

## Land and Population Controls in Rural China

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## Land and Population Controls in Rural China

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中国農村部における土地と人口のコントロール

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In the study of China's rural development, anthropologists and other social scientists have tended to focus on changes in property rights, or changes in family planning and birth control policies. The literature has tended to treat each separately, as if they were unrelated. Economists and political scientists look at land policy, while demographers, sociologists and anthropologists look at family planning. Yet the two domains are, in real life, closely related as households attempt to match and manage their land and labor resources. Land and population policy and practice should thus be analyzed together. In this paper I bring together questions about land and family planning in relation to both policy and practice. I also examine the significance of lineage revival. I draw on my own fieldwork in rural north China and comparative material to examine local and regional variations and their significance.

中国農村部の開発研究においては、人類学者やそのほかの社会学者は、財産権の変化や家族計画・産児制限政策の変化に焦点をあわせる傾向にある。関連文献ではそれらの変化があたかも関係していないようにそれぞれが別個に取り扱われる傾向にある。経済学者や政治学者は土地政策を研究する一方で、人口学者や社会学者は家族計画を研究する傾向にある。世帯は土地と労働資源とが見合うように、管理しようとするので、財産と家族計画・出生という2つの領域は実生活においては相互に密接に関連していることは明らかである。従って土地・人口政策は実践とともに分析されるべきである。本論文では筆者は政策と実践との両方から土地と家族計画についての諸問題を関連付けようと試み

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**Key Words** : China, Land, Population, Sex Ratio, Lineage

キーワード : 中国, 土地のコントロール, 人口のコントロール, ジェンダー, リネージ

る。また、筆者はリネージの復活の重要性を吟味する。筆者は地域差や地方差および差異の重要性を吟味するために北部中国の農村部でのフィールドワーク調査と比較資料とを利用する。

1	Missing girls	2.5	Land policy and population policy in practice
2	The Yellow Earth. Huang Tu Village, Henan	2.6	Land for houses
2.1	Henan Province and local county: population and missing girls	2.7	Names and uxorilocal marriage
2.2	The Women's Director	2.8	Land control policy in practice: the lineage as land enforcement agency.
2.3	Conversations on family planning and land	2.9	The village itself as corporate property
2.4	Land, landholding group, and lineage	3	Conclusion

“The dearth of girls is now more extreme in the PRC than anywhere else in the world.”

“...One of the toughest challenges is to modify China's rigid custom of patrilocal and patrilineal marriage, the restriction of land rights to the males of the patrilineal clan.”

Banister (2004)

## 1 Missing girls

In 2004, headlines about China's skewed sex ratios and missing girl problem appeared throughout the year, with stories demonstrating the Chinese government's determination to do something about it. It is estimated that over 40 million girls and women are missing in China. The problem was driven home in various ways. One article stressed the “frustrations of as many as 40 million single men by 2020<sup>1)</sup>”. A major book has warned of the impending danger of social and political instability stemming from a surfeit of unmarried young men (Hudson and den Boer 2004). Reports from specific places illustrate the concern. The city of Guiyang in southwest China had 129 male babies born for every 100 female babies. Guiyang banned abortions after 14 weeks of pregnancy in January 2005. Over the street a large banner bluntly proclaimed, “Firmly crack down on the criminal activity of drowning and other ways of brutally killing female babies.” But a clinic down the street advertised ultrasound tests, allowing people to choose methods other than drowning daughters<sup>2)</sup>.

The process of discriminating against girls has undergone what Amartya Sen termed a radical change as it shifted from female disadvantage in mortality to female disadvantage in natality (2003). Over the past two decades, sex selective abortions

have rapidly been replacing the more brutal methods of gender (sex) selection mentioned above.

Despite the growing media and scholarly attention that missing women in Asia have received, there is remarkable uniformity in the explanations and remarkably little challenge to received wisdom. For China, three basic explanations for gender discrimination occur again and again in scholarly and popular discourse. These are that sons are necessary for heavy labor on the farm, to support their parents in old age, and to carry on the family line. These explanations offer convenient stereotypes but little deep analysis. A brief look at them will raise some questions.

1) Heavy labor. Rural women have contributed a large proportion of the farm labor in China for nearly fifty years. The fact that farming has become more mechanized makes the “heavy labor” argument rather dubious, particularly at a time when many men have left farming to women and migrated to towns and cities in search of better incomes. The “heaviness” of labor is a highly subjective concept, but becomes especially questionable when tractors and combines replace draft animals. If the heaviness of the labor is important, then it is necessary to identify exactly which heavy tasks make men more valuable than women in order to better understand what prevents women from performing them. The fact that heavy tasks are typically left unnamed is problematic<sup>3</sup>.

2) Old age support. The patrilineal family system requires that sons stay home to support their parents, and that daughters marry out to support their husband’s parents. Parents expect to be supported by sons and daughters-in-law. Naturally, if parents force their daughters to move away by disinheriting them, then daughters will be less able to support them. It is not uncommon in my own fieldwork to run across cases where parents receive as much or more economic and personal-needs support from their married-out daughters living in another village or district than from their sons or daughters-in-law. Why is it inconceivable or unacceptable for daughters and sons-in-law to support parents in old age? Usually, the answer to this question is to move on to the “family line.”

3) The family line. Continuing the family line from father to son is a mandate and perhaps even a mantra, repeated so often in some areas that it is never questioned. China has a long cultural history of writing and teaching about patrilineal traditions. Without doubt, the concept of the family line is a powerful force in Chinese society. But the communist government had worked hard to displace it, to suppress the power of lineages, and to create an independent source of opportunities. Why have they re-emerged and become so important in some areas? Why do some regions and groups place much more importance on lineages than others (M. Han 2001; Cohen 1990, 2005)? Why does the search for expanded networks and social relationships often continue to exclude women from its formal mapping?

In addition to the three explanations above, social scientists have probed more deeply. Demographer Judith Banister (2004) has provided one of the most compre-

hensive reviews of the problem. She examined a series of reasons for China's growing sex imbalance. They include poverty, the political or economic system, socio-economic development, educational level, Chinese culture, the one-child policy, low fertility, and ultrasound technology. She found that the China's shortage of girls cannot be explained by poverty, political or economic system, by the level of socio-economic development or by educational level as these variables do not correspond to the demographic evidence. However, the distribution of daughter shortage within China is closely associated with the distribution of Han Chinese culture within China Proper, while the peripheries and most minority areas have more balanced sex ratios. Banister argues that the introduction of the state family planning policy is associated with rising proportion of sons, and that this rise became even more marked once ultrasound technology for sex testing became available (though illegal for this purpose), followed by abortion for sex choice. The recent demographic data support the view that female disadvantage in mortality has been transformed into female disadvantage in natality. Prenatal female mortality (through abortion) is obviously less distressing than female infanticide. As a result, the sex biases inherent in the culture can be expressed more easily, and the proportion of girls has plummeted. Banister concludes, "The combination of continuing son preference, low fertility and technology is causing the shortage of girls in China." ... "The traditional cause of China's shortage of females and the underlying cause today is the son preference endemic in Han Chinese culture, especially in some subcultures within Han regions" (2004: 17). This return to the concept of son preference as an underlying cause, seems to reduce the problem to an "endemic" cultural attitude. However, Bannister refers to customs, economic practices and land rights, not just attitudes, in speaking to China's policies to address gender discrimination.

