RURAL DEMOCRACY IN CHINA

The Role of Village Elections

BAOGANG HE

Rural Democracy in China

Also by Baogang He

The Democratisation of China

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For a Democratic China

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"A Survey Study of Voting Behaviour and Political Participation in Zhejiang," *Japanese Journal of Political Science* (Cambridge University Press), vol. 7, no. 3, 2006, pp. 225–46.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Quiet Revolution in Rural China

The democratization of China will be one of the most significant events on the world stage in the twenty-first century. It will reshape the polity of China and impact the Asian region and even global politics. A quiet democratization process started in rural China. In the wake of the collapse of the People's Commune System, rural China encountered challenging issues regarding local stability and order. To fill the organizational vacuum and reestablish local order, villagers in Guangxi created a village autonomy organization and introduced village elections in 1979. Village elections were formally introduced in 1987 with the promulgation of the Provisional Organic Law of Village Committees.

Rural China is often the subject of incongruous and paradoxical descriptions that range from peasant rebellions, daily resistance, rampant corruption, social disorder, kinship fighting, "dark force" in village politics, and extreme poverty, through rapid economic development, increasing wealth and prosperity, and, surprisingly, deepening democratization processes. Each depiction contains a partial truth individually or even collectively. Without intending to deny any of these images of rural China, this book focuses on that part of the picture that is rural democracy or the lack of it, and it develops a holistic understanding of how rebellion, resistance, corruption, and poverty impede or promote the development of rural democracy. It examines the status of village democracy, studies the achievements and the problems, and explains its dynamics. This book also defends a normative understanding of village democracy, which takes political equality, deliberation, and public virtue seriously, and employs it against the practice

of rural democracy as captured by the new rich, which is class-based and excludes women's participation.

Great transformations have taken place in rural China over the past three decades (Unger 2002). In economic life, we have witnessed the collapse of the People's Commune System, the introduction of the household responsibility system, the rapid development of the rural market, the launch of village and township enterprises, and large-scale rural migration. Rural society has undergone dramatic transformations, including urbanization, the revival of kinship, the emergence of plural interests, the reduction of family size, the emergence of the new rich, increasing social space and freedom, and increasing social protest and social conflicts. In the context of these changes, rural politics has undertaken great changes, including the formation of self-governing village committees, village committee elections, the redrawing of the boundaries of villages, and a changing relationship between village and township. Among these changes, according to the former president Jiang Zemin, three crucial and fundamental reforms were the household responsibility system, village and township enterprises, and village committee elections.

Self-governance and village elections have come about in three stages. In the first stage (1978–87), both were adopted in rural areas. In the second stage (1988–98), trial elections were initiated. In 1990 up to a dozen villages in each county were selected for trial elections, and a basic institutional framework was established. The third stage (1998 to now) saw the promulgation of the New Organic Law of Village Committees in 1998 followed by fairer and more open elections (1998–2006).

There were 652,718 villages in 2004 and approximately 3 million "village officials" in China. The word "village" (*cun*) has two meanings in Chinese: either a natural village or hamlet composed of residents who live together (*ziran cun*) or an administrative rural area (*xingzhen cun*). An average village has approximately 382 households. The size of villages varies. For instance, of all the villages in Ningbo city, 1,956, or 38%, have fewer than 100 households. Of these, 57 have no more than 30 households. A further 2,613 villages (51%) have between 200 and 500 households, with 556 (11%) having 500 households or more (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Ningbo municipality 1994).

Each village usually has a branch of the Chinese Communist Party, as well as a village committee and a village representatives' assembly. These three organizations generally constitute the village political power structure. Ideally, the village committee should hold administrative power, with the village representatives' assembly exercising legislative and supervisory powers.

By law, the party branch constitutes the heart of the village power structure, and it is widely accepted in most villages that the leader is the party secretary and not the elected village head. In most of the villages in Zhejiang, the party secretaries tended to be directors of village cooperatives. Despite this,

the village power structures have been significantly reshaped by village committee elections. Perhaps the most interesting development in this regard has been the introduction of elections for the position of party secretary, in which both nonparty villagers and party members can vote in some rural areas.

According to Article 111 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1982), the village committee is constituted as an autonomous grassroots organization of the people. In accordance with the Provisional Organic Law of the Village Committee its members are to be elected through regular and fair elections. The village committee is responsible for handling the village's affairs. "The village committee is at best a mixture of grass roots self-governance and governmental administration . . . and a semiofficial layer at the bottom of the administrative structure of the state. It is regarded as a successor of the now defunct production brigade" (Louie 2001:140).

