



## Chinese Civic Associations: An Empirical Analysis

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*Modern China*, Volume 24, Issue 3 (Jul., 1998), 285-318.

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# *Chinese Civic Associations*

## **An Empirical Analysis**

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The emergence of civic associations in post-Mao China has attracted increasing interest from Chinese and Western scholars alike. Recent studies have focused on a wide range of issues concerning the concept of civil society in the Chinese context (Huang, 1993; Ma, 1994), the causes of the emergence of civic associations, their relationship with the state, their activities, and their potential impact on democratization (He, 1997). Some scholars (White, Howell, and Shang, 1996; Wang Ying, Zhe Xiaoye, and Sun Bingyao, 1992) have attributed the rapid growth of Chinese civic associations to the sustained market reforms the country has experienced in the post-Mao era. Others have credited a set of limited measures taken by the post-Mao leadership to moderate the state's control over society (Whyte, 1992: 87-94). Several researchers (Chan, 1993; Unger and Chan, 1996) have argued that the emergence of such associations should be treated as part of a process of the development of state corporatism in China. However, this view has been implicitly challenged by others who, while recognizing some characteristics of state corporatism in Chinese civic associations, point to a more complex set of relationships between such groups and the state. Using evidence on a variety of civic associations in two rural communities, Shue (1994: 77-84) has suggested "a possible continuum of associational structures

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: *I wish to thank Larry Diamond and Elizabeth Perry for their helpful comments. Financial support for the research on which this article is based was provided by the U.S. Institute of Peace (SG-71-94). The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Institute of Peace.*

MODERN CHINA, Vol. 24 No. 3, July 1998 285-318

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and experiences stretching from those relatively . . . state-dominated at one extreme, to those relatively . . . autonomous, at the other." Shue's argument has been echoed by other researchers. Unger's (1996) study of business associations concludes that a complex set of factors has affected the status, autonomy, and activities of Chinese civic associations. While some Chinese business associations have been completely dominated by state agencies, others have shown a surprising level of independence and a capacity to represent the interests of their members. Pearson's work on foreign and Chinese business associations (1997, 1994) has provided similar evidence. Perry (1995) and Wasserstrom and Liu Xinyong (1995) have shown that even official and semiofficial labor unions and student associations can break away from state control and play an independent political role at critical junctures (such as the 1989 pro-democracy movement).

The dualist—semiofficial and semicivic—nature of most Chinese civic associations has also been explicitly identified by Chinese sociologists (Sun Bingyao, 1994; Wang Ying, 1994; Ding, 1994). Sun has traced the source of this dualism to the simultaneous pressures from the state and society on the formation of an intermediary level of organization between the two, a view shared by Shue (1994). Wang Ying has argued that Chinese civic associations sought official support to overcome many practical difficulties (especially the lack of funding and office space). X. L. Ding reports evidence that, by assuming such dualism, China's political opposition could establish an otherwise impossible institutional foothold (or "institutional amphibiousness," in Ding's colorful metaphor) to undermine the authoritarian regime.

It is clear that the works on Chinese civil society and civic associations cited above have laid a solid foundation for further investigation of the subject. In particular, the works by White, Howell, and Shang (1996); White (1993); and Wang Ying, Zhe Xiaoye, and Sun Bingyao (1992) contain rich and fresh information from careful field research and insightful theoretical analysis. However, most studies of Chinese civic associations have failed to provide comprehensive empirical data at the national, provincial, municipal, and county/district levels or a systematic analysis of such empirical data. While case studies have enabled us to examine individual "trees," we have not been shown the "forest." Consequently, there is little knowledge about the rates and

patterns of growth of Chinese civic associations since the late 1970s, about the structural changes in China's emerging civil society, or about their organizational characteristics.

This article attempts to fill this empirical gap. It provides a comprehensive study of registered Chinese civic associations at the national, provincial, municipal, and county/district levels by coding and analyzing the data on these groups provided by two sourcebooks (Fan Baojun, 1995; Ma Yili and Liu Hanbang, 1993). An examination of the empirical data analyzed in this article may yield clues to several important questions hitherto left unanswered by the literature:

1. What has been the pattern of growth of civic associations in post-Mao China?
2. What changes have taken place in the structure (i.e., types of civic associations that collectively constitute part of the social capital) of such organizations since the late 1970s?
3. How does politics affect the growth of civic associations?
4. What are the differences between civic associations at different levels (i.e., national, provincial, and county/district)?
5. What are the major differences between civic associations in urban areas and in rural areas?
6. How do Chinese civic associations compare with those in other parts of East Asia, especially in Taiwan?

These topics will be treated in detail in this article. The first section briefly explains the data and the methodology used in selecting and coding the data. The second section analyzes the data on national, provincial, municipal, and county/district civic associations in China. The third section provides a brief comparison between mainland China's civic associations and those in Taiwan.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

### THE DATA

*Zhongguo shehui tuanti dacidian* (Fan Baojun, 1995) is the most comprehensive sourcebook on national, provincial, and municipal associations in China that were formed and registered before 1992. Its compilation began in the spring of 1992, with the collaboration of

scholars in research institutions and universities, as well as officials in the Division of the Supervision of Social Organizations in the Ministry of Civil Affairs and in the provincial departments of civil affairs. This sourcebook provides some of the most essential information about Chinese national, provincial, and municipal associations, such as the dates of their founding, their membership, and their main activities. Such information enables a researcher to reconstruct longitudinal data on the growth of civic associations at all levels, study their structural changes (i.e., the change in the distribution of different types of organizations over time), and measure their membership characteristics and size.

Another sourcebook, *Shanghai shehui tuanti gailan* (Ma Yili and Liu Hanbang, 1993), contains detailed information (dates of founding, membership size and characteristics, and main activities) on county and district associations formed in Shanghai before 1992. The data in this book enable us to reconstruct similar longitudinal data on the growth of grassroots associations. Shanghai was chosen because it was the only city for which there is a systematically constructed database suitable for this study. A note of caution is in order here: in looking at the data from Shanghai, one must take into account its high level of development and strong Western influence before 1949.

*Zhonghua minguo Taiwan diqu geji renmin tuanti gaikuang diaocha baogao* (Ministry of the Interior, 1990) contains a massive survey of civic associations in Taiwan. Some of the data collected in this survey are useful for making a brief comparison between the development of civic associations in Taiwan and those in mainland China.

