzai and a second, more extensive audit. Long Yuanheng confessed and accused Sun Xinzuo of staging the second boycott.

Between the 9th month of Jiaqing 10th year (1805) and the 4th month of Jiaqing 11th year (1806)--
-public apology in Wanzai

1806 (the 11th year of the Jiaqing Reign)

The 6th month ----the county-level civil examination was resumed. The “12 native students + 4 Pengmin students” arrangement returned in practice.

1807 (the 12th year of the Jiaqing Reign)

The 2nd month ----Third Boycott.

Chapter 4: Compromises Came at a High Price

Wanzai natives' two strikes against the civil examination were a rare and highly unusual event. One such strike was sufficient ground for a swift execution of the strike leaders in Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns. Yet the sluggishness of the state's response, such as not arresting Sun Xinzhu in a timely manner, led to the second examination strike. As a negotiation tactic that only the literati and members of the local gentry could employ, examination boycotts were largely tolerated during the Kangxi reign, but imperial leniency did not last. Yongzheng emperor and Qianlong emperors relentlessly prosecuted such boycotts, and the leaders of examination boycotts, like those who organized market closure to pressure the government (罷市), were often decapitated. Since the Jiaqing reign, imperial clemency the leaders of examination strikes were often exiled to Xinjiang, the second-most severe punishment in the Qing's legal code.

By refusing to participate in the civil examination, the nature of the Wanzai natives' discontent fundamentally changed. The scope of the problem expanded far beyond debates over migrant policies and management of the native-migrant relationship into dangerous territory. In the view of the emperor and his provincial mandarins, the Wanzai natives, especially the native elite, were now openly showing contempt for the imperial authority and the state apparatus that delivered its verdict on the issue of educational quotas after debates and contemplation. The matter was now a judicial one that required provincial bureaucrats and the Ministry of Justice to respond and defend the authority of the state in accordance with the Qing legal code. Wu Jen-shu has argued that patterns of collective action, which he uses to analyze worker strikes and local mass protests in Ming and Qing China, provide a theoretical framework for understanding examination-related strikes. Wu has analyzed 458 strikes and mass protests in Ming and Qing China, including 21 examination-related events that occurred after only students from wealthy families or children from the scholar-gentry class were admitted into local county/prefectural schools.¹⁰⁴ Protests could also erupt over identifying impostors who were hired to take the civil examination, or who were not registered residents of the prefecture or county where they took the civil examination.¹⁰⁵ Examination-related protests could be organized in public spaces such as a Confucian temple, and protests often occurred after the examination ended, when the examiners could be attacked by angry students.¹⁰⁶

However, the Wanzai case shows the heterogeneity of such events. No evidence suggests that the strike was organized in a public space, a common feature of the examination-related violence that Wu Jen-shu has shown. It was not a spontaneous action of the masses, another common feature of such events, since palace memorials confirm that the strike was organized and premeditated with the backing of members of the local elite, including a retired county magistrate who had served outside of Jiangxi province. The resistance in Wanzai was also not a

¹⁰⁴ Wu Jen-shu 巫仁恕, *Ji bian liangmin: Chuantong zhongguo chengshi qunzong jiti xingdong zhi fenxi* 激变良民: 传统中国城市群众集体行动之分析 [Good Citizens Turning Rebel: Analyses of Urban Mass Collective Actions in Traditional China] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011), 59.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 308-312.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 308-312.

type of the “examination riot” that Benjamin Elman briefly mentioned in his classic study of the history of the civil examination in China between the 14th century and the 19th century, since the protest in Wanzai was categorically non-violent.¹⁰⁷ In contrast to examination riots that erupted after accusations of unjust grading or a sudden decrease in educational quotas, no evidence suggests that violence against the magistrate or the Pengmin ever occurred. The native students simply refused to show up when the civil examination took place.

The question becomes what it means to organize and participate in a boycott against the civil examination in Qing China. Few research on the local boycotts against civil examinations has been published. As a negotiation tactic, strikes against the civil examination were rarely effective in Qing China. The state rarely relented, and the strike leaders often faced grave consequences. Then why would anyone, especially the literati, engage in such a defiant action? It is possible that the literati overestimated their privileges and the state’s tolerance for defiance. Yet, given its nature as civil disobedience, the strikes against the civil examination did not seem to merit the punishment for rebels who attempted to subvert the dynastic regime. It is possible that the nature of such strikes, only made possible by the backing and organizing of local elites, was precisely seen as equally subversive as full-fledged rebellions in nature by the state.