1.2 Why Study Rural Democracy?

With the introduction of village elections and the establishment of village and representative assemblies, village politics has changed in various ways. This has affected the political behavior of 3 million "village officials" and the welfare of 650,000 villages in China. About 600–900 million rural people have experienced semicompetitive elections. Even if only 1% of the rural population is enjoying the fruits of rural democracy, the actual number of villagers is large enough to claim that rural democracy has significantly impacted the political life of many villagers. In addition, rural China is the source of Chinese civilization and the foundation of Chinese society and state. If democracy is possible in rural areas, it will be impossible to make a persuasive argument against the democratization of urban China. In China, it is likely that a vibrant, effective, and meaningful democracy can be built only from below and from within, and successful cases of burgeoning rural democracy are the beginnings of this process.

Village democracy is important to villagers themselves, as they are given an opportunity to control their lives and deal with common issues and interests through democratic means. It provides an opportunity for villagers to realize their potential as political beings. Through village elections, an increasing number of Chinese villagers are fighting for power and asserting their right to control matters concerning their daily lives.

A growing body of literature has studied the introduction of village elections and considered their meaning and nature, the conditions that constrain them, and future prospects for Chinese local democracy (O'Brien 1994; Thurston 1998; Tianjian Shi 1999c; Tianjian Shi 2000; Sylvia Chan 1998a: 507–21; Baogang He 2000a & b; Xu Yong and Wu Yi 2001). For instance, Tianjian Shi (1999b:384–412) has focused on Chinese institutionalist tactics

for introducing village elections, while Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li (2000:465–89) have addressed the issue of accommodating democracy in a one-party state.

There have been debates over the democratic quality of village elections. Many commentators have not taken village elections seriously. "Skeptics note that the village elections were a response to the breakdown of Party control in the countryside and justified primarily on instrumental grounds" (Peerenboom 2002:531). Henry S. Rowen (2003:128) has pointed out,

> At first most presumed that upper levels of the government and Party would rig the outcomes, and in fact local Party cadres have continued to resist relinquishing their privileges, and non-Party members have often been subjected to various forms of discrimination. Some representative assemblies dominated by members of the old establishment still hold that Party membership is the main qualification for candidacy.

In light of this specific observation, skepticism about village elections is legitimate. Many problems have emerged, including electoral corruption, the intensification of clan fighting, the failure to complete elections, the election of criminals or short-eye leaders, the domination of authoritarian figures over passive citizens through clientelism, unfair distribution of collective property in favor of the rich, and the exclusion of women. These problems are present because power-holders pursue their own ends. Moreover, despite a few experiments in direct township elections, the center has so far resisted the extension of village elections to the township level or above.

There are a number of questions and debates about whether village elections can actually be said to be "democratic." Sylvia Chan (1998b:246) raises the question of "how democratic these elections really are." Emerson M. S. Niou (2002:24) asks, "how widespread in area and how democratic in procedure are village elections in China?" (also see Yijiang Ding 2001:76). In this context the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has presented village elections as a great achievement of local democracy, and the Chinese media have endorsed this position.[1] Certain commentators in the international media also consider village elections to be a good indication of the progress of democratic reform in China.[2]

Nevertheless, some Chinese intellectuals regard them as no more than a political ploy on the part of the CCP. For example, Shaozhi Su (2000) and Hu Ping (2002) argue that village elections serve to legitimate the overall authoritarian system and domesticate citizens more effectively by making them complicit in their own subjugation. Similarly, Larry Diamond and Ramon Myers (2000:365–86) ask whether village elections should be called more properly "illiberal democracy" rather than "electoral democracy." Drawing

on their empirical studies of voter behavior, Yang Zhong and Jie Chen (2002:686–87) express doubt about the democratic quality of village elections.

In contrast, Anne Thurston (1998) confirms the democratic character of village elections, and Susan V. Lawrence (2000:16–17) acknowledges the existence of village democracy in the area of the operation of village representative institutions. On the basis of his survey results, Kent Jennings (1997:370) argues that "[t]o the degree that democratization is occurring in China, the signs are most evident at the local level."

1.3 Objectives of This Study

Within the context already discussed, and while acknowledging the partial truth of the skeptical position mentioned above, this book aims to challenge the skeptics with a nuanced assessment of village democracy in its variety and diversity; in particular it tests the view that village democracy cannot develop in the Chinese authoritarian state. The question concerning the compatibility of village democracy with China's authoritarian rule will be addressed by empirically examining the motivations and strategies of local officials, and the changing nature of village party organization, and by tying these back to the concept of a "mixed regime." Currently, the leadership at the national level is attempting to renew its authoritarianism and regain its legitimacy by conducting a wide range of experiments with village elections and participatory institutions. At the same time, as will be shown, local party organizations are no longer Leninist, and local participatory institutions play not only consultative but also evaluative and supervisory roles. What has thus emerged is a mixed regime, a dynamic blending of three elements: democracy, authoritarianism, and totalitarian control (for a detailed discussion on the mixed regime, see section 13.4).