However, it is important to point out that the conclusions reached by this article, which analyzes data on registered civic groups only, may not provide a complete profile of civic associations in contemporary China or Taiwan because the data do not contain unregistered associations. Obviously, underground groups (such as cults, secret societies, unofficial labor unions, illegal religious groups) banned by the government were excluded from the data. Moreover, the registration procedure was decentralized and loosely enforced during the 1980s, before the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident. Civic associations could register with a number of government agencies, such as the local offices of the Ministry of Civil Affairs and other government departments with authority over proposed areas of activities. Consequently,

it is possible that the data may miss fully legitimate organizations that were formed in this period but failed to register (due to the lax enforcement) or whose registrations were not reported by various government agencies. The implementation of the regulations on civic associations in 1989 raised the hurdle of registration. A new civic association was required first to obtain official approval from the relevant government agency, with direct supervisory authority over its proposed activities, before it could register with the local offices of the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Such tightening would certainly discourage the registration of groups whose proposed activities might not fall clearly within the purview of any single government supervisory agency and deter groups that feared official registration that would invite unwanted government attention. However, it remains unclear whether many civic groups chose to remain active even without official registration.

#### METHODOLOGY

There are several methodological issues involved in coding and sorting the large amount of data contained in the two sourcebooks on China. Since the compilers of the sourcebooks did not apply a systematic method of coding or categorizing the associations included, a system of classification has been devised for this study. The official Chinese system uses four broad categories: *xueshuxing tuanti* (scholarly associations), *zhuan ye tuanti* (professional or specialized associations), *hangyexing tuanti* (industry or sectoral associations), and the more generic *shehui tuanti* (civic associations). Other scholars have noted the use of a more detailed classification system, which categorizes civic associations according to their main activities.<sup>1</sup>

In this article, nine categories of civic associations are established: (1) scholarly associations in natural science, technology, and engineering; (2) scholarly associations in the social sciences, humanities, and management studies; (3) recreational (sports and hobby) and friendship associations; (4) arts, education, and health associations; (5) professional and managerial associations; (6) business and trade associations; (7) public affairs groups; (8) religious groups; and (9) charitable groups and foundations.<sup>2</sup>

In processing the data, I excluded organizations for which certain crucial information is not provided (such as date of founding or membership) and obviously official organizations that did not seem to be "civic," such as political study groups set up to promote the official ideology and associations established to promote China's ties with foreign countries. I also dropped a province from the sample if important information was missing for more than 2% of its associations.<sup>3</sup> In selecting the provincial sample, I chose four relatively industrialized provinces (Jiangsu, Shandong, Liaoning, and Jilin) and four agrarian provinces (Guizhou, Henan, Jiangxi, and Shanxi) to reduce a possible selection bias. In studying municipal associations, I selected three cities (Qingdao, Ningbo, and Chongqing) that are not provincial capitals since they may be more representative of most large Chinese cities.<sup>4</sup> In the analysis of district and county associations, I chose five urban districts and five suburban (rural) counties both to avoid selection bias and to make comparisons between urban and rural associations.

### *UNDERSTANDING THE GROWTH OF CHINESE CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS*

#### *STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN CHINESE CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS*

There were two striking characteristics of civic associations in China at the end of the Mao era. First, there were relatively few civic associations at all levels: only 103 national associations, 355 provincial associations in the eight selected provinces (averaging 44 each), 89 municipal associations in the three selected cities (averaging 30 each), and 57 associations in the ten selected counties/districts in Shanghai (averaging 6 each) (see Tables 1-4). This evidence reconfirms that the state in the Mao era severely limited civic activities. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), nearly all civic associations ceased activities. Second, there was little diversity in civic associations in the Mao era. The concentration of most civic associations in a very small number of categories is an indication of serious structural weakness of civil society. The data in Tables 1 through 4 show that more than half of the national, provincial, and municipal

associations were involved in the natural sciences, technology, and engineering—areas considered politically safe and not directly a part of ordinary civic activities. Three categories of associations accounted for between 82% and 95% of national, provincial, municipal, and county/district associations (although the categories varied across different levels). At the national and provincial levels, scholarly associations (in the natural sciences, technology, engineering, the social sciences, humanities, and management studies) accounted for two-thirds of all associations. Compared with national and provincial associations, municipal associations before 1979 showed a slightly greater “civic content.” Municipal associations included more groups that had a greater impact on civic life at the local level than at the national or provincial level. In the three selected cities—Qingdao, Ningbo, and Chongqing—municipal recreational, friendship, arts, health, and education groups accounted for 36% of the total. At the county/district level, as shown by the data for five urban districts and five suburban (rural) counties in Shanghai, civic associations similarly lacked diversity (with only four categories represented). However, there were considerably more arts, education, health, recreational, and friendship associations that more directly contributed to local civic life in urban districts and rural counties (46% of all groups in the ten counties and districts included in this study).

The growth of civic associations, both in number and diversity, has been dramatic since economic reform began in 1979. In the fourteen years (1979-1992) surveyed in this study (see Tables 1-4), the number of national associations rose sevenfold, averaging 48% a year. The increase of provincial associations in the eight selected provinces in the same period was 787%, averaging 56% a year. In the three selected cities, the increase in the same period was 885%, with an average annual growth rate of 63%. In the ten Shanghai counties and districts, the same period saw an increase of 1,207%, averaging 86% a year.

Another notable change brought about by the explosive growth of civic associations in post-Mao China was a much greater diversity of such associations. This structural change was caused by (1) the rapid emergence of business, trade, professional, and management associations and (2) the relative increase of scholarly associations in the social sciences, humanities, and management studies. The relative increase of these groups has been the principal cause of the dramatic change in



**TABLE 1: Distribution of National Associations, 1978 and 1992**

<i>Type of Association</i>	<i>1978</i>		<i>1992</i>	
	<i>Number of Associations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number of Associations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Natural sciences, technology, and engineering	53	51	138	17
Recreational and friendship	19	18	69	9
Social sciences, humanities, and management studies	13	13	224	28
Arts, health, and education	5	5	71	9
Religious	5	5	8	1
Professional and managerial	3	3	44	6
Business and trade	3	3	212	27
Charitable groups and foundations	2	2	16	2
Public affairs	0	0	8	1
Total	103	100	790	100

SOURCE: Fan Baojun (1995: 273-384).

**TABLE 2: Distribution of Provincial Associations, 1978 and 1992**

<i>Type of Association</i>	<i>1978</i>		<i>1992</i>	
	<i>Number of Associations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number of Associations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Natural sciences, technology, and engineering	204	57	638	20
Arts, health, and education	60	17	387	12
Social sciences, humanities, and management studies	30	8	846	27
Religious	20	6	47	1.5
Recreational and friendship	19	5	273	9
Professional and managerial	10	3	232	7
Business and trade	8	2	682	22
Charitable groups and foundations	4	1	27	1
Public affairs	0	0	17	0.5
Total	355	100	3,149	100

SOURCE: Fan Baojun (1995).

NOTE: Data are from eight provinces: Guizhou, Henan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Shandong, and Shanxi.