Boycotting against the civil examination was a felony that was listed in the Qing legal code, and the masterminds must be identified and prosecuted. However, a boycott, as a collective action, was also inherently a collective crime. The state could not dictate punishments for all of the students involved in a collective crime, as a Chinese adage 法不責眾 suggested, and the resumption of the civil examination implicitly demanded another collective action. With the redemption of the public on display, the tone of the provincial officials softened immediately and requested permission from the Jiaqing emperor to resume the county-level examination. Educational Commissioner Li even indirectly asked the Qing court to reconsider its decision of not separating the educational quotas. Those who manipulated the crowd must be punished, Li said, but the majority of the students in Wanzai were “law-abiding” and the boycott should not cost their future. The issue of educational quotas in Wanzai needed to be discussed properly to ensure that “both sides were satisfied and no more petitions would follow” 總期兩俱悅服，永杜訟端。¹⁰⁸

Criminalizing the Leaders of the Collective Action

Sun Xinzū, the now-disgraced former magistrate of Ou’ning county in Fujian, understood the system better than most. He decided to present his case directly to those who could decide his fate in Beijing. In late 1807, two years after the boycott against the civil examination in Wanzai, Sun turned himself in Beijing to “redress an injustice” 申冤. Sun, a 66-year-old defendant, was assigned to be interrogated by a Grand Secretariat in charge of criminal justice. The record of his

¹⁰⁷ Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: the University of California Press, 2000), xxxii.

¹⁰⁸ Lü Xiaoxian 呂小鮮, ed., “Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue’e fenzhengan” 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang’an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 19.

testimony survived, which offered us a rare opportunity to hear the voice of the key actor, whose crime warranted execution, without filters or distortions. His damning testimony was accompanied by the conclusion from the Grand Secretariat who saw no truth in it.

Sun first claimed that he was “utterly unaware of the petitions by Xin Meichen and Long Yuanheng” 辛梅臣, 龍元亨上控, 我委不知情. He accused Long Yuanheng, who claimed that Sun was the mastermind behind the boycott when being interrogated in Jiangxi, of perjury. Sun’s testimony portrayed the provincial officials as corrupt bureaucrats whose goals were to protect each other at all costs, including falsifying testimonies and illegal interrogation. In Sun’s own words:

I turned myself in in Beijing to directly present my side of the story, which hopefully can make it to the top and clear my name without my testimony being distorted by officials who protected each other.¹⁰⁹

致訟原委, 懇乞轉奏, 提京質審, 以免官官相護, 改供抽卷, 以申冤枉事.

Sun was also dismissive of the efforts to audit the Pengmin populace registry. He said that the Pengmin populace registry had been revised five times under former Governor Qin and other former county magistrates over the years, but “Pengmin-related cheating failed to subside 冒混如故.” Sun did not pretend to be persuaded as the people back in Wanzai did. After listing a number of irregularities that reflected the incompetence of the local and provincial officials and even a possible conspiracy of deliberately failing to curb Pengmin-related cheating, Sun presented the most damning accusation among all: the former Educational Commissioner Li Junjian allegedly manipulated the ranking of the civil examination participants in Wanzai to favor the Pengmin:

When Former Educational Commissioner Li Junjian supervised a county-level civil examination, he re-ranked a Pengmin student Lan Guangzao, who originally ranked 9th in the first class, to 4th in the first class when releasing the result. Re-ranking a student to make his rank higher than what his performance warrants is not a way to ensure fairness and eliminate issues. The native students are not convinced, and the Pengmin students have become even more audacious.¹¹⁰

前學政李鈞簡科試, 將考列一等第九名棚民藍光藻, 於發紅案時改撥第四名補廩, 挽越原考名次之前, 實非剔弊持公之道, 以此士心不服, 而棚民益復無所顧忌.

Most importantly, Sun maintained that he was not physically present in Wanzai when both boycotts occurred. He claimed that he was in Beijing in late 1805, and he was “traveling” in Hubei in 1807 when the second boycott occurred. We do not have other sources that could corroborate Sun’s whereabouts, but Sun was determined to maintain his innocence.¹¹¹ He

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 20-21.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 20-21.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 20.

insisted that hostels and temples in Shandong and Hubei that he stayed at or visited could prove his alibi.¹¹²

Sun's testimony ended with a pleading to the throne. He claimed that he wanted to return to Wanzai from Hubei, where he was "traveling" (and therefore not hiding), to turn himself in and clear his name. However, he was "afraid that Governor Jin was already accusing me of being the ultimate mastermind behind the boycott and the illegal enrichment." Governor Jin, Sun said, would maintain the original accusations against Sun himself and would not "rectify the injustice" 昭雪. Only the Jiaqing emperor, as wise as "the sun and the heaven", would not allow any of his subjects to suffer from injustice, which was why Sun embarked on a 3-month-long journey to the Censorate in Beijing to turn himself in.