This book seeks to assess the democratic quality of infant village democracy through an empirical study of village citizenship, the nature and features of electoral procedure, political participation and competition, gender equality, and the operation of elected village committees and representative assemblies. Crucially, the book will seek to determine whether village elections have changed the village power structure and whether democratic procedures, such as the right to dismiss elected but corrupt officials, and democratic institutions, such as the village representative assembly, have actually been adopted and how they have operated in practice.

Through empirical evidence and conceptual rethinking, the book will demonstrate that progress has been achieved with respect to village democracy. The Chinese experience demonstrates that there are various forms of and paths toward local democracy and that this experience contributes to the

global development of local democracy. Certainly, it is reasonable to doubt the possibility of replacing the national government through a vote, but, at the local level, many nonparty members have indeed replaced village party secretaries through village elections.

This book explores four essential aspects of village elections—the democratic elements of village elections, the limitations and deficiencies of rural democracy, the key determinants of rural democracy, and the prospect of rural democracy in particular and Chinese democratization in general. In this way, an ideal of village democracy is defended, against which the state of village elections and infant rural democracy is assessed by investigating six dimensions of village democracy—village citizenship, democratic procedures, political participation, political competition, gender equality, and the functioning of village representative assemblies.

A critical distance is maintained from any official line by examining several fundamental limitations on village elections, including the domination of the village party secretary and the disadvantages women have experienced during the election process. The book investigates the effect of village elections on village power structures and rural governance and considers the cases of extension of village elections to township elections. Finally, drawing on rich empirical studies, the book formulates the idea of a mixed regime, examining its key features and its implications for our understanding of political development in China. This volume calls for creative thinking beyond the existing models of democratic transitions. It is imperative that Chinese democratization is examined locally, deeply, creatively, and wisely, free from simplistic ideological constraints.

There are many articles, book chapters, and working papers, as well as plenty of newspaper coverage, on the topic of village elections, but there is no single-authored volume on the topic. Although articles and book chapters provide valuable information and analysis, their length does not allow them to address village elections and democracy in a systematic and comprehensive way. Specialized studies of Chinese village elections often have a narrow focus on one issue or a few variables, so they are strong in technical analysis but limited in examining the interaction of variables owing to the constraints of space and are therefore deficient in providing a broad and general picture.[3]

This is one of the first books in English that treats village elections and democracy in a creative, systematic, wide-ranging, and coherent way with the use of rich and firsthand material. The work is creative in the sense that the author goes beyond the artificial division between insiders and outsiders and develops a folk (local) Chinese theory of rural democracy characterized by political equality, deliberation, and public virtue, and formulates the notion of the mixed regime against conventional paradigms of democratic transition. It is systematic in that it synthesizes English and Chinese writings on the topic,

examines the interactions of various factors, and puts the development of rural democracy or the lack of it in a historical perspective. It does not draw conclusions on the basis of one case or one factor such as economy or kinship but provides a systematic consideration of the interactions of key factors.

This book is wide-ranging in the sense that it examines four key questions about rural democracy, six dimensions of village democracy, and three key determinants and their interactions. It is coherent in the sense that it examines the relations between different themes and perspectives in a consistent way, in contrast to edited volumes, which present different perspectives but often lack a coherent treatment of the topic. Finally, the rich and firsthand material has been gleaned from 12 years of empirical research, conducted between 1993 and 2005, which includes 3 surveys, numerous interviews, more than 100 official documents, 70 students' summer investigation reports, and the resultant data from the author's 4 experiments in deliberative democracy. This material is complemented with updated 2005 survey data from the Ministry of Civic Affairs.

It should be made clear at the beginning that the various democratic elements of village governance examined in this book are distributed unevenly and that there are many variations and differences between villages. Democratic elements in each village are limited. This book seeks to synthesize these diverse democratic features and experiences, as well as the knowledge that has been gained by villagers in the past twenty years. In other words, the book seeks to collect the scattered "democratic flowers" together and examines how democratic practices emerge and develop so as to provide an insight into the future of democratic village life.

Nevertheless, readers should be cautioned against any exaltation and exaggeration of village democracy in real life. As Allen Choate (1997:4) reminds us, "regarding those elections in isolation from their contexts can (and sometimes does) lead to serious distortions of perspective." In the national game of politics, village democracy is only a small component of the mixed regime machinery and an instrumental mechanism for the continuation of Chinese resilient authoritarianism (Nathan 2003:6–17).

1.4 What Is Rural Democracy?

The Chinese official theory of village democracy has undergone a dramatic transformation. Village democracy was perceived as "self-education, self-management, self-building-up and self-service" in 1986. It was also understood by Peng Zhen as a form of direct democracy, which means that the masses can make their own decisions on matters of their own interests and welfare. In 1995, the Ministry of Civic Affairs formulated village democracy as "four democracies": democratic election, democratic policy-making, democratic

management, and democratic supervision; such a formulation was adopted in the 1998 PRC Organic Law of Village Committee (Article 2).