**TABLE 3: Distribution of Municipal Associations in Chongqing, Ningbo, and Qingdao, 1978 and 1992**

<i>Type of Association</i>	<i>1978</i>		<i>1992</i>	
	<i>Number of Associations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number of Associations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Natural sciences, technology, and engineering	47	53	156	18
Recreational and friendship	19	21	127	14
Arts, health, and education	13	15	128	15
Religious	6	7	8	0.9
Charitable groups and foundations	2	2	2	0.2
Social sciences, humanities, and management studies	1	1	221	25
Business and trade	1	1	162	18
Professional and managerial	0	0	66	8
Public affairs	0	0	7	0.9
Total	89	100	877	100

SOURCE: Fan Baojun (1995: 273-384).

**TABLE 4: Distribution of County and District Organizations in Shanghai, 1978 and 1992**

<i>Type of Association</i>	<i>1978</i>		<i>1992</i>	
	<i>Number of Associations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number of Associations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Arts, health, and education	23	41	149	20
Natural sciences, technology, and engineering	20	35	16	22
Charitable, religious, and public affairs	11	19	41	5
Recreational and friendship	3	5	195	26
Business and trade	0	0	86	12
Social sciences, humanities, and management studies	0	0	75	10
Professional and managerial	0	0	38	5
Total	57	100	745	100

SOURCE: Ma Yili and Liu Hanbang (1993).

the distribution of civic associations at all levels (see Tables 1-4). Consequently, the concentration rate of civic associations showed a considerable decline in the fourteen-year period. If we take the com-

bined percentage of the top three types of civic associations as a concentration rate, this rate was 82% for national associations in 1978 but fell to 72% in 1992. For provincial associations, it dropped from 82% to 69%. For municipal associations, the rate declined from 89% to 61%. In counties and districts, the rate plunged from 95% to 68%. It should be noted, moreover, that the rapid increase in recreational and friendship associations in counties and districts had the greatest impact on changing the distribution of these associations in Shanghai.

Despite the enormous growth in numbers and diversity experienced by China's civic associations since 1979, certain types of associations expanded little in the same period. Religious groups, charitable organizations, and public affairs associations failed to expand at the same rapid pace as other types (see Tables 1-4). The slow growth of officially registered religious organizations must be, however, treated with some caution. The official data certainly fail to include unofficial or underground religious groups. In most rural areas, data collection on such organizations may be rudimentary and even miss officially sanctioned religious groups; religious activities in rural areas may also be organized by clans who felt no need to register as organizations. Finally, nearly all registered religious groups were umbrella organizations that contained numerous individual churches. For example, all the Catholic churches in one county would register under the name of that county's association of Catholic churches rather than as individual churches. Therefore, the data on religious organizations may underreport the number of such groups.

At the same time, there appeared to be a notable structural weakness of civil society in China in the early 1990s: China seems to have a dearth of organizations—such as religious groups, charitable organizations, and public affairs associations—that, in most countries with more robust civil societies, play a direct role in generating social capital and guarding the interests of the community.

Such a structural weakness, however, must be traced to a combination of political and economic factors. The hostility and suspicion of the state led to prolonged persecution of religious groups under Mao's rule. In the Deng era, the state continued to distrust these groups and tightly controlled their growth and activities. The absence of signifi-

cant political reform was the main cause for the small number of public affairs groups. Of these groups included in our sample, we observe only four such types: consumers' associations, wildlife protection associations, regional and local economic development councils, and children's affairs groups. Most such associations seemed to have close ties to the state. For instance, consumers' associations across the country worked closely with local industrial and commercial administrations in protecting consumers' rights; some of them were even housed in the office buildings of these government regulatory agencies. Wildlife protection associations also had strong sponsorship from the Ministry of Forestry. The national office of the Chinese Wildlife Protection Association was inside the compound of the Ministry of Forestry. These associations' close ties to the state have prompted some scholars to label them "government-organized non-government organizations" or GONGOs (White, Howell, and Shang, 1996: 112). Regional economic development councils, many of which consisted of retired government officials, enjoyed a close relationship with local governments. The only public affairs group that seemed to be relatively autonomous was the Association of Citizens Concerned with Children. Its members were retirees who helped local schools organize extracurricular activities.

Finally, the low level of economic development and, until the early 1990s, the absence of a large private sector and significant economic resources controlled by private individuals were responsible for the slow growth of charitable groups. In the near future, however, charitable groups and private foundations may see more rapid growth as China's economy continues its expansion and more wealth is accumulated in private hands, thus providing the resources for philanthropy. This growth can occur even without significant political liberalization. However, in the absence of political reform, the prospects for religious and public affairs groups are dimmer. The evidence from the period of 1979-1992 shows that economic reform may generate the momentum for the formation of certain new groups, such as business, trade, and professional associations. But economic reform alone cannot produce conditions conducive to the formation of politically sensitive groups such as religious and public affairs associations.

*PEAK AND GRASSROOTS ASSOCIATIONS:  
MEMBERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS*

In the previous section, structural differences between peak associations (national and provincial groups) and grassroots associations (municipal and county/district groups) were noted. The most noteworthy difference is that three categories of associations—(1) natural science, technology, and engineering associations; (2) social science, humanities, and management studies associations; and (3) business and trade groups—made up about two-thirds of the associations at the three levels. In comparison, such associations had a much smaller presence in counties/districts. In the ten selected counties/districts in Shanghai, their combined share was only 44%. On the other hand, two categories of associations—(1) arts, health, and education and (2) recreational groups—accounted for 46%. This suggests that civic associations at different levels serve different social needs. At the grassroots level (counties and districts), civic associations primarily serve individual needs through the organization of activities that directly enhance the quality of civic life of local residents. On the other hand, municipal, provincial, and national associations mainly serve “corporate” needs of lower level associations through the development of extensive regular contacts among these groups.

In addition to their differences in structure and mission/orientation, national, provincial, and municipal associations are different from county/district associations in terms of membership characteristics, a key measure of the “density” of civic associations. An examination of the type (group or individual) and size (large or small) of the membership of Chinese civic associations may yield important information about their orientations and penetration of society. Associations with many or a majority of group (corporate) members may have a high degree of corporate density but a low degree of civic density since such associations chiefly function to enhance the corporate interests of their members, rather than serve the civic needs of their individual members or individuals associated with their corporate members.

In comparison, associations with exclusively or predominantly individual members have a higher degree of civic density because they more accurately reflect the degree of “organizedness” of a community, as well as more directly serve the civic needs of their members (i.e.,

community building and the pursuit of shared interests). Moreover, associations with only individual members may have a higher degree of penetration of society than associations with only or predominantly corporate members. Data on membership type and size of Chinese civic associations at various levels reveal the following characteristics.