Sun's gambit failed as the officials in Beijing upheld the same charges. Grand Secretariat Dong Hao, who was assigned by the Jiaqing emperor to investigate Sun's case, found Sun's testimony inconsistent with the memorials from the provincial officials in Jiangxi. At this point, Sun was accused by the provincial officials of both enriching himself illegally via the first boycott and attempting to prevent others from participating in the civil examination in Wanzai. Judging from the brevity of his comment, Grand Secretariat Dong Hao probably did not do any investigation besides memorializing Sun's testimony and transferring him to the provincial prison in Jiangxi. In an imperial edict, the Jiaqing emperor called Sun a "conniving" criminal whose punishment should be enhanced, given that Sun was a retired county magistrate, a former enforcer of the law, and an absconding fugitive.¹¹³ The Ministry of Justice planned to sentence Sun to death, following the precedents of punishing the leaders of a boycott against the civil examination that was established during the Yongzheng reign.¹¹⁴ Sun was living on borrowed time, but his fate was yet to be sealed. The Ministry of Personnel received the inter-ministry communication regarding the Sun case, and surprisingly, someone at the Ministry of Personnel argued for leniency. Since Sun had voluntarily surrendered, he should be exiled for three thousand miles after being flogged one hundred times (one class below the capital punishment), in accordance with the legal principle of downgrading the punishment of criminals by one level

¹¹² Ibid, 22.

¹¹³ See "Libu wei chaxun zhukao yi an qing jiang lexiu zhixian geshen" 吏部為查訊阻考一案請將勒休知縣革審 (The Ministry of Personnel's investigation into the attempt to prevent students from participating in the civil examination and the Ministry of Personnel's request to investigate the retired magistrate [Sun Xinzuo]), 1807, 12th month, 20th day, The Grand Secretariat Archives at the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica 中央研究院歷史語言研究所內閣大庫檔案, #190765. Also see Lü Xiaoxian 呂小鮮 ed, "Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan" 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang'an* (歷史檔案) [Historical Archives] 1 (1994): 24.

¹¹⁴ See "Libu wei Xingbu wuxing xiubing tiaoli shi" 吏部為刑部誤行修併條例事 (The Ministry of Personnel's report on the misapplication of the legal code by the Ministry of Justice), 1808, 3rd month, The Grand Secretariat Archives at the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica 中央研究院歷史語言研究所內閣大庫檔案, #148498.

who committed high crimes but voluntarily surrendered 二死三流，同為一減。By the order of the throne, Sun was exiled to Yili, Xinjiang, where he spent the rest of his life.¹¹⁵

Zhou Jishi, who was the magistrate of Wanzai on probation (署萬載縣試用知縣) when the boycott occurred, was also punished. His tenure was terminated despite sending a servant of his family to Beijing to petition at the Censorate. An investigation found that Zhou condoned Sun's crime and failed to capture Sun swiftly when Sun was a fugitive. He was accused of accepting "bribes", such as "clothes and umbrellas", from the natives who boycotted the civil examination.¹¹⁶ Zhou was sentenced to serve in remote military posts while paying a monetary penalty.¹¹⁷

The Reinstatement of Pengmin Quotas: The Implicit Recognition of a Proto-ethnic Group?

In 1807, Tie Bao, the Manchu governor-general of Jiangnan and Jiangxi, submitted a palace memorial and formally requested the reinstatement of Pengmin quotas in Wanzai County, three turbulent years after Xin Meichen's trip to Beijing. Governor-general Tie Bao traced the origin of the Pengmin, the 1731 decision to establish Pengmin quotas from the Yongzheng reign, the 1763 decision to eliminate Pengmin quotas from the Qianlong reign, the disagreement between Educational Commissioner Li Junjian and Governor Chen Dawen, and the proposal of Qin Chengen and Cao Zhen who picked up the issue after Li and Chen's promotions. After everything that happened, Tie Bao's memorial implied that it was time for the court to compromise. Tie Bao consulted the Governor and the Educational Commissioner of Jiangxi, and all agreed to reinstate Pengmin quotas and end the saga once and for all. The final twist of the decades-long saga would be the timing of the reinstatement. If announced prematurely, the disobedient subjects and wicked gentry in Wanzai would think that they successfully force the hands of the emperor and win a compromise. The reinstatement of the Pengmin quotas would not and should not be seen as a compromise. The new policy would not be announced until Sun's case was concluded in order to highlight the imperial grace. The Jiaqing emperor was pleased by Tie Bao, who found a way for the court to get out of the predicament. But the emperor was also in no hurry to reinstate the Pengmin quotas. The story of Wanzai came to an end in 1807. At the end of this chapter, Table 2 updates the complete timeline of major events in Wanzai.