"One of the toughest challenges is to modify China's rigid customs of patrilocal and patrilineal marriage, the restriction of land rights to the males of the patrilineal clan, the traditional weakening of daughters' ties to their natal families after marriage, the dependence on sons but not own-daughters for old age support, and other customs that make daughters worth little in the eyes of their natal families (Das Gupta et al. 2004). So that China's daughters may survive and be valued as much as sons, they need rights and responsibilities to have lifelong close ties to their natal families. The government has promoted some of these changes and has passed egalitarian laws. The need now is to more vigorously enforce the laws giving daughters equal rights and responsibilities." (Banister 2004: 15).

Here Banister makes one of the few clear references to the property system as a factor in China's son preference. I will argue that it is more than labor or the family "line" that is at stake. The system of family property and the political institutions for holding and transmitting land and property rights need to be more carefully examined.

While conventional explanations pointing to labor, old age support and family line do reflect the way many people talk about son preference, they do not necessarily tell the whole story. They may operate like euphemisms that point to relatively benign and uncontested cultural assumptions without calling attention to the more controversial and conflictual aspects of the system that discriminates so persistently and pervasively against girls and women. When local people speak about their gender preferences, they may prefer to deflect criticism regarding their family strategies.

My aim is to consider the links between property rights and population control to see how these two policies work together to produce the enormous deficit of daughters. Who exercises *de facto* control over land and property? Despite government efforts to legislate gender equality, patrilineal institutions retain considerable power in many rural areas. Their workings within the village power structures need to be made more visible. The close ties to women's natal families that Banister advocates would be stronger if daughters were in line for a share of the family house and land.

Pradeep Panda and Bina Agarwal, writing about India, claim that few people study women's property status in relation to violence. Examining marital violence, they argue that for women economic independence can deter violence. "In all existing research, however, a significant unexplored factor is the impact of women's property status on the likelihood of violence. In fact, we came across no study either for India or elsewhere where this had been studied empirically" (Panda and Agarwal 2005). Panda and Agarwal are concerned with property ownership as a way of protecting women from marital violence, but we will consider the idea that property ownership for women may also contribute to a more equal chance of pre and post-natal survival for girls. The thorny question of violence in relation to property and gender also seems to lurk behind the standard three explanations for missing girls above.

The Chinese government has finally moved from silence and cover-up to taking measures to encourage better treatment of girls. Yet while some policies reflect thought about the causes of discrimination, many of the policies have been little more than prohibition and propaganda. They have not taken into account the institutions that operate in rural society. Some of the measures that have been reported in the press are:

1. A ban on ultrasound for sex determination,
2. A ban on late abortion,
3. Propaganda that girls are good, and
4. Provision of pensions for parents with one child or two girls.

The first three measures deal with symptoms rather than causes. Forbidding the use of ultrasound for sex determination, and forbidding the use of abortions to

try again for the desired sex do not address why parents are making such a choice. Public powers denouncing female infanticide provide a serious warning about the law, but do not consider why people take such extreme measures against newborn babies. Proclaiming that daughters are as good as sons does not seem likely to change people's minds without some substantial evidence. The fourth measure is more concerned with causes, and responds to the claim that sons are needed for old age support. The government stresses the need for social security for rural populations, and in some places has promised to provide pensions for parents who have no sons. It remains to be seen whether promises for pensions at age 60 will have much affect on the reproductive choices of parents aged 20 to 30, although sixty-year-old villagers who just started to receive them expressed their happiness to the media who came to interview them<sup>4</sup>). Pensions cannot hurt as a way to increase the value of daughters or decrease dependence on sons over the long run, but as an incentive to have daughters, pension promises are quite removed in time. How can young parents today be sure the government will honor its pledges in the distant future?

Although China has a long history of practicing female infanticide (Lee and Wang 2001), in the post-revolutionary period the missing girls problem arises simultaneously with increased wealth (Croll 2000). The sex imbalance can be seen as a product of development and a problem for development. Should nations and development consultants be concerned? As with environmental degradation, social institutions can propel societies to follow a pattern of maximizing individual advantage that can have negative consequences for the future. Targeting girls as a lesser good harms women throughout their lives, and creates a cohort of males assured of their superiority, yet unable to find wives and form families. The rootedness of the male population as the basis for son preference ends up creating a class of rootless males.

While it is common to point to son preference in traditional culture, sex ratios evened out during the collective years (Banister 2004, Greenhalgh and Li 1995), with the surplus of males only reappearing during the reform period. Clearly, questions about the family line, the patriline, and the lineage are relevant here. Why is patrilineal culture still so compelling in reform China?

The period of rural collectives (excluding the Great Leap Famine of 1958 to 1961) witnessed rapid population growth. For two decades, up to 1980, collective resources supported children so that economic incentive for couples to keep reproduction in tune with household resources (or else become poorer) was lifted. In China as a whole, the growing population consumed economic gains without improving standards of living (Huang 1990).

In the 1980s, the reforms gave the rural population more incentives for production, and more responsibility. The distribution of land to farmers as a way to increase output meant that population would have to be controlled. Otherwise, if population grew, soon there would be too little land to support all the families.

As farmers competed for land, rural (class) inequality could grow with a return to landowners and landlessness, exactly the conditions the Chinese Communist Party originally promised to eliminate.

To stabilize rural society (and avoid massive urban migration, another potential source of social inequality and social unrest), the revival of family farming meant that the government had to limit land holding by instituting a system of village-based land allocation, and limit reproduction by instituting the one-child policy. Otherwise, large variations in family economic and reproductive outcomes would rapidly lead to large social inequalities in rural areas.

The arithmetic was simple. With only one child per couple, the land per household would grow, and in the next generation, there would be more land for each farming household. With two children, the next generation would have the same amount of land as their parents (provided they did not marry too young<sup>5</sup>).

If reproduction were left “unmanaged” families would have very unequal outcomes, some with many children, and some with few. A return to private landholding and inheritance, would mean that those with more children would not have enough land for them. Within a generation, class conflict could re-emerge between those who had many children and little land and those who had few children and more land per child.

Rationing land and rationing children was the answer. Rural families would get equal amounts of land to use (not to own), and would have equal numbers of children. This would provide social insurance for all, and prevent the reduction in resources and income per capita caused by population growth. What they very surprisingly forgot to consider (or did consider but dismissed), was that children are not equal, and in Chinese society, men and women are not equal.

Before I illustrate how these linked policies work out in a particular village, I review the simple gender probabilities implied by the family planning policy in rural China. Not surprisingly, there is a big gap between the abstract way the national government envisioned family planning and land contracting, and the local understandings of the rural population.

In local understandings of gender, marriage was followed by patrilocal residence and patrilineal heirs. Parents supported sons by giving them houses and land, and sons supported parents in old age (Croll 2000). The link between them was property. Daughters were valued, or not, according to the value of their labor. Parents did not form a multi-generational contract involving land with daughters, although they might love them and otherwise treat them well. These local understandings were the products of long-standing patrilineal tradition in most of China, supported up to mid-century by organized lineages and clans. These lineages and clans, when politically and economically successful, often supplanted local government (J. Watson 2004b; R. Watson 2004). The local practice might be more flexible in some parts of China than in others, but these local patrilineal models remained



intact. Thirty years of Maoism disrupted many lives and youths destroyed many lineage temples, but they never disrupted the tradition of making daughters marry out while keeping sons to inherit their parents' living space and their father's kinship ties. Sons were considered crucial to the contract between generations and to defining village membership as well. "Outside" men were never very welcome among distrustful Chinese villagers who always had reason to fear bandits and rival clans.