Village democracy is a political process whereby village affairs can be managed by villagers and for villagers, and village citizens are capable of participating in village decision making either through direct democratic mechanisms, such as all-villagers assemblies, or through representative institutions, such as elected village committee members and village representative assemblies. The ideal of village democracy provides normative direction and evaluation criteria for assessing the degree to which individual villages achieve this ideal. The following dimensions of Chinese village democracy will be used in the subsequent chapters to assess the status of village democracy.[4]

1. *Citizenship*. Village citizens are the *demos* in a village and who should be included in or excluded from village elections and democracy. Settling these questions is a precondition for conducting democratic village elections. Effective registration of electors "is the foundation of electoral administration" (Mackenzie 1958:115).
2. *Elections*. Village elections are key aspects of village democracy. They enable villagers to elect capable village leaders, to redistribute village power and wealth, to grant villagers a right to protect their interests, and to offer them the power to approve or disapprove of candidates for village chiefs. Without the right to vote, the views of villagers are regarded as worthless. With the right to vote, however, villagers have some leverage in respect to their local leaders.
3. *Procedure*. Democracy requires procedures for arriving at collective decisions in a way that secures the fullest possible and qualitatively best participation of the people. Village democracy requires a process of making village decisions according to prescribed procedures and the majority principle. The paramount position of the legal procedure is necessary so that the exercise of power is conducted in full accordance with commonly agreed and accepted procedures. Village electoral procedures provide the legal basis and entitlement with which villagers can challenge the manipulating behavior of local leaders.
4. *Competition*. Political competition in village committee elections is a touchstone of village democracy. Village elections are meaningless if voters lack choice, just like markets are flawed when consumers are not provided with a choice of goods to purchase. Village elections are certainly not only boring but also unable to deliver legitimacy if they lack real competition. When village elections are competitive the election results are uncertain. This makes the political game interesting and exciting.
5. *Participation*. Political participation in village affairs is a central determinant of whether village democratic institutions can actually work. Indeed,

it is only through the political participation of villagers that formal institutions, which exist in a written paper, can be transformed into genuine democratic institutions. It is through "rightful resistance"—a form of participation where villagers use official policies and state laws to confront local leaders (Li and O'Brien 1996:28–61; O'Brien 1996:31–55)—that so called cosmetic village elections can be transformed into meaningful village democracy (Kennedy 2002:456–82).

6. *Village Representative Assemblies.* Village democracy must be understood to include not only village elections but also village representative assemblies (VRAs, *cunmin daibiao huiyi*). Village elections are only one of the many essential ingredients of functioning village democracy. As Anne Thurston (1998:18) points out, "to equate the election of committees with democracy is a mistake." Susan Laurence (1994:67) observes that "simply having an 'elected' villagers' committee is not enough to bring about real change in the way villages are run." In some cases, once in office, village heads, blinded by the short-term interests of villagers, have divided up public assets among villagers. In other cases, village heads became corrupted and resorted to embezzling public money. In order to prevent the corruption of power, supervisory and power-balancing mechanisms are required in addition to elections. VRAs are important in furthering village democratic decision, democratic management, and democratic supervision. Without VRAs, village democracy cannot possibly thrive. Through the VRAs, the politics of village democracy no longer exists merely in the theoretic realm, it has moved into the terrain of practice (Wang Xu 1997:154).
7. *Gender Equality*. Gender equity is a central component of democracy, and the political participation of women is one of the hallmarks of democratization. Village elections have fundamental flaws if they have not promoted women's political status and participation. In this context, we will examine the question of whether village democracy has promoted gender equality and improved the political status of women.

The official Chinese theory of village democracy is a mix of the authoritarian and liberal ideas of democracy. The authoritarian elements include the theoretical principle of the domination of the party, for example, village self-government must be under the control of the party. Its liberal ideas are expressed by a set of democratic procedures, such as fair and free elections, and an open nomination process. The official theory of "four democracies" ignores the issue concerning the influence of the new rich. A liberal understanding that the rich middle class is a driving force for democratization underpins justification for the rich being encouraged to participate in the political process without consideration of political equality issues. Liberal

efforts toward improving democratic procedures do not deal adequately with the issue concerning with the domination of the party.

Here we need to pay attention to a Chinese folk theory of village democracy as a theoretical supplement or even an alternative to the Chinese official theory of village democracy. It is "folk" because it is voiced and articulated by ordinary people and local cadres. This folk theory comes from my discussions with numerous villagers, village cadres, and township leaders who express recurrent themes, such as public spirit, the control over the rich, and care for disadvantaged groups. This folk theory of village democracy attempts to work out solutions to deepen village democracy in terms of political equality. Unfortunately, this folk voice is missing in the dominant view of liberal democracy. English language writing on liberal democracy fails to pay sufficient attention to the voice of peoples from the developing countries.