The 1807 resolution was a Pyrrhic victory for the native community given the price that the native elite paid. The natives' ultimate goal of protecting its fair share of the "from county school to scholar-officials/local elite" pipeline was achieved once and for all. No conflicts over the educational quotas would appear between 1807 and the nationwide abolition of the imperial

¹¹⁵ Zhu Qingqi 祝庆祺, Bao Shuyun 鲍书芸 eds., *Xing'an huilan sanbian* 刑案汇览三编 [A Conspectus of Judicial Cases] (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 2004): 406-409.

¹¹⁶ See "Libu wei xucan jifan yanwu zhi yige Zhixian Zhou jishi shi" 禮部為續參緝犯延誤之已革知縣周吉士事 (The Ministry of Rites's subsequent report on the delay of arresting the fugitive, the retired disgraced magistrate Zhou Jishi), 1807, the 8th month, 9th day, The Grand Secretariat Archives at the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica 中央研究院歷史語言研究所內閣大庫檔案, #190821.

¹¹⁷ Zhu Qingqi 祝庆祺, Bao Shuyun 鲍书芸 eds., *Xing'an huilan sanbian* 刑案汇览三编 [A Conspectus of Judicial Cases] (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 2004): 406-409.

civil examination system in 1905. However, what was left unsaid in the palace memorials in the palace memorials and local gazetteers was the Qing state's reluctant recognition of the Pengmin as a proto-ethnic group. Four decades later, the natives would take an unprecedented step to draw a line between themselves and the Pengmin by writing their *own* version of local history. The 1849 gazetteer, titled *A Native Gazetteer of Wanzai County*, remains the most staggering proof of the ethnic boundary between two ethnic groups.

Situating the Three Strikes in Wanzai: A Singular Event?

Were three strikes in a single locale a normal phenomenon? Or was this another example of the singularity of the Wanzai quota case? According to the consensus among scholars who have studied examination strikes in late imperial China, the answer is a complex one. The three strikes in the Wanzai quota case were highly atypical if we only consider the state's aggressive responses to examination strikes in the two previous reigns. However, as several scholars of late imperial China have observed, the state responded less aggressively towards collective actions during the Jiaqing reign, which marked a significant historical shift in terms of the handling of examination strikes. As Han put it:

Bakao action [examination strikes] appeared often in the late Ming and early Qing periods, and was deemed a serious threat to local administration by early Qing emperors. It was not until the Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns, however, that the alarming surge in examination riots was dealt a serious setback. These two emperors reprimanded and severely punished the examination candidates as well as the magistrates who made conciliatory gestures toward those involved in these examination boycotts... The Qing government under Jiaqing not only meted out less severe punishment for examination boycotts; the emperor also approached this issue from a more balanced position.¹¹⁸

By "a more balanced position," Han suggests that the Jiaqing emperor "held local officials responsible for causing the boycott" while "penalizing the leaders of the boycott." Han also argues that:

In comparison to Qianlong, Jiaqing acknowledged the possibility that local government malfeasance could lead to boycotts. From this perspective, examination riots could sometimes be viewed as a channel for venting righteous anger and thus, participation in such a disturbance could be pardoned.¹¹⁹

Applying Han's observations to the Wanzai quota case, it is obvious that local officials were not accused of engaging in "malfeasant" activities that led to the boycotts. Rather, it was their incompetence (specifically, Zhou Jishi's failure to capture Sun Xinzu timely) that led to their punishment. The very first examination strike, a result of "waiting for the imperial edict," was excused by provincial officials without disapproval from the Jiaqing emperor. And yet provincial officials were not pressed by the throne to capture and execute Sun Xinzu after the second strike,

¹¹⁸ Seunghyun Han, "The Punishment of Examination Riots in the Early to Mid-Qing Period" *Late Imperial China* 32, no. 2 (December 2011): 152.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

which made the third strike possible. It is reasonable to assume that the Jiaqing reign exhibited a higher degree of leniency towards collective actions. If the throne found that local officials in Jiangxi were indeed guilty of manipulating the results of the civil examination, as Sun Xinzu argued in his testimony, Sun's punishments might have been spared. It is difficult to imagine that such an event could occur during the two previous reigns.