Under these local understandings, the policy of limiting parents to one or two children directly affected the ability to obtain sons. Its impact in society, however, was differentially felt, according to what Attwood (1995) has called "demographic roulette" or to what peasants had traditionally called "fate"—that element of life that they could not control.

Taking this knowledge of the importance of sons, the family arithmetic is not too hard. At the birth of the first child, roughly 50 percent of the families will get a son and be satisfied. The remaining 50 percent will eagerly await the birth of the second child. At the birth of the second child, half of these will get a son, bringing the total number with sons to 75 percent. This is an important figure. Because most of rural China has been limited to two children, it means that a 75 percent majority have their basic demands met, and 25 percent of the population will have two sons. On the less fortunate side of the roulette table are the 25 percent whose first two tries give them daughters. These are the families that will strongly oppose the family planning. They are the ones who will break the quotas, hide or give away girls, or if necessary abandon, kill, or neglect their infant daughters in their concern to get a son. To these families, ultrasound machines and abortion of female offspring are very attractive, low-cost alternatives in their quest to get a son, just like the other 75 percent of the population whom luck has favored.

With only a minority of 25 percent directly discontented within the villages, perhaps the government thought that would be a small price to pay for the stability of land and population. The formula overall would be a fair one, and "chance" or "fate" rather than the government would be to blame for those who did not get a son. The formal arithmetic would contain no provision for gender bias. Because local officials who enforce policies from above also live among angry villagers demanding the right to have sons; the policy has not been easy to enforce on the 25 percent who feel cheated.

The outcome, now well demonstrated in massive statistical evidence that millions of daughters are missing, is a product of the contradictions between national and local cultural regulations. By not taking gender into account, China now faces the problem of millions of missing girls and women and millions of bachelor men, worrisome for both sexes. Girls are raised in a culture where they are second choice, where they are a minority throughout their lives, and always feel less worthy. They are the easiest group to exclude or victimize when competition or conflict erupts. The rules and structures of village life combined with those of the national government

produced the unforeseen consequences that embarrass and concern China today.

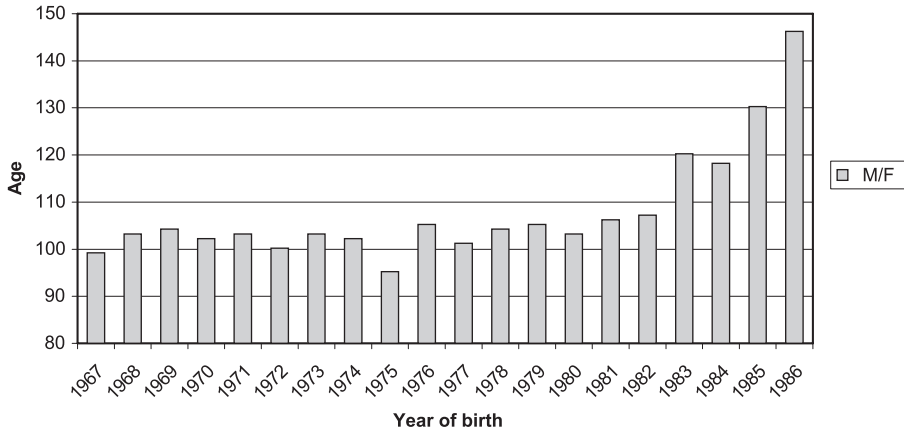
## 2 The Yellow Earth. Huang Tu Village, Henan

I began fieldwork Huang Tu Village in spring, 1989 with brief visits in the 1990s and again in 2004. Interested in gender and rural development, I selected this farming village in Henan for two reasons. First, as early as 1981 the census data for Henan Province showed a demographic pattern favoring sons, with a birth sex ratio of 110 males per 100 females (China Official Yearbook 1984: 420–427). Sex ratios that rise above the expected norm of 106 male births per 100 female births are a warning sign that female children are endangered in a particular region<sup>6</sup>. In 1989, Henan's birth sex ratio rose to 116, the third highest in China (Zeng Yi et al. (1993: 294). Second, the village was located in a traditional wheat-growing region, like most of the north China plain, with cotton as a subsidiary crop. These crops traditionally provided the main food and clothing for the farmers and for the market until home spinning and weaving was largely replaced by factory-made cloth, reducing women's work and their economic value to the household. In the early twentieth century, this region was associated with a relatively strong system of gender discrimination against women in the labor force compared to parts of southern and southwestern China. When I arrived in 1989, over 80 percent of Huang Tu Village labor force was employed in farming, with construction as the next largest occupation. The communist revolution had required women to become an active part of the agricultural labor force during the Maoist era (1949–1976) and in the reform period women still did much of the manual farm work, as I observed in 1989. They were among the family workers sent to dig ditches for a village irrigation canal, and they worked in the fields to plant and harvest crops. Huang Tu Village seemed like an appropriate place to examine the relationship between gender and development and a possible setting in which to examine the institutions that devalue women. To what extent did development contribute to or undermine what has been called "fierce" patriarchy (Dreze and Gazdar 1996) when daughters' lives are systematically devalued?

### 2.1 Henan Province and local county: population and missing girls

By 2000 Henan Province had become China's most populous province, with a total population of more than 91 million and a density of 554 persons per square kilometer (Henan 2005)<sup>7</sup>. The sex ratio for the total population in 2000 was 106 males per 100 females, having risen from 104 in 1981<sup>8</sup>. The sex ratio for small children aged 1–4 in 2000 had shot up to 136 males per 100 females, with nearly 1/2 million girls missing for the previous four years, 1996–1999<sup>9</sup>. Henan's disturbingly high child sex ratio is among the highest in China.

The county in which Huang Tu Village is located, north of the Yellow River,



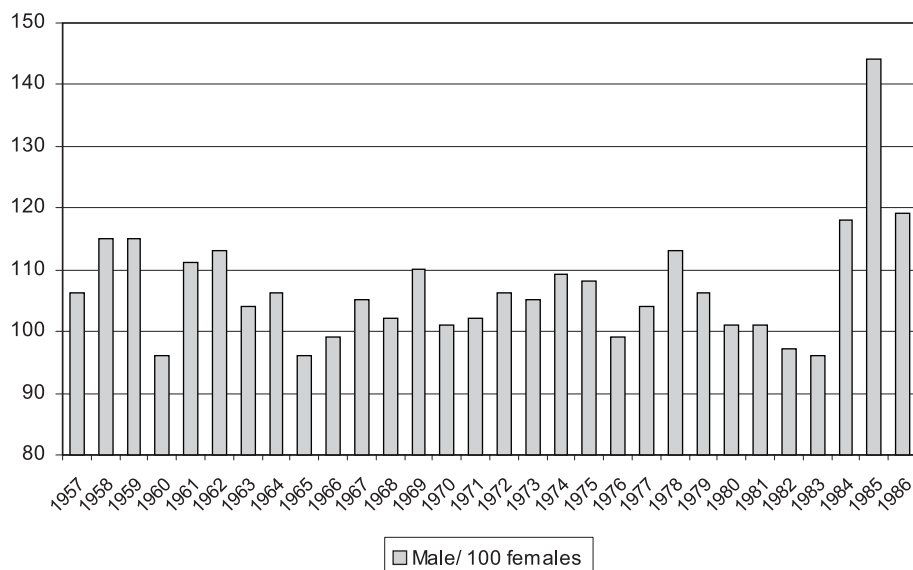
**Figure 1** County sex ratio by birth year 1967-87  
Source: county police records, 1988

had about 529,000 people in 1988, and reached nearly 643,000 in 2000 (China census 2000). A breakdown of population by age and sex at the county level shows that sex ratios began to rise in the mid-1980s, shortly after the one-child policy was established, and rose rapidly at the end of that decade.