A folk theory of village democracy concurs with the republican tradition of democracy. It has the three following features. The first is to take political equality seriously through moderate control on the influence of the new rich. "Moderate control" here is something like Michael Walzer's blockage mechanism—institutional bars to limit the convertibility of money into political power. In an ideal village democracy, neither the rich nor the poor have domination over village affairs; each group can keep an eye on the other so that village politics is able to avoid the excesses of the envious poor and arrogant rich. Village democracy should not be controlled by the new rich. It should not be a form of class rule by the new rich and for their benefit. Village democracy has intrinsic value as a means for the rural poor to achieve political equality.

Second, village democracy should include deliberative mechanisms as a supplement to electoral participation. In such a system those who participate in deliberative processes are randomly selected, so that the influence of the rich is reduced, and many representatives of disadvantaged groups are included (Baogang He 2006a).

Third, village democracy should encourage the development of a republican virtue—the ability of an individual to think and behave above personal or clan interest, or to place the good of the whole village community above one's own. The current definition and practice of village citizenship is too narrow and hence it is most concerned with economic benefits. An enriched definition of village citizenship is one way to transcend narrow considerations of economic interests in determining the nature of village status.

1.5 Explaining Rural Democracy

Dietrich Rueschemeyer et al. (1992:5 and 41) analyze democracy in terms of power and interests. They assume that democracy is "above all a matter of

power." They argue that power relations are critical in determining whether democracy can emerge, stabilize, and then maintain itself even in the face of adverse conditions. Democracy takes on a realistic character only if it is based on changes in the overall distribution of power.

In the context of village elections, there are three power relations, determining factors or "clusters of conditions" affecting the emergence of village democracy: the political powers of local township and village elites, the economic power of the new rich, and the social power of kinship. It is the interaction between different clusters of power and interests that helps to account for the emergence or absence of village democracy and to shed light on its future prospects. In this book, I have focused on the role of local political powers. This is because "the resistance or support of local town and township leaders for elections and local autonomy has been far more decisive than the Ministry's wishes in determining the extend of village democratization" (Ogden 2002:255). Moreover, other studies of village elections have already excellently covered the role of central leaders and the Ministry of Civic Affairs (O'Brien 1994; Tianjian Shi 1999b:385–412).

This book attempts to develop an empirical understanding of how embryonic village democracy is generated and can be further developed. It examines the conditions in which village democracy is present and/or absent, and discusses how limited village democracy can develop under an authoritarian regime.

It is misleading to assume that one single factor, such as the economy, can determine the outcome of village democracy. It is the interaction of economic, political, and social factors combined, together with the diverse attitudes of local leadership and passive versus active citizens that account for the variations, unevenness, and differences of rural democracy or lack of it. This book will study a number of combined factors favorable to establish village democracy including local leaders committed to democratic values, active and participatory citizens, a certain level of economic development with collective assets and wealth, and the relative balance of different kinships, and the presence of the new rich who use democracy to defend their interest.

1.6 The Local Significance and Insider's Perspective

Village elections are of international significance and "an asset for China's international image" (Choate 1997). Just as the question of human rights in China has been a concern in terms of American and Chinese foreign policies (Nathan 1994:622–43), so the question of village elections has now become an issue for America's policy toward China. Rowen (2003:137) formulates this well: "Washington bets that a rich China become democratic and that the Taiwan issue will be peacefully settled in the context of a moderated

Chinese foreign policy". Although important, too much preoccupation with village elections from the big picture perspective of international politics may tend to overlook the local significance of village elections and democracy. Though leaders in Beijing or Chinese dissidents overseas in Washington may hold different views on village elections given their different interests and political positions, we should not ignore the villagers' own evaluations and their daily experience of village democracy, which is after all the most important issue that influences their welfare and democratic experience.

In turn, this book adopts an insider's perspective that looks at the villages deeply, describing and explaining the actions and views of the villagers themselves, and examining the changes within village politics as the villagers and officials experienced them. This perspective is important and most appropriate, as the original purpose of village elections and democracy was to democratize village life rather than national political life. Village democracy is for villagers, by villagers, and of villagers, not for outsiders. This insider's perspective is different from an outsider's perspective. To evaluate village elections from the perspective of national politics or international politics is to adopt an outsider's perspective that goes beyond the original meaning of village elections. Although it is important to ask the question whether village elections have led, or will lead, to regime change in China it would be unfair to conclude that village elections are meaningless if they do not lead to regime change or if they do not extend to townships.

This work has utilized three insider perspectives: normative consideration of rural democracy, an administrative insight on how rural democracy operates, and an ordinary citizen's view about the value of village elections and the flaws associated with it. In the final stage of revising the manuscript, I went to rural China and stayed there for a couple of weeks to force myself to take grassroots issues seriously and directly link to the lowest groups in rural China. I am primarily concerned here to address the democratic life of Chinese villagers.