(1) National and provincial associations are peak organizations that have a higher proportion of corporate members than municipal and county/district associations. Forty-four percent of national associations had only group or corporate members. Twenty-two percent had only individual members. At the provincial level, 39% of all associations had only group or corporate members. In comparison, more than half of municipal and county/district associations had only individual members (57% and 63%, respectively). This evidence suggests that associations at the grassroots level may have higher civic density: they are more likely to cater to the needs of their individual members and function as organizational linkages among individual citizens. Nevertheless, the fact that Chinese civic associations have an unusually high proportion of groups composed only of corporate members is a sign that such associations may not have a direct impact on the civic activities of individual citizens.

(2) Different types of civic associations have different membership characteristics. Business and trade associations consisted almost exclusively of corporate members, especially at the national and provincial level in our sample (82% and 77%, respectively). In urban districts and suburban counties in Shanghai, there was a much larger share of business associations with only individual members (21%) because these associations consisted of small businesses owned and operated by individuals (especially in the fast-growing private sector). In contrast, scholarly, professional, arts, education, and health associations generally have more associations composed of individual members only. At the national level, 39% of scholarly associations; 34% of arts, education, and health associations; and 24% of professional and managerial associations had only individual members. This difference was especially pronounced at the grassroots level. In the category of recreational and friendship associations, we observed that 63% of national and 56% of provincial sports, hobby, and friendship associations consisted of only corporate members, while 63% of similar groups at the grassroots level in Shanghai had only individual members.

(3) Size of membership is a useful measure of the strength of civic associations and their penetration of society. Generally, large memberships constitute an important component of the organizational capital of civic associations. The data show that most Chinese civic associations have a relatively small number of individual members.<sup>5</sup> Of the national associations with only individual members, 45% had fewer than 500 members (averaging from a few to a maximum of 16 members per province). Two-thirds of the provincial associations in Shandong (a province with a population of 86 million) had fewer than 500 members. Sixty-six percent of municipal associations in Qingdao and Ningbo had fewer than 200 members.<sup>6</sup> Of the district and county associations in Shanghai, about half had fewer than 100 members, and about a quarter had between 100 and 200 members each.

There are several explanations for the small size of individual memberships of civic associations. One must note the relatively elitist nature of most professional and scholarly associations that constituted the majority of groups with only individual members at the national, provincial, and municipal levels. Typically, membership in these organizations requires higher education, specialized training, or a relatively privileged position in various state-affiliated organizations (such as universities, research institutions, and large state-owned enterprises). Moreover, the large share of corporate members in sports associations may also discourage individual members. Another crucial factor is the institutionalized segmentation of society created by the *danwei* (work unit) system that formed the foundation of the social system of the planned economy. The *danwei* system severely limited an individual's social contacts by creating a small, self-contained social unit that attempted to provide for all the social and material needs of an individual. This led to what one scholar aptly described as the "parcelization of social life" (Shue, 1994: 69). Even China's current civic associations are forced to exist and operate within the confines of the remnants of the *danwei* system and the institutional framework of the (declining) planned economy. Many professional and scholarly associations, for example, display the organizational characteristics associated with a planned economy. For example, instead of forming a provincial association of accountants, accountants in the textile industry in Shandong formed their industry-based accounting association; accountants in the chemical industry also

formed their association on the same basis. This arrangement was also true of Shandong's auditors, quality controllers, and archivists.

Finally, limited means of communication and economic resources also prevent Chinese civic associations from expanding their individual membership base. Lack of access to private telephones, a shortage of facilities for holding associational activities, and the relatively low standard of living in China make it difficult to organize and extend civic activities beyond a small group of most committed (and privileged) members.

*PATTERNS OF GROWTH: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS*

Chinese civic associations experienced two phases of rapid growth from 1979 to 1992. Based on the national, provincial, and district/county data in Tables 5 through 7, the first phase began in 1979, with the effective launch of economic reform in rural China and a fundamental reorientation of the government's policy toward economic modernization. With the government's renewed emphasis on science, technology, and basic research, many scholarly associations in such fields emerged from 1979 to 1981, providing the main momentum for the growth of civic associations in this period. At the national level, new scholarly associations constituted 75% of all the groups formed in the three-year period. Sixty-three percent of all new provincial associations and 80% of all new county and district associations established in the same period were scholarly associations.

However, the growth of new associations began to slow at all levels in 1982 and fell drastically in 1983. While no single event was responsible for the slowdown in 1982,<sup>7</sup> the cause of the plunge in 1983 was the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign launched by conservatives against the trend of economic and political liberalization. This brief backlash lost steam in early 1984. The acceleration of economic reform in 1984, in general, and the implementation of urban economic reform, in particular, marked the beginning of the second phase of rapid growth of civic associations. This phase spanned the years 1984 to 1989. The momentum of growth was much greater in this period. Even the political turmoil created by the student demonstrations and

*(Text continues on page 303)*



TABLE 5: Newly Established National Civic Associations, 1979-1992

Type of Association	Year													
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Social sciences, humanities, and management studies	33	34	19	14	9	17	10	11	6	6	18	6	12	16
Business and trade	3	2	5	5	7	10	12	20	17	24	20	26	24	34
Natural sciences, technology, and engineering	16	16	5	0	2	4	13	5	7	1	5	4	4	3
Arts, health, and education	2	1	7	1	1	6	5	1	4	4	2	7	7	18
Recreational and friendship	2	2	6	0	4	2	4	9	3	2	6	1	2	7
Professional and managerial	2	1	3	1	0	4	3	3	3	4	5	1	2	9
Religious, charitable, and public affairs	0	3	0	0	1	2	2	0	1	3	4	2	2	5
Total	58	59	45	21	24	45	49	49	41	44	60	47	53	92

SOURCE: Fan Baojun (1995).

**TABLE 6: Newly Established Provincial Civic Associations, 1979-1992**

Type of Association	Year													
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Social sciences, humanities, and management studies	33	53	51	38	35	70	92	93	86	78	65	31	49	42
Business and trade	2	9	9	14	18	51	59	69	70	87	105	47	68	66
Natural sciences, technology, and engineering	65	34	44	24	12	38	34	37	36	45	33	10	13	9
Arts, health, and educational	13	30	8	18	11	24	31	37	38	35	50	10	11	11
Recreational and friendship	2	20	19	12	13	14	12	22	20	21	19	37	25	18
Professional and managerial	5	12	17	6	2	19	24	24	23	33	24	11	15	7
Religious, charitable, and public affairs	1	5	13	3	2	7	2	4	4	5	2	5	8	6
Total	121	163	161	115	93	223	254	286	277	304	298	151	189	159

SOURCE: Fan Baojun (1995).