Year	1731	1763	1803	1805	1807	1807
Reign	The Yongzheng Reign	The Qianlong Reign	The Jiaqing Reign	The Jiaqing Reign	The Jiaqing Reign	The Jiaqing Reign
Actors	Unknown	Educational Commissioner Zhou Huang, Governor of Jiangxi Tang Pin	Xin Meichen	Sun Xinzu, Zhou Jishi, and native students	Former County Magistrate Sun Xinzu	Governor-general Tie Bao, Governor Jin, Educational Commissioner Wang Tingzheng
Outcomes	Established the Four Pengmin (4 slots) 12 Native slots + 4 Pengmin slots	Eliminated Four Pengmin Quotas 12 slots available for both the Pengmin and the natives	Petitioned in Beijing	16 slots were made available to all. Boycott	Petitioned in Beijing	Reinstated Pengmin Quotas

1806	1807	1807
The Jiaqing reign	The Jiaqing Reign	The Jiaqing Reign
Wanzai students	Former County Magistrate Sun Xinzu	Governor-general Tie Bao, Governor Jin, Educational Commissioner Wang Tingzheng
The second Boycott	Petitioned in Beijing and his arrest	Reinstated Pengmin Quotas

Table 2: The Complete Chronology of Major Events

Chapter 5: Wanzai in Comparative Perspectives

The stories of the Pengmin in the 18th and 19th centuries, such as the Wanzai quota case, must be analyzed regionally and comparatively. The scale of Hakka and Pengmin migration was remarkable: they migrated outward from their core region (where Fujian, Jiangxi, and Guangdong's borders converged), settled widely in various regions in China proper, and reached as far away as Sichuan and Anhui. Governmental responses to new migrant communities were differentiated based on an array of factors: the scale of a migrant community, the attitudes of local officials toward migrants, and the length of time between the initial settlement and the emergence of conflicts. It is possible that the distance between the core region and the new settlement was an indicator of the balance of power between the natives and the Pengmin: greater distance between the core region and the new settlement, as in the case of Pengmin communities in Anhui, was translated into a lower probability and a small scale of permanent settlements, while new Hakka and Pengmin communities in closer proximity of the core region could be as established as the native communities after a long period of development and inter-community conflicts were far more pronounced. For example, the Hakka experiences in Eastern Guangdong, which was on the outskirts of the Hakka/Pengmin core region, were contrasting in comparison with the experiences of the Hakkas/Pengmin in Anhui and Zhejiang, regions that were hundreds of miles away from the Hakka/Pengmin core region, where entire lineages of migrants could be easily evicted if conflicts between them and the natives arose and taking the civil examination locally was an impossibility. The possible causal relationship between the distance to the core region and the varying levels of native-migrant hostility requires further research.

The Hakkas in Guangdong: The Model of an Established Migrant Community

In 1801 (6th year of the Jiaqing reign), Liang Degong, a 43-year-old Hakka student from Xin'an County, Guangdong, appeared in front of the Nine Gates Infantry in Beijing to petition. Liang complained that the officials of his county refused to allow Hakka students to participate in the civil examination locally even though the Hakkas had resided in Xin'an county for over a century:

The natives and the county officials did not realize that we Hakkas had been living in Xin'an for over a century. Four to five generations have passed. We have abandoned our native place. How can we return there? Furthermore, we have been living in Xin'an for so long and we are not allowed to participate in the civil examination. Given that we have been away from our native place for so long, why would people in our native place allow us to do so? So we can only return to our native place for the exam in theory, but in practice, that will not be possible. In the last few decades, we Hakka students have petitioned the county magistrates, but they still favored the natives and refused to act on our petitions.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Puk Wing Kin 卜永堅, "Shiliao jieshao: Xin'an Keji li an lu" 史料介紹: 新安客籍例案錄 [An introduction to a Hakka educational quota document in a local gazetteer], *Tianye yu*

不思來新百餘年，傳世四五代，原籍久棄，安得有籍可歸。況久住之新安，尚不准考，豈久曠之原籍，誰肯容考乎。所以雖有撥歸之名，究無可歸之寔。自後十餘年間，童等屢次呈考，只有行縣查詳，而縣主瞻徇依舊，瞞覆不恤。

Liang cited a precedent from 1787 (the 52nd year of the Qianlong reign). Xinning, a nearby county, began to allow Hakka students to participate in the local civil examination after Hakka students went to Beijing to petition the Censorate. A member of the Liang lineage, Liang Guodong, thought that the same principle should also be applicable in Xin'an at the time. Three different county magistrates verified that the Hakkas had ancestral graves in Xin'an and paid taxes locally. The Hakkas also had no relatives or properties in their native place anymore, so returning to their native place and taking the civil examination there was an impossibility. Liang touchingly summarized his complaint on behalf of 472 Hakka students in Xin'an:

Three different magistrates have ruled our county and we Hakkas have petitioned five times. The natives have numerous tricks to manipulate the clerks and the magistrates to protect their interests. They rebutted every time we petitioned. There has been a few decades and no conclusion has been reached. Currently, the Hakka students in four counties in our prefecture have been allowed to take the civil examination. The merchants in Eastern Guangdong were also allowed to have their own educational quotas. Only we Hakka students in Xin'an are being suppressed and we are weeping about the injustice. We have no other way to redress the injustice that we have suffered for more than four decades. So I had to embark on a long journey to the capital and appealed to the highest authority.¹²¹

三易縣主，五次申詳。奈土著等詭計百出，擺弄府衙書吏，延擱舞弊，矇蔽憲聰，詳文屢到屢駁。又經十餘年，竟無定案。現廣州屬邑，龍(門縣)、增(城縣)、清(遠縣)、花(縣)客童，悉蒙收恤。即粵東商旗，尚開學額，獨新安四百餘童之屈抑，垂涕向隅；四十餘載之沉冤，觀光無路，只得跋涉來京，瀝情上叩。

Voices of migrants like Liang's are extremely rare in historical evidence available to us because they were often excluded from the compilation of local gazetteers. The Xin'an case was meticulously documented in one genealogy of a Hakka lineage that has survived and has been reproduced in its entirety. "Xin'an County", a county that was in the southern frontier of China and was more than 1,400 miles away from the capital, is present-day Shenzhen and Hong Kong, part of the Pearl River Delta Megalopolis.

Liang's story was remarkably similar to the experience of Xin Meichen, the protagonist of Chapter 1. Both traveled long distances to the capital to petition and complained about issues related to the civil examination as well as the "incompetence" of local officials. But their stories also diverged substantially. Xin Meichen was a native of a locale where the migrants were allowed to take the civil examination and were allegedly taking up a disproportionately large

wenxian: *Huanan yanjiu ziliao zhongxin tongxun* 田野與文獻：華南研究資料中心通訊

[Fieldwork and documents: South China research resource station newsletter] 58 (2010): 24-35.

¹²¹ Ibid, 27.

number of the total educational quotas available to the entire county. Liang was a descendant of the migrants who was not allowed to take the civil examination at all. Xin's petition made it to the throne and was forwarded to be debated between provincial officials for years. Liang's petition was not presented to the Jiaqing emperor and was handled much more swiftly and smoothly. The commander of the Nine Gates Infantry forwarded the case to the governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, who turned to his provincial administration commissioner and the magistrate of the Guangzhou Prefecture (where Xin'an was located) for more information. An investigation into the eligibility of the Xin'an Hakka students followed, and 533 Hakka students from 457 families, out of 4392 Hakka households in Xin'an, were deemed eligible. Within two years, the Ministry of Rites submitted a palace memorial to the throne and requested that the Hakka students in Xin'an should be allowed to take the civil examination locally. By imperial grace, the eight original educational quotas that the natives in Xin'an were entitled to would remain intact, and four new Hakka-only quotas (two for Confucian apprentices 文童, two for military apprentices 武童) were granted.

It is difficult to reconcile the story of Wanzai with the story of Xin'an. They occurred roughly simultaneously as two parallel events during the Jiaqing reign, but the handling of the Xin'an case was free of debates or disagreements. The Hakkas in Xin'an certainly benefitted from the precedents in nearby counties while no such precedents existed in Jiangxi. In fact, the resolution of the Wanzai quota case referred to the Xin'an model when a censor advocated for the establishment of Pengmin quotas in 1807.¹²² Both communities seemed equally established in terms of the length of residence in their current locales. And yet, the identical solution that was thwarted and was eventually seen as an inevitable compromise in Wanzai was welcomed as the only possible solution in the handling of the Xin'an case, under the supervision of the same emperor. What were the factors behind the divergence of the approaches?

One obvious answer is the judgments of the provincial officials. Officials at the provincial level and the prefectural levels uniformly agreed that the Hakka students were treated unfairly, and the issue of eligibility for the local civil examination and the issue of the educational quotas were essentially bundled together and were resolved together. But a deeper answer to the swift resolution of the Xin'an case could be found in the records of wars between the Hakkas and the natives in the 1850s and 1860s. Half a century after the Xin'an case, large-scale violent conflicts erupted between native communities and migrant communities, which manifested as violent wars between villages and villages. Different from Jiangxi, lineage organizations that dominated local politics developed to an extraordinary level in the late Qing period, and village-based militarization was widespread in Guangdong (eastern Guangdong in particular).