I am attempting to go beyond the artificial opposition of observer and observed, and deliberately blur the boundary between insider and outsider. I have adopted both roles, moving back and forth between them, and I attempt to combine the strong points of both, namely, the normative consideration of village democracy from the insider's perspective, and the solid empirical research carried out by outsiders. While developing an insider perspective, I have taken advantage of outsiders to carry out an objective study with the instruments and methods of modern social science. As an outsider teaching in Australia I am able to keep a long distance critical perspective and maintain a criticism of the official line. I have been able to maintain an external stance that has prevented me from being involved in the official politics and helped me to develop an objective perspective.

This book will describe how Chinese villagers feel about their elections and the practice of village democracy, thereby offering an important insider's perspective. Thus this book explores many such important issues concerning village democracy. For instance, it asks to what degree and under what conditions villagers are capable of controlling their own lives. What issues, agenda, and matters can ordinary villagers control and what matters are beyond their control? What kind of democratic institutions, mechanisms, and procedures can villagers use to influence village leaders and agenda and so resolve village matters relevant to their everyday lives?

1.7 Methodology and Sources of Materials

I am committed to democratic value, and undertake a normative-informed empirical study; that is, to measure the state of village elections against the ideal model of rural democracy. It is important to take a normative ideal of village democracy seriously. The dominant approaches to the study of village elections like statistical analysis and institutional analysis do not address normative questions. Neither do they offer us a normative direction although they provide us with useful and solid empirical data, and test some theoretical hypotheses. For me it is extremely important to be concerned with the direction of village elections and normative questions about the nature of village democracy.

This book is not based on impressionist observations rather it draws on 12 years of research, conducted between 1993 and 2005. This long period of study has enabled me to track various trends and developments in the implementation of village elections and the rise of village democracy. I have conducted numerous casual and formal interviews, with both individuals and groups and undertaken research trips that include participatory observations in village representative assemblies.[5]

I have employed political science methods, statistical analysis of survey and data, as well as comparative methods. Though each method has its merits, there are also limits and problems. Interviews often offer us conflicting and confusing opinions and facts. Surveys carry with them the possibility of biased results, for example, on kinship questions. Case study is a method of concretizing generalizations; it, however, has inherent limits, for case studies may not be able to confirm generalizations (Hong 2006:25–37). Statistical description can make or indicate a general trend, but does not provide detailed information, and it cannot offer normative prescriptions. In addition as Thomas B. Gold (1993:57) once pointed out, "our research is still vulnerable to China's domestic political vagaries. Data are incomplete and often of dubious reliability and validity." This study combines all these methods in order to overcome or minimize the problems associated with each method. Plural

methods are complementary. It has combined qualitative and quantitative methods to study village democracy. Without a qualitative analysis of the nature and functions of village democracy, the quantitative finding of the number of meetings and persons who attend meetings is meaningless; without quantitative research, qualitative analysis, in particular, normative consideration is empty.

The book uses a number of anecdotal cases supported by some statistical data. These cases reveal the existence of village democracy and its normative force if certain conditions are met. In some circumstances we cannot tell how widespread these successful cases are, but the persuasive normative weight and force of these instances cannot be underestimated or dismissed. The cases of nascent village democracy could serve as a model to inspire thousands of villagers to defend their interests by building their own democratic structures. Indeed in the matter of recalling corrupt elected village chiefs many villages follow one or two successful examples.

Although most of my materials come from Zhejiang, I have studied other provinces, and compare Zhejaing with them. I have used national data and put Zhejiang in the context of national trends in rural democracy. Though provincial variations exist, I do not use the province as an analytical unit. This is because local variants of Chinese villages are more significant than regional ones; and elections and village democracy in all provinces are constrained by the authoritarian regime.

Some of Zhejiang's successful cases are not widespread phenomena at national level; they are exceptional cases, developing under conditions of rapid economic development so they cannot be extended automatically to other poor provinces. They are, nevertheless, promising stories. Zhejiang reveals a theoretical and realistic possibility; that is, if certain conditions are met, a likelihood of developing local democracy is high. There exist common factors with regard to the logic of development of village democracy. When certain conditions of development are met, the rest of Zhejiang will catch up with the already successful places in establishing rural democracy, and other provinces in China will follow it too.

The book draws on four sets of firsthand sources. The first are three surveys, the second are 70 students' summer field study reports; the third are the more than 100 local government documents of different types, and the fourth come from my interviews. These four sets of sources are complementary to each other. The case studies, student field reports, and interviews provide concrete stories of real people and events but are unable to generate by themselves a reliable understanding of the big picture and general trend, while the survey results provide a general knowledge but without specific examples. In the final stage of revising this manuscript, the author also used the 2005 survey data. The survey was sponsored the Ministry of Civic Affairs, and conducted by the

Institute of Sociology in China's Academy of Social Sciences. Across China, 2,710 village committee in 130 counties, 26 provinces and cities were randomly selected, and the size of the survey is 3,500.