NOTE: Data are from eight provinces: Guizhou, Henan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Shandong, and Shanxi.

TABLE 7: Newly Established County/District Civic Associations in Shanghai, 1979-1992

Type of Association	Year													
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Recreational and friendship	0	5	5	6	10	18	18	16	36	36	22	7	8	5
Natural sciences, technology, and engineering	39	20	9	10	5	6	12	8	9	5	6	2	2	8
Arts, health, and education	7	2	2	1	2	12	10	18	22	18	17	1	6	8
Business and trade	1	0	1	0	0	4	10	6	10	19	9	5	14	7
Social sciences, humanities, and management studies	0	1	1	1	2	3	9	11	5	21	7	2	10	2
Religious, charitable, and public affairs	0	0	1	2	4	6	4	3	2	1	8	0	5	2
Professional and managerial	0	0	1	2	4	6	4	3	2	1	8	0	5	2
Total	47	24	16	17	14	34	45	49	51	67	55	10	38	29

SOURCE: Ma Yili and Liu Hanbang (1993).

NOTE: Data are from five urban districts and five suburban counties: Huangpu, Jingan, Changning, Luwang, Zhabei, Chuansha, Qingpu, Jiading, Jinshan, and Chongmin.

subsequent dismissal of Communist Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang in early 1987 had a negligible effect on the formation of new associations that year. Although the number of new national and provincial associations declined slightly in 1987, more new municipal and district/county associations were formed that year.

A careful look at the growth trajectory shows that 1988 and 1989 saw the most visible gains in terms of the number of newly formed associations at all levels. This suggests a relatively relaxed political environment, especially in 1988. The rapid growth in 1989 was surprising, given the nationwide political instability in the spring of that year and the conservative crackdown following the Tiananmen Square incident in June. The drastic decline in the number of new groups formed in 1990 was due to a regulatory change issued in late 1989 specifically to curtail the growth of civic associations (to be discussed below). Tables 5 through 7 also show that the growth of civic associations in the second half of the 1980s was driven by new types of organizations.

At all levels, the momentum of growth was provided mainly by the emergence of new business and trade associations; this was the consequence of the deepening of market reforms that weakened direct administrative control of the planning system and fostered more horizontal linkages among firms and producers in the same sectors.<sup>8</sup> From 1984 to 1989, such groups accounted for 36% of all newly formed national associations, 27% of all newly formed provincial associations, and about 20% of new district/county associations. In addition, a large number of professional-managerial, arts, education, health, recreational, and friendship associations emerged in the same period, further diversifying the population of Chinese civic associations.

Of the new groups formed between 1984 and 1989, associations in these categories constituted 24% of all new groups at the national level, 29% at the provincial level, and 89% at the county/district level (see Tables 5-7). This growth was driven by two forces: rapid economic development and market reforms, which led to greater specialization and created more new professions, and sustained economic growth in the 1980s, which produced more wealth and provided more resources for Chinese citizens to pursue various recreational and cultural activities. Of scholarly associations, those in the natural sciences, technology, and engineering grew slowly, but those in the

social sciences, humanities, and management studies continued to gain. A careful analysis of this category shows that most new scholarly associations formed in this period were in the category of “management studies,” such as quality control, management, auditing, pricing, and accounting—activities that reflected a growing sophistication of and demand for economic management. There seemed to be some overlap between associations in this category and professional and managerial groups. Most professional accountants, auditors, and statisticians tended to organize separate “scholarly associations” (*xueshu tuanti*) within their own industries, instead of forming an encompassing association to include all professionals across different industries and sectors.

The second phase of rapid growth ended in 1989. The number of new groups formed in 1990 plunged (see Tables 5-7). The decline was less drastic at the national than at the provincial and county/district levels. Moreover, although the growth of national associations resumed in 1992 (thanks to the formation of a very large number of business and trade associations that year),<sup>9</sup> the recovery was slow at the lower levels, evidently due to the implementation of a new government policy restricting the formation and activities of civic associations. While there was no formal system of registration or monitoring prior to 1989, the “Regulations on the Management of the Registration of Social Organizations” passed by the State Council in October of that year instituted a new regime that restricted and controlled China’s emerging civic associations (White, Howell, and Shang, 1996: 102-6). Two specific provisions of the 1989 regulations significantly raised the hurdles for new civic associations.<sup>10</sup> First, the regulations required all new associations to seek approval from government agencies with authority over the applicants’ proposed domains of activities before they could register with local offices of the Ministry of Civil Affairs (Article 9). This bureaucratic procedure may have deterred many civic groups, particularly those with no ties to the state or state-affiliated organizations, from seeking formal approval. Second, Article 16 expressly prohibits the formation of the “same” or “similar” associations within the same administrative jurisdiction. This restriction was viewed by some analysts as an attempt to monopolize interest representation and strengthen state corporatism (White, Howell, and Shang, 1996: 104). Its practical impact has been to reduce

the number of new associations formed at the local level, as shown by the data in Tables 5 through 7.<sup>11</sup>

Newly available data on provincial, prefecture, and county associations registered from 1993 to 1995 indicate that the restrictions imposed in 1989 have slowed down but failed to stop the growth of these groups. About 30,000 and 19,000 civic associations applied for registration in 1993 and 1994, respectively (see Table 8). The approval rate was 87% in 1993 and 81% in 1994, indicating tighter government control over approval procedures. The result was a downward trend in the net growth of civic groups in the mid-1990s, in sharp contrast with the double-digit growth rate in the 1980s. The overall net growth was 8.4% in 1993 but only 4% in 1994 and 3.7% in 1995. The slowdown of growth at the county level was even more pronounced.

*LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT AND CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS: THE URBAN-RURAL GAP*

Differences in levels of economic development are often believed to have a significant impact on the number, structure, and size of civic associations. More developed areas tend to have more civic associations that are diverse and relatively large. However, no empirical study has been conducted to measure such differences. In this study, a striking difference is found in the number of civic associations between industrialized and less industrialized provinces—not at the provincial level, but at the grassroots level. This provincial sample includes four relatively industrialized provinces (Jiangsu, Shandong, Liaoning, and Jilin) and four agrarian provinces (Guizhou, Jiangxi, Henan, and Shanxi). The population of the four relatively industrialized provinces in 1992 was 220 million, compared with 191 million for the four agrarian provinces. The number of provincial associations in the four more industrialized provinces in 1992 was 1,642, compared with 1,508 in four agrarian provinces—or about 9% more.<sup>12</sup> The only structural difference found is that more industrialized provinces had more professional groups than agrarian provinces (136 versus 97).