While lineage organizations were also reasonably developed in Jiangxi, as the role of the Xin lineage in Wanzai has shown, they never reached the same level as their equivalents in Guangdong did. The inter-community hostility between the natives and the migrants were

¹²² Lü Xiaoxian 呂小鮮, ed., "Jiaqingchao Jiangxi Wanzaixian tupeng xue'e fenzhengan" 嘉慶朝江西萬載縣土棚學額紛爭案 [The Native-Pengmin Struggles over Educational Quotas in Wanzai County, Jiangxi during the Jiaqing Reign], *Lishi dang'an* (歷史檔案) [*Historical Archives*] 1 (1994): 22-23.

coupled with the loosening of local control in Guangdong and the state's reliance on local militias to counter bandits and rebels in the mid-19th century, which implicitly allowed local militarization in both communities to develop. The very fact that migrant students were allowed to take the civil examination in Wanzai and no such large-scale inter-community violent conflicts occurred in Jiangxi entailed that the level of inter-community animosity was far higher in Guangdong, which rendered debates on the resolution of the issue brought by Hakka students unnecessary and the institutionalization of the inter-community divide clearly inexorable.

Conclusion

The position of the Wanzai case in Chinese history from the 18th century onward has not been defined because researchers have mostly seen the case as an isolated event, an interesting example of a prolonged struggle between a migrant group and a native community in a South Chinese province. However, as the Wanzai quota case and the Xin'an quota case has shown, the Qing state's responses to inter-ethnic tensions among the Han Chinese were non-uniform and highly context-dependent. It resulted in a patchwork of migrants-related, localized policies of educational quota distribution. We also witnessed, for the first time, the transition of an inter-ethnic conflict to the criminalization of collective action.

It is time to ask: what questions can this thesis answer? A better question, for now, is what we can see in this saga that spanned over three Qing reigns. We see a state that was reasonably informed but still struggled to react to the inter-ethnic and intercommunity divisions that were developing its geographical core. We see the formation and the dissolution of economic interdependence between two ethnic groups, which turned the civil examination into their battlefields, where the quantitative ethnic boundary was heatedly contested and formed. We see a populace that understood the hierarchy of the bureaucratic system and conceptualized the capital of the Qing Empire as the only dispenser of justice when all other options failed them. We see how the very bureaucratic system that the "little people" in Wanzai turned to doubled as a legal apparatus when the people challenged the state and the state responded with punishments. But most importantly, through palace memorials and local gazetteers, we can perceive the human actors who underpinned the sociopolitical dynamics of a remote corner of South China, ranging from a disgraced retired county magistrate who dared to manipulate the system to the emperor who resided one thousand miles away from Wanzai.

The ultimate goal of the author is to explore the precursors of social disorder in South China in the second half of the 19th century. In *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1839-1861*, Wakeman presents how a population that fractured along numerous boundaries of identities, including ethnicities, dialects, and geographical origins, and a state that relied on *ad hoc* responses to crises, initially reacted to the presence of the British military in South China. Yet, as this thesis shows, Chinese society had already been showing signs of fractures caused by internal destabilizing factors decades before the arrival of the British. The story of Wanzai was an extreme one but not a unique one. As Chapter 4 shows, similar native-migrant dynamics, featuring varying degrees of animosity, were emerging across South China exactly when imperial leniency towards collective actions was replacing a more draconian approach. It might be a conceptual leap for the specialists of late imperial China who might find

it difficult to connect the Pengmin in Jiangxi to the Taiping Rebellion and the larger social disorder in South China, but I believe that the role of the struggles in Wanzai and the native-migrant divide that it represented in the formation of social disorder in South China can be established with further research.

The historical memory of the native-migrant divide faded away when the communist regime took pain to erase the native-migrant divide before and after the 1949 takeover. Mao personally witnessed the divide along the native-migrant line in Jiangxi firsthand when building his first revolutionary base. The base, located in Jinggangshan, Jiangxi, is now a socialist holy land, but few realize how the fall of Jinggangshan echoes the story of Wanzai. The native-migrant divide in South China ran so deep that the ethnic subconsciousness resurfaced during the Cultural Revolution, but in a form that only statistical analysis could reveal: the presence of Hakka populations was positively associated with collective killing in Guangdong.¹²³

A gazetteer of Wanzai published in 1988 briefly and revealingly introduced the communist efforts of containing and eliminating the native-migrant divide. It pointedly targeted all inter-ethnic divides:

In the mid-Qing period, conflicts over the unjust distribution of educational quotas by the Qing state and admissions into the county school were frequent, which caused a “Native-Pengmin divide.” The divide deepened to the degree where “the Pengmin” were not allowed to reside inside the county seat and inter-marriages between the two communities were also not allowed. During the Republican period, “the divide between the Pengmin and the natives” still lingered. *In order to eliminate the divide, during the Land Reform, the county government explicitly terminated the ban on Pengmin residence inside the county seat and the ban on inter-marriages. The county government also required both communities to compile new gazetteers together and desegregate schools.* Since the founding of the New China, the Party and the government have worked extensively to eliminate the native-migrant divide.¹²⁴