I organized some third and fourth year students from Zhejiang University to research on different aspects of village elections for their summer investigation assignment. I received around 70 student reports between 1998 and 2000. I conducted individual interviews and formal group discussions with local officials, village leaders, and villagers; and had more than 20 meetings and interviews (either in township or in villages) with village heads and township leaders, who were also asked to fill in the questionnaire.

With the help of a research team comprising two staff members and seven students from Zhejiang University, I conducted three surveys in Zhejiang province between October and November 1998. Villagers, village chiefs, and township leaders were surveyed separately and four geographic areas were covered: Wenzhou (six villages in Tangxiang), Shanmen (seven villages in Liuao township), Lishui (three villages in Shuiger, five villages in Wuyun) and Shaoxing (six villages in Chengdong township). There are variations between these villages and townships. Private economy dominates in Tangxiang township, Wenzhou, and Liuao township in Shanmen. Shuiger and Wuyun townships in Lishui are very poor and underdeveloped. By contrast Chengdongxiang township in Shaoxing are quite rich with well-developed collective enterprises. Around 1,800 questionnaires were distributed to villagers from the villages selected, of which 1,500 returned, and 1,245 villagers' respondents were useful. In addition, we gained the 111 respondents to the village chief survey, and the 115 respondents to the township leader survey.

The survey methodology took the form of face-to-face interviews with villagers, village chiefs, and township leaders. The survey adopted a simple random sample in the target population for village chiefs and township leaders, and proportionate stratification was used for the survey of villagers. In each township, we considered a certain ratio of respondents based on the categories of gender, generation, kinship, and economic development. Where cost and convenience were considerations judgmental or purposive sampling was adopted as well as quota sampling. Student interviewers were given quotas of different types of people with whom they should conduct interviews. Because of practicalities, such as restrictions of accessibility and local permission, we could not conduct a representative sampling.

Social survey is a relatively new phenomenon in China. There are problems of questionnaire and response bias. Unprofessional behaviors do exist, including occasionally the filling in of the survey by field workers, or helping the interviewees to complete the survey. To ensure high quality survey work

was conducted, we checked the interviewing processes and returned survey papers, monitored mechanisms including telephone checks or a revisiting interview. Initially in carrying out my survey in 1998, I encountered three main problems. First, student survey workers sometimes conducted their interviews while accompanied by village cadres, whose presence contributed to a tendency toward saying "good" things. Second, a few villagers failed to understand the questions and thus gave invalid answers. Third, occasionally, husbands completed the questionnaires for their wives, brothers for sisters, or vice versa. Sometimes discussion took place when completing the questionnaires. Once these problems were identified, the student survey workers were instructed to overcome them by separating village cadres from the interviewee, or reading the questionnaire aloud for some interviewees if necessary, and by prohibiting the interviewee from filling the questionnaire for others. In any event, these problems did not significantly compromise the quality of the survey because the size of the sampling was large enough to reduce the impact of such irregularities. Data concerning electoral facts (rather than values or attitudes) are largely accurate and the survey outcomes provide a wealth of new information that was previously unavailable. As Melanie Manion (1994:741–65) argues, "a great deal can be learned about a large Chinese population from surveys that sample in non-randomly selected localities."

1.8 Organization of Chapters

Chapter 1 Introduction

Set in the context of great rural transformations in China, this introduction explains the reasons for this study, the objectives of the study, its combined perspectives of an insider and outsider, and its explanatory framework for the variations of rural democracy. It introduces the basic concepts and features of rural democracy to be used for an assessment of the state of affairs of rural democracy in China. Its methodology, source of materials, and organization of chapters are explained in the its last two sections.

Part I: Dimensions of Village Democracy

Chapter 2 The Development of Democratic Procedures

Village democracy entails the creation, exercise, and transfer of village power in accordance with legally prescribed procedures. This chapter examines the development of a set of electoral procedures and democratic norms and brings out some of the major characteristics of village democracy.

Chapter 3 Village Citizenship

Village citizenship is concerned with the foundation of a village community and the membership of the village polity. Who are the *demos* in a village? How can a village maintain its common identity and boundary in a democratic way? Settling these questions is a precondition for village elections and democracy. This chapter examines the conflict and controversy surrounding the village status and addresses the puzzling questions of why and how villagers attempt to retain their village status. It finds that village assemblies and village representative assemblies have become prominent democratic institutions and mechanisms in seeking to resolve disputes over village status.

Chapter 4 Competitiveness of Village Elections

By examining the competitive nature of village elections, this chapter confirms the semicompetitive election thesis. Compared with elections in Chinese cities, village elections are found to be more meaningful and more significant, as demonstrated by the increase in competition, the generally lower rate of votes won by candidates, and a declining rate of incumbents winning reelections. The intensity of the competition in village elections indicates a growth of meaningful village democracy.