But the difference in the number of grassroots associations between more industrialized provinces and agrarian provinces was more pronounced. In 1993, the four more industrialized provinces had 13,013 prefectural associations, compared with 5,146 prefectural associations

**TABLE 8: Growth of Subnational Civic Associations in China, 1993-1995**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Provincial</i>	<i>Prefectural</i>	<i>County</i>
Number of civic associations applying for registration				
1993	29,773	2,528	9,835	17,368
1994	18,826	2,025	6,107	10,682
1995	—	—	—	—
Number of civic associations approved to register				
1993	25,958	2,627	8,628	14,680
1994	15,235	1,556	5,382	8,285
1995	12,823	1,365	4,432	7,024
Total number of registered civic associations at year end				
1992	15,4502	13,652	45,791	93,789
1993	16,7506	16,314	53,085	97,725
1994	174,060	17,792	56,555	99,605
1995	180,538	19,001	59,309	102,215
Net growth (in percentages) of registered civic associations in China, 1993-1995				
1992	—	—	—	—
1993	8.4	19.5	15.9	4.2
1994	4.0	9.0	6.5	2.0
1995	3.7	6.8	4.9	2.6

SOURCE: *Law Yearbook of China*, various years.

in the four agrarian provinces—about 150% more. At the county level, there were 27,793 associations in the four more industrialized provinces and only 8,030 in the four agrarian provinces—a difference of 246% (*Law Yearbook of China*, 1994: 1049).

The data on civic associations in five urban Shanghai districts and five suburban (rural) counties (see Tables 9-10) provide more detailed information on the differences between civic associations in developed areas and those in less developed areas. In 1992, the population in the five urban districts was 3.06 million; in the five suburban counties, the population was 3.19 million.<sup>13</sup>

Table 9 highlights two differences between urban and rural civic associations. First, there were more associations in urban areas than in rural areas. Second, structurally, there were more associations in urban areas that directly catered to the quality-of-life needs of local communities. Recreational and friendship associations accounted for

**TABLE 9: Comparison of Urban and Rural Civic Associations in Shanghai, 1992**

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Five urban districts		
Recreational and friendship	133	32
Arts, education, and health	88	21
Natural sciences, technology, and engineering	59	14
Business and trade	49	12
Social sciences, humanities, and management studies	35	8
Professional and managerial	30	7
Religious, public affairs, and charitable	22	6
Subtotal	416	100
Five rural counties		
Natural sciences, technology, and engineering	102	31
Recreational and friendship	62	19
Arts, education, and health	61	19
Social sciences, humanities, and management studies	40	12
Business and trade	37	11
Religious, public affairs, and charitable	19	6
Professional and managerial	8	2
Subtotal	329	100

SOURCE: Ma Yili and Liu Hanbang (1993).

the largest share of urban associations (32%), followed by arts, education, and health groups (21%). In comparison, scholarly associations in the natural sciences, technology, and engineering accounted for the largest proportion of rural civic groups (31%). The combined share of recreational, friendship, arts, education, and health associations in rural areas was 38% (versus 53% in urban areas). This difference stemmed mainly from the higher level of development in urban areas, which created a demand for such groups and provided the resources for such groups to operate. Moreover, the more sophisticated economy in urban areas led to the formation of more professional groups.

Compared with rural civic associations, urban civic associations not only are more numerous and directly oriented to local needs but have a higher civic density because of their relatively large membership size. While the proportion of associations with only individual members was the same for urban and rural areas, urban associations were larger than rural associations (see Table 10). About one-third of urban associations had fewer than 100 members, but nearly two-thirds of rural associations had fewer than 100 members. The distribution of



**TABLE 10: Membership of Urban and Rural Civic Associations in Shanghai**

	<i>Five Selected Urban Districts</i>		<i>Five Selected Suburban Counties</i>	
	<i>Number of Associations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number of Associations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<b>Size</b>				
Less than 100	84	35	129	66
101-200	73	30	42	21.5
201-500	47	20	16	8
501-1,000	9	4	2	1
1,001-2,000	14	6	1	0.5
More than 2,000	13	5	6	3
Subtotal	240	100	196	100
<b>Type</b>				
Individual members only	240	61	196	61
Group members only	78	20	22	7
Mixed membership	74	19	104	32
Subtotal	392	100	322	100

SOURCE: Ma Yili and Liu Hanbang (1993).

NOTE: Excluded from the table are 31 associations for which membership information is not given in the original sources. Groups included in this table have only individual members only.

urban associations based on size was more even, with half of them having 100 to 500 members—a range within which a minimum level of associational activities may be sustained without causing complicated organizational problems.

Civic associations in Shanghai's urban districts have also expanded into new areas. A notable example was the Club of Recovering Cancer Patients, active in several urban districts. Founded in 1990 by cancer patients, these clubs became self-help groups whose members provided a network of mutual support. They organized visits to hospitalized members (2,600 such visits in 1996), held "birthday parties" for members who had survived surgery for more than five years, and raised donations for poor members. In early 1997, membership in such clubs rose to 5,000, making it one of the largest voluntary associations in Shanghai (Xinmin wanbao, 19 April 1997: 2). Another example was the Huangpu Association for the Support of the Disabled. Composed of only individual volunteers, this group organized activities to raise the public's awareness of the needs of the disabled and provided services for them. Several districts have also organized sports clubs exclusively for the disabled. The last example is the Association of

Citizens Concerned with Children, which had chapters in several districts. This group consisted of volunteers, mostly retired teachers and government officials, who held functions at local schools and volunteered at reform schools for delinquent teenagers.

### *CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS IN TAIWAN: A BRIEF COMPARISON*

#### *GROWTH AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE*

Rapid economic growth since the early 1960s and the gradual transition to democracy in the late 1980s in Taiwan were two main sources of the growth of civic associations. Official data (see Table 11) show however, that, the fastest growth occurred in the 1950s, at an average annual rate of 15.8%. Most of the growth of the 1950s came from the formation of grassroots associations (while the number of new national and provincial/municipal associations formed in the 1950s and 1960s was similar). This suggests that, given the hard, authoritarian nature of the political regime in Taiwan at the time, the rapid emergence of grassroots associations might have been driven by the regime's political program of developing a local network of state corporatism or patron-client relationships. Since the Guomindang (GMD) government headed by Chiang Kai-shek (*Jiang Jieshi*) was considered an émigré regime and lacked local political roots, the need to consolidate its power base (especially after the tragic February 28, 1947, incident that led to an island-wide revolt against the GMD) dictated the development of state corporatist and patron-client institutions at the grassroots level (Wu, 1987). An analysis of the type of county associations formed in this period produces evidence to support this hypothesis. Of the 1,040 county associations formed in the 1950s, 394 (38%) were "charitable and social service" associations, which might have been conduits of benefits from the regime to its local supporters. Moreover, 246 (24%) of the new associations formed in this period were business and trade groups, vital components of a typical state corporatist system (Ministry of the Interior, 1990: 107).