Starting in 1985, a similar rise in the proportion of boys was recorded at the township (administrative village) level, a unit that encompasses more than ten large villages. Abnormally high sex ratios thus appeared in this rural area fairly soon after the family planning policy was introduced, and before ultrasound machines were commonly available in rural areas and county hospitals (see Figure 2). In the early 1990s, I observed that county level family planning offices in the region were still checking contraceptive use by using primitive x-ray machines to detect the presence or absence of an IUD, or a pregnancy<sup>10</sup>.

These county and township data show that the broad pattern of missing girls was not acute until the 1980s. In 2000, the pattern of elevated child sex ratios persists. When compared to the Henan provinc child sex ratios (aged 1-4) with an alarming ratio of 136 males per 100 females, the county shows an even higher sex ratio of 146 males per 100 females for children aged 1 to 4. Based on the number of recorded male children, 23,244 females were expected, but only 16,859 were counted. An estimated 6,385 female children were missing (see Table 1).

Moving to the village level, it is hard to identify significant trends because smaller numbers are involved. Table 2 shows the administrative hierarchy and the population for local levels, including the village team and small group (See Table 2). In 1988, Huang Tu had a population of 2,416 in 520 households. The households were divided into eight “teams” or “small groups.” Each “team” was the equivalent of a small village in size, but they were all fused together into what, in this part of



**Figure 2** Township sex ratio by birth year, 1957–1987, encompassing Huang Tu Village

**Table 1** Population, child sex ratios, and missing girls (age 1 to 4) for Henan province and county, 2000

Place	Total population	Children aged 1–4	Sex ratio (M/100F)	Estimated* missing girls
Henan province	91,237,000	4,091,535	135	494,891
County	642,000	41,508	146	6,385

\*Estimated by multiplying number of male children (N=24,649) by 0.943, a conservative standard for the normal sex ratio, and subtracting the reported number of girls (16,859) from the expected number of girls (23,244).

**Table 2** Levels of government and population 1988, 2004

	1988	2004
Township*	31,500	
Village	2,416	3,200
Teams* or small groups	Avg. 300	Avg. 400
Subgroup*	Avg. 75	

\*Township refers to an administrative village encompassing a number of villages. “Teams” are officially called small groups, a term rarely used by villagers. Subgroups, similar to “*yuanzi*” in Anhui (see M. Han, 2001) are informal groups within the team.

Sources: county police records (1988), village officials (2004)

Henan, is called a village (*cun* or *cunzhuang*)<sup>11</sup>). This village itself was under the authority of a township, or “administrative village” (*xiang*) located several kilometers away and included about 15 surrounding villages comparable to Huang Tu.

In 1988, Huang Tu Village documents recorded a balanced population with 1,206 males and 1,210 females. This figure is misleading, however, as men made up only 47 percent of the official village labor force. Village women, at 53 percent, were the dominant source of village labor. The shortage of men was caused by their transfer to nonfarm (urban) household registration status when they obtained government jobs in towns or cities<sup>12</sup>). Thus, village records excluded about 50 adult men whose wives and children retained village registration. This suggests that sex ratios among children were probably higher than normal, with about 50 extra boys. Of registered villagers counted in the labor force, all but 8 (of 495 women and 435 men in the workforce) were in “household managed” occupations which referred to farming.

From my first visit to the village, the state birth control policy has been a highly sensitive topic. One harsh campaign enacted in my presence in 1989 caused consternation to some of the higher authorities. I had photographed village officials confiscating household furniture and physically sealing up the empty house of a family that had fled the village in order to have another child. The offending family’s first child was a girl, and the daughter-in-law was pregnant again before the required four years had elapsed. Higher officials requested to see my pictures and confiscated them. Thus, in studying changes in household economic activities, I had to be careful because officials generally preferred to conceal methods of enforcement and the effects of an unpopular policy.

Two sets of local demographic data, from 1989 and from 2004, supplement the official data on sex ratios from higher levels of government and offer a glimpse at local conditions. In 1989, I conducted a survey of 50 households selected from each of the 8 teams. My sample of 73 children aged 0 to 15 shows evidence for skewed sex ratios, with a sex ratio of 152 males per 100 females. Due to the small numbers in the sample, the ratios fluctuated quite a bit from year to year, but they suggest that the sex bias may have been present even before the family planning policy began to be strictly enforced in the early 1980s.

**Table 3** Child sex ratios by age (M/100F) for Huang Tu Village, 1989

Year born	Age	Number	Sex ratio
1984–88	0–4	24	200
1979–83	5–9	19	57
1974–78	10–14	30	233
<b>1974–88</b>	<b>0–14</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>152</b>

Source: author’s interview sample of 50 households 1989.

Another opportunity to examine village age and sex data came in 2004 when I was given access to the household registration records for one of the eight teams. These records also show that Huang Tu Village sex ratios are roughly comparable to the abnormally high sex ratios reported in census data for the township, county, and province up to the year 2000. Table 4 shows that there were quite a few more boys born from 1990 to 1999. After the 2000 national census revealed the shocking scarcity of girls across China, government promotion of girl children through propaganda may have made local officials and villagers realize that they needed to have daughters (or simply that they needed to conceal the birth of sons because illegal abortions of females could be inferred from improbably high sex ratios). This could account for the sudden drop in the sex ratio for the 1–4 age group, although the numbers are too small to be significant.

Given the small numbers of births allowed in any village under the family planning program, it is difficult reliably to identify trends at the local level without referring to larger samples of births or age-sex distributions from more villages or longer time periods. All we can really conclude is that the data for Huang Tu Village are consistent with the larger trends.