清代中葉，朝廷因學額取近分配不公，常起爭端，造成“土客分歧”，發展至不准“客民”遷居城內，互不締結婚姻等。延至民國時期，本縣“土客”分歧尚存。為化除“土客”界線，土地革命時，縣政府又明令打破城居，互通婚姻，同修縣誌，合辦教育。新中國成立後，黨和政府通過多方面的工作，已消除“土客”分歧。

Few Chinese are now aware of the Native-Pengmin divide that was once prevalent in provinces in South China. The loss of Pengmin memories proves the effectiveness of ethnic integration under the Chinese Communist Party, but the process of integration remains poorly understood. Further research, especially archival work, is required to understand the dissolution of the divide between the natives and the Hakka/Pengmin in 20th-century China.

¹²³ Yang Su, *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 92-93.

¹²⁴ The Gazetteer Compilation Committee of Wanzai County, Jiangxi 江西省萬載縣誌編纂委員會, *The Gazetteer of Wanzai* 萬載縣誌, (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1988), 66.

In a biography of Xin Meichen, the first petitioner who petitioned Beijing, he was remembered by his fellow natives as a literatus who “fought for the interests of the entire county.”¹²⁵ When the natives in Wanzai, Jiangxi decided to boycott the civil examination, perhaps no one expected that their disdain for the Pengmin, whom they did not even view as legitimate residents of *their* county, would trigger a civil war five decades later that aimed to destroy the empire. Hong Xiuquan, a Hakka in their neighboring province and the equivalent of a Pengmin in Jiangxi, declared himself God’s Chinese son in 1851, founded the Heavenly Kingdom in 1853, and ultimately expedited the death of imperial China.

¹²⁵ *Wanzai xian tuzhuzhi* 道光萬載縣土著志 (A Native Gazetteer of Wanzai county from Daoguang reign, 1849).

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Appendix

萬載謠

施閏章

山城夜閉中夜雨，夜聞城中嗥猛虎。
十家九家聲暗吞，城中人少荊棘存。
城高五丈半傾裂，中貫長河無水門。
盜賊哀憐不肯入，官吏倉皇徵稅急。
雁集鳩居一何多，土人拱手客種禾。
殺牛沽酒醉且歌，滿眼蕪田奈爾何。

Poem A: A Ballad of Wanzai By Shi Runzhang

It was a rainy night in a city on the mountain. The howls of fierce tigers echoed.
Nine houses out of ten were in dark silence.
The lightly populated city was filled with bramble bushes.
Short city walls were in shambles.
No dams in place to contain a long river that cut through the city.
Dire poverty made thieves refuse to steal out of sympathy.
Local officials were always in a hurry to collect taxes.
Numerous geese and pigeons congregated and settled here.
The natives rested their hands while the migrants worked the fields.
They enjoyed their life by singing after drinking and eating beef.
There was nothing to do about the wasteland everywhere.

麻棚謠

施閏章

袁州民不藝麻，率賃地與閩楚流人，
架棚聚族，立魁長陵轢土著，
吏不能禁，謂之麻棚。

山陬鬱郁多白苧，問誰種者閩與楚。
伐木作棚御風雨，綠岡蔽谷成儔伍。
剝麻如山召估客，一金坐致十擔黍。
此隰爾隰原爾原，主人不種甘宴處。
客子聚族恣恁陵，主人膽落不敢語。
嗟彼遠人來樂土，此邦之人爲誰苦。

A Ballad of Hemp Sheds
By Shi Runzhang

The natives in Yuanzhou prefecture do not engage in hemp production. They rent their land to migrants from Fujian, Hunan, and Hubei. The migrants set up sheds and they congregate based on lineages. They have overtaken Changling Mountain and harassed the natives. Local officials cannot ban them or their practices.
The sheds of the migrants are called hemp sheds.

White hemp was prospering on remote corners of the mountains.
I asked who planted the white hemp.
The answer was the migrants from Fujian and the land of Chu.
They logged trees to make sheds that protect them from winds and rain.
Greenness encompassed the hills and valleys.
Mountains of hemp were reaped and potential buyers came to estimate.
Ten *dan* of hemp was worthy of one unit of gold.
Hills used to be just hills and the flatland used to be just flatland without hemp.
The natives did not work in fields near where the migrants enjoyed their banquets.
The lineages of the Pengmin gathered on the hills.
The natives were too afraid to speak.
Oh, the migrants from faraway places came to this Garden of Eden.
For whom the natives were suffering for?