The rate of growth of new associations slowed down sharply in the 1960s, averaging 3.8% a year. Nearly all the decline resulted from the low growth of county associations. Two factors might be responsible

**TABLE 11: Growth of Civic Associations in Taiwan: Number of New Associations Founded**

	<i>Before 1950</i>	<i>1951-1960</i>	<i>1961-1970</i>	<i>1971-1980</i>	<i>1981-1989</i>	<i>Total</i>
National associations	51	130	132	222	287	822
Provincial/ municipal associations	142	157	156	220	343	1,018
County associations	646	1,040	535	922	1,777	4,920
<b>Total</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>1,327</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>1,364</b>	<b>2,407</b>	<b>6,760</b>

SOURCE: Ministry of the Interior (1990: 13).

for this slowdown. On one hand, the continuation of political repression in the 1960s created a hostile environment for civic associations. On the other hand, the regime's apparently successful program of developing a local state corporatist network in the 1950s reduced the need to expand such organizations (mainly due to the high costs of maintaining these groups). Indeed, official data show that the most dramatic decline in growth occurred in the category of charitable and social service associations at the county level. In the 1960s, only 88 such organizations were formed, compared with 394 in the previous decade. Similarly, business and trade associations experienced slower growth, with the formation of 165 new groups in the 1960s.

The 1970s saw a slight increase in the rate of growth of civic associations in Taiwan, mainly due to the rapid pace of economic development and, toward the end of the decade, the beginning of gradual political liberalization under Chiang Ching-kuo (*Jiang Jing-guo*). The average annual growth rate rose to 4.5%. The accelerated pace of political liberalization in the 1980s seemed to encourage the formation of more new civic associations, with the average annual rate of growth rising to 6%. The growth in the 1970s and 1980s was, in some important ways, qualitatively different from that in the 1950s. First, because the rise of civic associations between 1970 and 1989 was driven chiefly by export-oriented economic development and internal political liberalization, the new associations might be more autonomous from the state than those formed in the 1950s. Second, the growth in these two decades was driven by new forms of associa-

tions underrepresented in the previous decades. This structural change was more visible at the provincial/municipal and county levels. For example, from 1970 to 1989, more academic and cultural associations were established in municipalities and counties than at the national level. Seventy-two percent of provincial/municipal academic and cultural associations and 83% of county academic and cultural associations were formed in this period (Ministry of the Interior, 1990: 106-7). Internationally affiliated associations (such as the Lions Club) also began to expand into municipalities and counties. More than 80% of the international associations in municipalities and counties were formed between 1970 and 1989. This period saw the revival of clan-based groups in municipalities and counties, with more than two-thirds of the provincial/municipal and county clan associations formed between 1970 and 1989. *Tongxianghui*, an association formed by individuals from the same hometown or region, contributed another important source of growth at the provincial/municipal and county levels.

The overall trend in the structural change of civic associations in Taiwan at all levels between 1960 and 1989 was one of rising diversity. This is evident in the falling concentration rate of the largest three categories of associations. At the national level, the concentration rate of the three largest categories of associations was 68% in 1960 but only 59% in 1989. At the provincial/municipal level, this rate fell from 67% in 1960 to 54% in 1989. At the county level, the rate plunged from 86% in 1960 to 61% in 1989.

The data in Table 12 indicate the presence of different groups at different levels. It is worth noting the importance of business associations in Taiwan. They accounted for the largest share of civic associations at all levels. On the other hand, academic and cultural associations were much weaker at the grassroots level: municipalities and counties had relatively few academic, cultural, or economic affairs associations, which were among the three largest categories of civic groups at the national level. Clan-based associations and *tongxianghui* had a very strong presence in municipalities, a sign that this type of jurisdiction provided the ideal size for the formation of such groups. At the grassroots (county) level, the most notable structural feature of Taiwan's civic associations was the very large presence of charitable and social service groups. This was perhaps a legacy of the patron-client

TABLE 12: The Distribution of Civic Associations in Taiwan, 1960-1989 (in percentages)

Type of Association	National			Provincial/Municipal					County			
	1960	1970	1980	1989	1960	1970	1980	1989	1960	1970	1980	1989
	Business and trade	26	26	24	19	42	37	34	28	34	33	32
Professional	3	2	1	2	11	8	7	7	22	19	16	11
Academic and cultural	28	24	23	21	3	4	6	7	1	2	4	6
Health	8	9	9	11	2	3	3	2	0	0	1	1
Religious	2	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sports	2	2	7	7	4	3	3	3	5	6	7	7
Charitable and social services	9	9	7	8	12	10	9	9	30	26	22	22
International	9	9	9	9	1	4	7	11	1	3	7	9
Economic affairs	14	16	15	19	6	6	5	6	2	3	3	4
Clan	0	0	2	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	4	5
Tongxianghui	0	0	0	0	13	15	16	15	2	3	3	4
Alumni	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	1	2
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0

SOURCE: Ministry of the Interior (1990: 105-7).

NOTE: Some columns do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

system created by the GMD in the 1950s to consolidate its rule. Prior to the GMD's arrival, such groups had a much smaller presence. In 1950, they accounted for 15% of all county associations. By 1960, their share had doubled (Ministry of the Interior, 1990: 107).

#### COMPARING TAIWAN AND MAINLAND CHINA

Several factors limit the ability to make a systematic comparison of Taiwanese civic associations with those in mainland China. First, differences in economic and political conditions must be taken into account. The data supplied by Chinese and Taiwanese sources are also different. For instance, the data on membership of civic associations in Taiwan were too sparse to permit a detailed analysis.

I thus limit my comparison to the structural differences between Chinese and Taiwanese civic associations. To control for the effects of democratization in Taiwan in the 1980s, I use the 1980 data for Taiwan and the 1992 data for mainland China and observe the following differences.

(1) Measured by the concentration rate of the three largest categories of civic groups, national civic associations in mainland China were less diverse than those in Taiwan. This rate was 72% in mainland China in 1992, compared with 62% in Taiwan in 1980. The rate was similar at lower levels, indicating that the diversity of municipal and county associations in Taiwan and China was about the same. However, the strong presence of scholarly associations at local levels in China reduces the diversity of civic associations there, as explained below.

(2) There are more scholarly associations in mainland China than in Taiwan at all levels. A possible explanation is that, in China, since such associations faced lower bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining official approval, many civic groups registered as scholarly associations, even though their main activities might have had little scholarly content. In Taiwan, these groups could relatively easily register as other groups, such as professional or economic affairs associations. It is worth noting that there were more municipal and county professional associations in Taiwan than in mainland China.