The local demand for sons is also reflected in family composition. With the team data from 2004, I calculated the number of households with children who remain sonless and daughterless. Out of 88 households, 66 had children under age 15. In these 66 households, 36 had a child of each sex, leaving 30 couples with children of only one sex. There were 18 couples with no daughter, but only 12 had no son. Seven of the sonless 12 had only one daughter and would be able to try again. Only five of the daughterless 18 would be allowed to try again. Thus at a minimum 13 families end up with no daughter, and 5 end up with no son, unless they either have a child outside the quota or adopt one. This gives a rough measure of the number of families that have already broken the rules, as well as those that might want to do so. Nine of the daughterless couples have not born a child in 10 years, suggesting their reproductive period has ended. Of the five couples who have no sons (and already have two daughters), only two have not born a child in ten years, suggesting the other three may still want to break the quota. This exercise in numbers resembles the kind of thinking that family planning cadres across China

**Table 4** Huang Tu Village sex ratios for one team, 2004

Years born	Ages	Number	Sex ratio (M/F* 100)
2000–03	1–4	21	50
1995–99	5–9	26	189
1990–94	10–14	40	122
1985–89	15–19	43	115
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>113</b>

Source: village officials and village records, 2004

must conduct if they are to keep village reproduction within the quotas. Yet a glance at the family composition within this same team shows that 17 households have couples that have gone over the quota of two children in the past 17 years. Nine of them had several daughters followed by a son. Only one had sons first with a daughter as the final child.

## 2.2 The Women's Director

In 2004, the problem of imbalanced sex ratios had clearly been publicized in the village and officials were concerned about it. The wall of one central building carried a large banner proclaiming, "Girls are as good as boys." The Women's director told me that she did not have any exact statistics on village family planning because she simply passed these data on up to the authorities. However, she told me, "The population must not increase. We must keep the proportion of births to 1 percent of the population per year. They cannot pass ten new people per 1,000 population. The whole village has about 3,000 people so we can have about 30 children per year." She said they make adjustments two times per year, but make a report to the administrative village each month.

The director also affirmed that for everyone, the third birth is the last. "If a woman is pregnant with the third, she must get an ultrasound test (*B-chao*) and see if it's a girl. If it's a girl, she must have an abortion (*yin chan*)<sup>13</sup>. If it's a boy, she can have it and pay a fine." This statement suggests that family planning officials are colluding with the private use of ultrasound tests in order to meet their quotas and allow villagers to meet their demand for a son.

## 2.3 Conversations on family planning and land

One former village official and his neighbor told me, "All the figures for family planning are *jia de* (false), or *biaomian* (superficial)." "None of the statistics are to be believed," they said, "because they don't report girls." But they also said, "People used to use ultrasound to abort girls but they can't any more." They pointed to a new national policy against using ultrasound to check the sex of the fetus. They then mentioned that there had been a lot of private clinics in the county town where you could pay to detect the sex of the fetus. In 2004, they said, "This year the government fined those clinics in the county town and destroyed their machines. It is really hard to get ultrasound tests now." They were also aware of the national campaign to promote girl children with slogans like, "Girl children are the nation's future." But they, like others, say that in rural areas the thinking has not changed. They point out that in the city, one of their daughters had a single child, a daughter, and in the county town, another village daughter has one child, a daughter. "For city people, it does not matter," they said. "They are happy with their single girl

children. But rural people still believe they must have a son to guarantee their basic living or survival in old age.” They went on to explain why rural people no longer give up their land when they move to the city. “Even if the whole family moves to the city, having land and grain is a form of basic welfare so they can survive.” In their team, they quickly named five households that left, and two that “completely left”—meaning that their parents left too. But as long as they have agricultural registration, they keep their village land and rent it out to others<sup>14</sup>).

## 2.4 Land, landholding group, and lineage

“The god of land brings a lawsuit against a farmer who has too many children.”

Li Hongkui, fine-arts teacher, Beiguodong Village, Wuzhi County, Henan  
(*People's Daily* Jan. 1, 2000)

Each of the 8 teams in Huang Tu is associated with a section of a large rectangle formed by the grid of streets that compose the village. Each team has its own household registration records, conducts its own land allocation, and is responsible for its own family planning. The village as a whole has a village council, a set of leaders responsible for managing local government, with the most authority vested in the Party Secretary.

Land was first contracted to individual households in 1980. In 1985 land was re-divided and administered by the eight teams, so that each team had its own leaders who would reallocate land among the constituent households. Team subgroups, or *xiaozu* (groups, not clans), subdivide land according to population changes. One team, for example, has four groups (of about 20 households each), consisting of north street, center street, south street and a miscellaneous group scattered on different streets of this team. Each group has slightly different amounts of land per capita, according to population growth or decline. These are the groups that readjust the amount of land, by drawing lots, each five years.

In 1988 the village had 4,155 *mu* of land with about 1.7 *mu* of land per person. In 1980 when they first divided the collective land, everyone—male or female, young or old—got exactly the same amount distributed to her or his family<sup>15</sup>). By 1985, due to family variation in births and deaths, differences in the amount of land per capita had emerged. In addition, some teams lost members due to official outmigration for urban jobs. Examples include a man who obtained a government research position in Zhengzhou, and another who studied physics at a university in the United States and later moved to Holland. Others transferred out of the village when they passed the examination to become a state sector teacher, and work in the administrative village school. These individuals may keep their houses or house plots in Huang Tu Village, but no longer receive farmland as individuals. The village redistributed land but only within each team in 1985. Thus, some teams had



larger or lesser amounts per capita according to whether they had gained or lost population. In 1989, Team 1 had 2.0 mu per capita, and Team 5 had only 1.3. By 1993, that variation had decreased. The village had conducted a second land redistribution in 1990 and at that time the variation ranged from 1.8 mu to 1.3 mu per person, with the average amount of land per capita of 1.55 mu.

In 2004, population growth had reduced the amount of land per capita from 1.7 mu in 1989 to 1.25 mu. The team with the least land per capita had dropped down to 1.0 mu per person, while the team with the most had one third more, with 1.5 mu per capita. The population was now 3,207 and the farmland had declined to 3,953 mu because some land was converted to residential house plots for new families (see Table 5).

To understand property rights within rural China, it is important to examine the role of lineages as institutions that often exercise power within rural communities. Lineages are not officially part of the government, but are maps of kinship networks within the community that affect alliances and group membership in various ways. Outlining the kinship structure is thus an important part of understanding power and property relations within a village.

When I first came to Huang Tu Village, it appeared to be a multi-lineage village, even though it had the name of a dominant lineage, here called “Huang<sup>16</sup>.” I collected information on the surnames for each officially listed household head in the village, and examined their distribution among the eight teams. Table 6 shows lineage distribution where lineage “A” refers to the most numerous name, Huang.

The numerical dominance of the Huangs was over 50 percent in three of the eight teams, but it did not reach the level of 80 percent, a convenient benchmark for considering a village a “single lineage” village. Thus, even though the Huangs were the most numerous of the diverse surnames in Huang Tu Village as a whole, three other lineages were the most numerous in other teams, and none seemed have

**Table 5** Huang Tu Village changes in land per capita by team 1989–2004

Team	Mu per capita		
	1989	1993	2004
1	2	1.8	1.4
2	1.7	1.6	1.1
3	1.9	1.7	1.3
4	1.8	1.6	1.5
5	1.5	1.5	1.5
6	1.3	1.3	1.0
7	1.5	1.3	1.0
8	1.9	1.7	1.4
Total	1.7	1.6	1.2

Source: village records from various years, from party secretary and team leaders.

enough members to be a completely dominant lineage. This impression was reinforced by the fact that the Party Secretary and Vice Party Secretary and the majority of the village council were not named Huang. I initially perceived the community as a multi-surname village with a number of important patrilineages, the Huangs being the largest.

Names can be misleading, however. In this case, the village method of keeping track of household heads unintentionally concealed the lineage affiliation of a portion of the households. The household registration booklets record the eldest male of the senior couple as head, and when he dies, the widow is regarded as household head, even when she is living with adult, married sons. Because women do not take their husband’s surname at marriage<sup>17)</sup>, the registers list these female household heads by their natal surname, which differs from the surname of their children. Thus, the listing for female heads of household does not reflect the lineage affiliation of the next generation. This inadvertently disguises the degree of lineage concentration among the males of the village. Because I could not obtain registration information for all 2,500 individuals in 1989, a method of reducing the distortion regarding lineage concentration is to omit the female-headed households from the sample and analyze just the surnames of the male heads. This is reasonable if there is no systematic bias to make some surname groups likely to have more widows or female-headed households than others.

Re-examination of the 1989 evidence (see Table 7) suggests that Huang Tu Village is not best described as a multi-surname village, but as a village with strong surname concentration in each team. Structurally, the eight teams resemble a “natural villages” (a term used in China to suggest they all descended from the same founding family, and defining patrilineal descent as “natural”) composed of a dominant lineage and a secondary lineage. Each team has a single surname that accounts for 50 to 83 percent of the households, and a secondary lineage comprising from 10 to 36 percent of the total households. Together, the two main surnames accounted for 73 to 100 percent of the male household heads in each team<sup>18)</sup>.

In 2004, I collected household membership from the registration books for

**Table 6** Huang Tu Village distribution of lineages among 8 village teams, 1989

Primary lineage	Percent	Secondary lineage	Percent
A	77	H	14
A	70	B	8
A	56	B	8
A	46	B	30
A	45	C	17
B	43	A	32
D	48	E	27
F	62	G	17

Source: village household registration records for head of household.

**Table 7** Huang Tu Village: surname concentration among male household heads for each of the eight teams (1989)

Primary lineage %	2ndary lineage %	Primary & 2ndary lineage %
83	10	93
82	12	94
78	20	98
77	18	95
64	36	100
57	36	93
53	20	73
50	35	85

Source: Village registration books (excluding households with female heads whose surnames (*xing*) do not correspond to the lineage name of the children of the household. Shading marks primary lineages with over 70 percent, and the sum of primary and secondary lineages with over 90 percent of team population.

every member (total 408) of one team, including the households headed by women. Classifying them according to the surname taken by the children of the household showed that 70 percent of the households belonged to the dominant lineage, supporting the evidence for surname concentration from 1989. Seen from this perspective, Huang Tu Village resembles an association of eight single-lineage communities (three of them dominated by non-Huang lineages) with a few minor lineages distributed among them. The fact that each landholding team is very strongly associated with one or two surname groups suggests that son preference in this area is related to the social significance of lineages and not just to the labor, old-age security, and lineal continuity concerns of individual families.

## 2.5 Land policy and population policy in practice

I recently interviewed a farmer who made a good living from farming his household allotment of land. He explained that his household has land for seven people because he has five children. He had three daughters by his first wife who got sick and died (*bing si le*). The three daughters are 24 or younger, that is, born under the birth control policy. All three daughters from his first wife work outside the province in a mobile phone factory. The oldest is to marry a soldier from China's far west, but soldiers are not allowed to marry until age 25. So if Huang Tu Village redistributes land next year, the father will still get land for his unmarried daughters for another five years. He has two sons by his second wife, age 10 and 7. So altogether this family has land for seven people until the older daughters get married. Clearly this man has bent the family planning regulations, and the land distribution system. He belongs to the dominant lineage for his team.

There are several interesting aspects to this example. The first is the fact that

land is still held and redistributed per capita so that daughters and daughters-in-law can in some sense be identified with a share. Second, the death of a wife who had three daughters (all born after the family planning policy was in effect, so that the third was beyond the official quota) allowed this man to remarry. Perhaps an exception was also made to allow his first wife to bear three children, but he should not have been allowed to have more than one child by his second wife. He seems to have broken most of the rules, and ended up with two sons.

Third, if his first wife were still alive, he would have no sons. The cause of her early demise is a matter of interest, but I have no further information. Although an anthropologist can dredge for gossip, there is no way to know the truth. Without drawing any conclusions about this case, I note, however, that there are many reports of men in rural China who have beaten and threatened their wives if they did not produce a son. In the past, men could take a second wife or concubine to try for a son, or adopt a boy. In the current family planning era, few boy babies are available for adoption. Polygyny is illegal but men might divorce in order to try again for a son with a different wife. I suspect that the mortality rate for rural women who are childless or have only daughters is higher than that of rural women who have sons, particularly in single-lineage communities.

## 2.6 Land for houses

One couple that I interviewed is a case of endogamous marriage in Huang Tu Village. Married at the start of the reforms, their parents opposed the match even though they belonged to different lineages. The parents' reason had to do with the principal of exogamy. They did not want their children to marry another person of the same village. Both the husband and the wife have become state sector teachers with household registration in the township, so their household registration has been removed from the village. Neither one of them receives farmland. Nonetheless, they built a new house in the village two years ago. They explained, "All sons born in the village have a right to a house lot (*zhaijidi*) of 3 *fen* (0.3 *mu*, or 200 square meters)." When I asked about daughters, they said that an *unmarried* daughter in theory also has that right, but the ones who actually receive it are sons, married or not, whether they work outside the village or not. For example, a married son of the village who has urban registration and has lived in the city for more than fifteen years told me he no longer has a house, but he still has 3 *fen* of land in Huang Tu Village. According to local rules, however, a married daughter loses the right to inherit the house plot.

Another example of gender and land transfer comes from an extended family with two married sons, each with a child. Several years ago, their daughter married out to a neighboring village. Because the land has not been redistributed yet, their daughter has no farmland in her husband's village while her two sisters-in-law in Huang Tu Village have received her share of the farmland, until they are each

given a full portion at the next land adjustment. These examples show how rural communities continue to exclude daughters from direct inheritance of farmland or house lots, and require them to marry in order to obtain land rights through their husband<sup>19)</sup>. In this setting, it is no wonder that many village women expressed the view that bearing a son is their duty or obligation (*ren wu*). It often sounded as if they were describing a job they were hired to do. Bearing a son creates the next property owner, and secures a woman's claims to land in her husband's village. This is vitally necessary for her because, as a married woman, she loses these rights in her natal village.

## 2.7 Names and uxoriocal marriage

Sensitivity to family planning is evident in numerous domains, some almost humorous. For example, one family that had a son at the very beginning of the Family Planning campaign in 1981 named him "Courteous." They had another son in 1982, and named him "Surpass (as in surpass the quota)" and seven years later in 1989, they had a daughter and named her "Addition." In another family that had three daughters and no sons, the third daughter was named "Little Brother." She remained home with her parents, and married at home in one of the rare cases of uxoriocal marriage. Her husband was the son of a teacher from outside the village. Her three children, two boys and a girl born in the eighties, all have the uxoriocal husband's surname. It remains to be seen whether the two boys of a different surname will be able to inherit land rights from their mother's side of the family without any problem.