(3) Branches of international associations have had a strong presence in Taiwan since the 1960s but no presence in China. This shows

that Taiwanese society was more closely connected with international groups, even under authoritarian rule, than Chinese society in the early 1990s.

(4) Taiwan had many more charitable and social service groups than China, especially at the lower levels. As explained above, the patron-client system created by the GMD in the 1950s was partly responsible for the relatively large number of such groups in Taiwan. However, I also suspect that the growing affluence of Taiwanese society was an important factor for this growth, especially in the 1980s. According to a different report, Taiwan had 1,074 foundations in 1993, with assets of U.S.\$880 million (Himalaya Foundation, 1994).

(5) Clan-based associations and tongxianghui played an important role in civic life at the grassroots level in Taiwan. However, official data examined in this study show that no such groups had been officially registered in China. Anecdotal reports suggest that clan-based groups had resurfaced and gained enormous political and economic power in rural China (Wang Huning, 1991; *Huaqiao ribao*, 6 April 1994: 2).

There were two similarities between Taiwan and mainland China. First, the number of religious groups was relatively small in both societies (although, as stated earlier, the registration process may miss or underreport such groups, especially in rural areas). Even in Taiwan, political liberalization and economic growth seemed to have failed to spur their growth. In 1989, there were 80 religious groups in Taiwan, with 276,913 individual members (about 6% of all the individual members belonging to civic associations) (Ministry of the Interior, 1990: 15). Second, the proportion of business and trade associations was similar in China and Taiwan. However, we must take into account that most corporate members of these associations in China were state-owned enterprises, while those in Taiwan were nearly all private firms.

On the whole, civic associations in Taiwan were more developed in 1980 than those in mainland China in 1992. In addition to the intangible factors that raw data did not shed light on (such as autonomy from the government), Taiwanese civic associations had greater diversity, stronger international ties, and more economic resources to support their activities.<sup>14</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The data and analysis provided here offer a glimpse of the changing relations between state and society in China brought about by the emergence of civic associations in the past two decades of economic reform. The rise of these groups is both a sign of the waning domination of the state and a cause of enhanced societal autonomy in the future—even though present-day Chinese civic groups stretch from a high degree of dependence on the state at one end to relative autonomy from it at the other. To be sure, the civic associations analyzed in this article do not yet constitute a full-fledged civil society. They are merely its most embryonic cells. This account of their growth from 1979 to 1992 also illustrates their vulnerability to political shocks, such as occurred in 1983 and late 1989. Indeed, this study raises questions about the efficacy of market-oriented reform alone in transforming the political system in general and in fully restructuring the relations of power between the state and society in particular. The noticeable decline in the growth of civic associations following the restrictions imposed on them in October 1989 demonstrates that an authoritarian regime maintains the capacity and means to restrain the growth of independent civic associations potentially threatening to its monopoly of power. Moreover, the state-corporatist designs embodied in the policies of the current government toward civic associations should also caution us against assuming that such associations will inevitably gain autonomy and counterbalance the (attempted) domination of the state in the future. The experience of democratic transition in other countries in general, and this analysis of civic associations in Taiwan in particular, suggests that the rise of a full-fledged civil society is unlikely prior to the initiation of a democratic transition. In other words, a robust civil society may be envisioned in China only after a sustained process of political liberalization.

Although this empirical analysis of the growth and structure of Chinese civic associations provides a broad understanding of China's incipient voluntary sector, more research is required to follow its development. Specifically, future studies on Chinese civic associations should focus on unregistered groups and their activities (which are left out of this study),<sup>15</sup> on the impact of civic groups on local



politics, on networking among different civic associations, and on their capacity for self-development (membership recruitment, activities, and fund-raising). The combination of macrolevel study, as offered by this research, and microlevel analysis may provide a more accurate and sophisticated understanding of the process of social and political change in contemporary China.

## NOTES

1. Such a system consists of eight categories: (1) academic and professional; (2) trade and production; (3) cultural, leisure, and sports; (4) friendship; (5) new socioeconomic groups; (6) religious; (7) social welfare and public affairs; and (8) issue-oriented groups (White, Howell, and Shang, 1996: 133).

2. In my analysis later in this article of the growth of these groups, I merge religious, charitable, and public affairs groups into one category; in analyzing membership characteristics, I also merge the two separate scholarly groups into one.

3. For this reason, Heilongjiang and Zhejiang provinces were dropped from this study.

4. Chongqing became a centrally, directly administered municipality in 1997. I exclude Chongqing from this analysis of the size of the membership of municipal associations because Chongqing is a megacity, and the size of its associations might be larger than other average-sized Chinese cities.

5. I do not analyze associations with both corporate and individual members because of the problem of double-counting: some corporate members may also register their employees as individual members, thus inflating the number of genuinely individual members.

6. Qingdao had a population of 6.7 million in 1992; Ningbo had 5.1 million in the same year.

7. The situation in 1982 was not dominated by a single political development (unlike in 1983 with the launch of the conservative Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign in early October). Rather, a series of developments might have conveyed a subtle message of rising conservative influence. In early 1982, the government launched a campaign to crack down on "economic crime," which was widely viewed as a conservative ploy to slow down market reforms. Chen Yun, the architect of China's planned economy, also spoke in January of maintaining the dominant position of the planned economy. In May, the government initiated a campaign against pornography and "decadent" music. In the same month, Deng Liqun, a hard-liner, was appointed to the powerful post of the minister of propaganda. Taken together, these developments might have discouraged the formation of new groups that year.

8. White, Howell, and Shang (1996: 184-207) provide a detailed account of the rise of business and trade associations in China.

9. The year 1992 saw the revival of economic reform after Tiananmen. Deng Xiaoping's southern tour reignited market reforms, perhaps spurring the growth of business and trade groups.

10. A full text of the regulations was printed in *Renmin ribao* (3 Nov. 1989).

11. According to field research carried out in Shenyang by Gordon White and his coauthors, local authorities enjoyed a great deal of flexibility in interpreting and enforcing the new rule. Some civic associations were permitted to register despite such restrictions (White, Howell, and Shang, 1996: 137).

12. Adjusted for population, the number of provincial associations in industrialized areas ought to have been 15% more than that in agrarian provinces.

13. Of the five suburban counties selected in this sample, Chuansha and Jiading were later incorporated into two new urban districts.

14. Civic associations had a total income of \$360 million in 1989—28% from membership dues, 34% from donations and government subsidies, and 20% from unspecified income (Ministry of the Interior, 1990: 43).

15. Mark Sidel's (1995) study of unofficial organizations, formed mainly by dissidents and liberal reformers in the 1980s, is one of the few works on unregistered associations.

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