## 2.8 Land control policy in practice: the lineage as land enforcement agency

Over the years, I have spoken with villagers and officials about anomalous household situations such as uxoriocal marriage and widow remarriage to better understand how well families or individuals outside the patriline were tolerated with respect to membership and land rights. In one team, I found that uxoriocal marriages accounted for only two percent of all marriages. When I interviewed a leader about uxoriocal marriage in his team, he seemed embarrassed, speaking of the two cases in hushed tones, and explained the unusual circumstances involved. I comment on the embarrassment because it contrasts so greatly with the many cases of uxoriocal marriage I encountered in a Han village in Yunnan province where uxoriocal marriage was an accepted alternative even in families with both sons and daughters (Bossen 2002). In Huang Tu Village, one case of uxoriocal marriage occurred in a household that had three daughters and no son, and another in a household where a virilocally married widow with young children remarried. Years earlier, I was told

about another case of a widow with young children who attempted to bring in a husband from outside the village. In the first attempt, the husband mysteriously died (drinking himself to death in the company of another Huang Tu Villager), and in the second attempt the man was beaten up and driven out by the nephews of her deceased husband (Bossen n.d.).

Some have predicted that the one-child policy would eventually lead to the acceptance of uxori-local marriage in rural communities (H. Han 2003). This is because roughly half of all families would have a single daughter and, without a son, this large group of parents would view their daughter as their heir and source of old age support. However, the two-child policy and the use of sex-selective abortion seems to have delayed any such transition by providing the large majority of families with at least one son.

In addition to the very low tolerance for uxori-local marriage exhibited by patrilineal groups in Huang Tu Village, divorce is exceedingly rare. I did not encounter a single case of a divorced woman who retained any land or house rights within the village. In this region, women who divorced generally moved away, even if they had small children. One divorced woman who remarried into Huang Tu Village complained that her second husband did not treat her first son equally with the son that she had with him. The stepson was not allowed to inherit.

In Chinese villages, some of these variations in local practice such as the acceptance or rejection of uxori-local marriage or of divorced women as entitled to a share of the marital property are linked with the strength of patrilineal organization. Where villages are dominated by a single lineage in numerical terms, whether or not it is perceived as a corporate group (by constructing lineage temples, for example), it still has considerable informal power to police its boundaries and exclude outsiders. One of the major principles of the lineage as an institution is its exclusion of men who are not members by birthright<sup>20</sup>.

## 2.9 The village itself as corporate property

I suggest that debate about whether or not Chinese patrilineal groups require “corporate property” in order to qualify as lineages may not recognize that the village itself is, in some way, patrilineal corporate property as long as the village leadership can make decisions about who can or cannot become a member. This sense of “ownership” does not depend on title deeds, but on lineage strength in using political connections or force if need be to defend village interests. The strong lineage, with its careful record keeping of members and their links to others, is able to include or exclude. While membership in the village or in the communist party is officially lineage-neutral, the bonds that bring people into relations of trust with one another are still greatly strengthened by lineage affiliation, reinforced by a history of family and residential ties and obligations as brothers, and neighbor-cousins

(often called “brothers”) often growing up in the same or adjacent courtyards, and as migrant workers often calling upon kin to help them get jobs in outside settings.

Lineage theorists tend to think of property as belonging to the individual or household, or lineage and to look for signs of joint ownership of land, temples, schools, or other buildings<sup>21</sup>). But the village itself is a unit whose property is managed by a leadership operating largely under patrilineal rules. Thus, the village itself, which, following decollectivization, is not explicitly considered collective property, has a property system of different layers of ownership. Even though individuals contract property for household production, the land remains effectively the property of the corporate group headed by village leaders (Guo 1999: 74–75). These leaders also represent their lineage interests. Over the years, as the status inversions of the Maoist years that elevated men of poor families are forgotten, the influential leadership positions of party secretary and the village head often return to members of the dominant lineage (M. Han 2001: 146). In regions where there is no dominant lineage and many different surname groups compete for power, the enforcement of gender rules strictly delimiting lineage membership may be less stringent (Li Shuzhuo et al 2000, and Bossen 2002).

How is power actually exercised within the village? Is party membership strong enough to counter lineage membership as a basis for power? Gao (1999: 201) wrote about clan power in terms of family planning, and made some interesting comments on the relationship between clans and the party.

“We must be cautious not to overstate the similarities between the periods before 1949 and that in post-Mao China. For one thing, the clans and the Communist local officials have not yet totally merged as one political body. ... In present-day China clan power and the local official authorities still comprise two distinct political entities. Nonetheless there is a great deal of overlap. Furthermore, if the state chooses to, it can still exert power over the local authorities. A clear example of this is the implementation of family planning policies. Since the early 1990s, a large number of abortions and IUD operations have been forcefully carried out in Qinglin and Gao Village, and local clan power has been unable, and in fact has never tried, to stop these brutal measures” (1999: 201).

While it is important to note that much of the birth control burden falls on women who are outsiders to the lineage, Gao’s point is still valid. Perhaps the view here should be the optimistic one that when the state sees its vital interests at stake, it is capable of projecting power to the village level. As long as missing daughters are not seen in this light, however, the state is prepared to accept the power of lineages and other local elites.

### 3 Conclusion

Some scholars have explicitly linked China’s family planning policy to miss-

ing girls (Greenhalgh and Li 1995) but few have linked the household responsibility system to increasing sex ratios. Households are now in charge of their own labor force and their own social security. Their security comes from their land and their land rights are enforced by lineage-dominated groups. Households are taking that responsibility and choosing sons over daughters. There is clearly a relationship between the land system and the son system.

How high will the sex ratio go? Amartya Sen (2003) seemed relieved that it has not risen above 120. If we assume everyone has two children and the 25 percent who are “boyless” carry on to have one boy, with the third (and subsequent) girls being aborted, unregistered or something else, then the resulting ratio is 125. If we limit the number of pregnancies to five, then the sex ratio is 122 males per 100 females. (According to Li et al, 2003, describing conditions of high fertility, if families with no sons continue to have up to 5 children, only 3 percent will still lack a son). I suggest that a sex ratio of around 125 is an upper limit allowing all families to have at least one son. The danger that it could go higher would seem to depend on a condition where girls per se represent a grave disadvantage to their parents—as when they are expected to provide an expensive dowry—as has been the case in India. In China, the compromises at the local level amounting to a son guarantee mean that the majority of families have at least one son. Some will have two sons, unless the policy is enforced as it is in Anhui, where even rural couples are supposed to stop at one son.

Son preference in rural China is exacerbated by population control. The pattern of skewed sex ratios in Huang Tu Village approximates the more general model of gender probabilities outlined for the two-child policy above, with a rough estimate of twenty-five percent of couples bending or breaking the rules. However, insistence on having a son is primarily motivated by land allocation practices and patrilineal rules of male land inheritance. The significance of the patriline is not merely that the “line” is a ritual link between ancestors and descendents, but is very importantly about land, local territory, and territorial integrity, concerns that fall within the traditional domain of lineage interests<sup>22</sup>). Lineage ties that prescribe loyalty and solidarity remain a potential source of village political power and brute force.

In rural China, patrilineal groups retain power for several reasons.

- The central government is weak on the ground. It cannot enforce its regulations without cooperation from local leaders who are surrounded by patrilineal kin groups with claims upon them. This, of course, is a specific instance of the classic observation that “Heaven is high and the Emperor far away.”
- Private property in land is not allowed, so local allocation is the practice by which villagers’ property rights are defined, with patrilineal principles operating to determine who belongs to the community and can contract farmland. While the introduction of private property in land will not solve this problem as long as the lineage system remains intact in rural areas, the current system



unquestionably devalues daughters.

- Although the state systematically works to eliminate other centers of power, rural lineages are “below the radar” and “traditional,” often operating as an agent of the state. They thereby pose a relatively low level of threat to state power. Lineage organization thus enters the vacuum which exists where the institutions of civil society otherwise would be<sup>23</sup>.

While there are of course cultural elements in this formulation, son preference can best be seen as a response to specific policies and circumstances.

The land reform of the 1950s stressed that women were to have equal rights to land, and they were counted in the distribution of land to households in the first phase of land reform. Collectivization, however, erased those rights for men and women as they became landless workers on larger collective farms managed by village committees under the direction of the state. Decollectivization did not bring a return to either the pre-revolutionary situation of larger and smaller landowners, nor did it bring a return to the immediate pre-collectivization situation where women were supposed to have gained title to land. Rather, as explained above, decollectivization brought a mixed system of contracting to households based on patrilineal birthright, with the village government as the effective owner-allocator of the village land. In the household, there is a decision as to which individuals are members with inheritance rights, and which members are temporary workers. In the village as well, there are members who have birth rights, and those who have only temporary rights to residence and income, without a say in governance and without a share of inheritance. Because current village practice still treats daughters' land rights in the family and village as temporary, the accepted way for daughters to regain a claim on land and housing is to raise a son for their husband's family and patrilineage. The reform period has witnessed the revival of patrilineal control over village land rights and the implementation of a national birth control policy. Acting together these developments have contributed to the extreme shortage of daughters in rural China.

Missing daughters are a human development problem per se. The Chinese government and outside development workers are increasingly seeing them as a problem with respect to development as well. The argument that a generation of bachelor males risks being a challenge to social stability is one element<sup>24</sup>. Missing daughters' devalued sisters may also have less to contribute to society than had they been raised in a more female friendly environment. Interestingly, neither the United Nations Human Development Index nor the related Gender Development Index contains a sex ratio measure. The current measures of life expectancy, literacy, and income, which comprise the index, are, of course, important, but the significance of skewed sex ratios to human development needs to be recognized.

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## Notes

- 1) McCurry, Justin and Rebecca Allison. 'One child' policy leaves China with huge shortage of women. *The Guardian, London*, Tuesday, March 23, 2004, p. 9.
- 2) French, Howard. Chinese Crack Down on Illegal Abortions. *The New York Times*. February 18, 2005.
- 3) There are many examples where statements about heavy labor or hard labor by men are presented at face value without any documentation of the specific work of men or women. See, for example, Li Shuzhuo, Marcus W. Feldman, Nan Li (2003).
- 4) An experiment in providing such pension rewards is being conducted in Jiaozuo, northern Henan (Sina.English.com 2004)
- 5) The "wan xi shao" idea was to have children "late, spaced out, and few" as a way of maintaining land-population equilibrium.
- 6) See Elisabeth Croll (2000), Dreze and Sen (2002: 257–262), Barbara Miller (1981), Amartya Sen (2000: 104–107), and Judith Banister (2004) for explanations of this standard and for an introduction to the general problem of missing girls. Throughout this paper I will use "sex ratio" to measure males per 100 females as this is the standard usually used for China. Studies for India often use the inverse ratio of 94.3 females per 100 males to represent the normal birth sex ratio. In the latter case, birth sex ratios below 94 females per 100 males suggest discrimination against daughters.
- 7) Sichuan was China's most populous province until the a new administrative region for Chongqing was made a separate territory of about 30 million people in 1997. Henan (2005) reports a population of 92.56 million, about 1 million more than the figure given in the China Census for 2000.
- 8) This is an abnormally high sex ratio for total population. Normally, sex ratios for total population are much lower due to the greater longevity of women.
- 9) Taking the normal sex ratio at birth of 106 males per 100 females, then the inverse is .943 females per male. The population of boys age 1–4 in Henan in 2000 was 2,360,487. Multiplying this number by .943 gives 2,225,939, the expected number of girls. The reported number of girls was only 1,731,048. The difference is 494,891, or nearly 1/2 million.
- 10) One x-ray technician in Henan, working with little protection (a leather rather than a lead shield) told me he got extra compensation for submitting to hazardous x-ray exposure as he did checkups on women.
- 11) The villages studied by other anthropologists are often the size of a "team" in Huang Tu Village. For instance, M. Han's village population (2001: 19) had 301 people in 78 households in 1990. Gao studied a village of 351 people (1999: 26) and Ku studied a small village of 61 households (2003: 25). Yan (1996) and J. and R. Watson (2004) studied larger villages.
- 12) Men also obtained nonfarm status for jobs as "workers" in mines or railroads, while the remaining family members were classified as "villagers" (*nongmin*, often translated as "peasant"). Access to formal government employment was very rare for village women. Many nonfarm men were counted at their place of work, raising the sex ratio of cities and nonagricultural work sites such as mines.
- 13) She corrected her use of the term, *liu chan*, implying that they do these post ultrasound abortions rather late.
- 14) This elderly individual and his wife have a land contract. The rent for their land is around Y1,080 per year, but they take it in the form of grain. They rent it to a relative (most likely their son). "All

- the farming is mechanized now,” he said, “planting and harvesting. People still spray pesticides three times for wheat, but that’s it.”
- 15) A *mu* is 0.0667 hectares.
  - 16) The pseudonym, Huang, was chosen to indicate that they are the dominant family, as well as to suggest the pervasive Yellow Earth of their environment.
  - 17) Before the 1949 revolution, women took the surname of their husband when they married, and were known by the two lineage surnames, their husband’s and their father’s plus “*shi*” which, like “Mrs.” denoted a married woman.
  - 18) This is very similar to Hu Mingwen’s description of Liuxia village in Jiangxi Province, Wannian county, Huyun township. Liuxia village is composed of four “natural villages” in which each has a different dominant surname (2004: 6).
  - 19) See also Bossen (2002) and Jacka (1997) for descriptions of rural women’s land rights.
  - 20) For general discussion of Chinese patriliney and patrimony, see Harrell (2002). Regarding lineages that lack corporate property in the northern part of China, see Cohen (1990, 1992, 2005), and M. Han’s study of a lineage (2001) in Anhui. For south China, see J. and R. Watson (2004, 2004a, 2004b).
  - 21) See M. Han’s comparison of lineage models (2001).
  - 22) See J. Watson (2004b) for a description of the role of lineage militia in defending lineage interests.
  - 23) See Hu Mingwen (2004) and Zeng Guohua. (2004) for opposing positive and negative views on the revival on lineage and clan strength in Jiangxi Province, as well as Ruf (1999, 2000) for Sichuan.
  - 24) Watson (2004b, orig. 1989) noted the link between involuntary bachelorhood and violence in South China. Hudson and den Boer’s broad examination of the historical role of unmarried males in China concludes, “Throughout Chinese history, men at the margins of society have been available for work that involves violence. Occasionally they changed the destiny of a nation.” (2004: 226)

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Zeng Yi et al.

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