Chapter 5 Voting Behavior and Political Participation

This chapter examines the participatory activities of villagers in making democratic institutions work, inventing new institutions, and creating competitive or semicompetitive elections. It also examines the voting behavior and participation of villagers in the election process and discusses the determinants of political participation.

Chapter 6 Village Representative Assembly

This chapter examines the status and function of village representatives' assemblies and discusses how they operate in reality. It finds that village representative assemblies are becoming vital components of village democracy and are gradually displacing the party branch meeting as the final decision-making body on matters concerning the welfare of all villagers.

Part II: The Limits of Village Democracy

Chapter 7 Village Elections and Village Power Structure

This chapter investigates the degree to which village elections have changed the village power structure and the political behavior of village cadres. It finds

that village elections and electoral institutions are as important as economics and kinship in determining where the locus of village power lies and in contributing to the patterns of village governance. Village elections have resulted in significant changes in village power structures. They empower elected village organizations and force village party organizations to adopt an electoral process. Nevertheless, the fundamental limit of village election is that the voter-elected village heads do not constitute the center of village power.

Chapter 8 Women and Village Elections

This chapter examines issues surrounding the participation of women in village elections and assesses the impact of elections on women's lives. It considers the political status of rural women, offering evidence to demonstrate the disadvantages they experience during the election process. It assesses whether village elections promote the political status of women by examining the rate at which women are elected to political positions and the type of positions they occupy. It also considers the effectiveness and limitations of affirmative action polices, such as legal protection and political intervention.

Part III: The Shape of Village Democracy

Chapter 9 Village Elections and Township Leaders

This chapter examines the important administrative roles played by local township leaders in the context of village elections. It is concerned with three different attitudes toward elections and the corresponding strategies township leaders use. It examines how they intervene, influence, and even manipulate elections and investigates the emergence of Chinese Machiavellians who support rural democracy.

Chapter 10 Political Economy of Village Democracy

This chapter studies a linkage between economic development and village election and democracy of which Western Sinologists and Chinese scholars offer different views. It examines issues concerning the impact of economic conditions on participation, the working of the village committee, and the working of the village representative assembly.

Chapter 11 Kinship and Village Elections

The process of the impact of kinship on village elections is far more intricate and multifaceted, and also more subtle and variable than the available

descriptions seem to comfortably accommodate. There are questions of how exactly kinship impacts village elections and what the patterns of kinship impact are. This chapter takes a systematic study of the impact of kinship on village elections and addresses the following questions through an examination of the case of Zhejiang. Does a strong lineage force exist in all villages? If yes, does it really constitute a serious problem for village elections? Will village elections become an instrument of political control of small lineages by big lineages? How exactly does kinship influence village elections?

Part IV: Prospects of Chinese Democratization

Chapter 12 From village to Township Elections

The chapter begins with a general discussion of the impact of village elections on the political behavior of township leaders, and the logical development from village to township elections. It examines the driving forces behind direct township elections and the obstacles they face, as well as the Chinese utilitarian approach to local democracy. It also investigates the opposition and driving forces behind direct township elections and discusses the prospects for direct township elections in China.

Chapter 13 Conclusion

Despite local official resistance to village elections, village elections have been developing and improving. This chapter explores the question of how and why village elections have dynamic development through a discussion of democratic connections between power and interests, the roles of rational actors, institutions, and path-dependence process. This chapter formulates and examines the idea of the mixed regime, exploring its implications for our understanding of political development in China.

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PART I

Dimensions of Village Democracy

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CHAPTER 2

Development of Democratic Procedures

Over the past 10 years, procedures and regulations of direct village elections have improved greatly. New breakthroughs were introduced in the 1995–96 round of village elections at national level. Nominations by officials, village groups, or villagers' assemblies were replaced by "direct nominations" (*haixuan*). The practices of "preliminary vote" (*chuxuan*) and secret ballot have replaced the processes of consultation, multilateral negotiation, and final decision by village election leading groups (Ma Yang 1999:112).

We can easily identify the procedural development from "elections without choice" to elections with semichoice or full choice, democratic procedures that are designed to protect ordinary villagers' rights and interests. Previously, compliance with electoral laws was exceptional and manipulation of them was the norm. In many places I visited recently, I found that township leaders did comply with electoral laws, but they also manipulated the written rules in a sophisticated way.

Scholars have studied the different aspects of electoral procedures. John Burns (1988:76–117) researched the electoral procedure adopted in rural China from 1962 to 1984. Sylvia Chan (1998a:507–21) has detailed each step in the implementation of the procedures, including the formation of an election committee, the registration of voters, nomination of candidates, the preparation of the final slate by the election committee, and the general election itself. Pastor and Tan (2000:494–99) have also described the following: election management, registration, nomination and selection of candidates, campaign, voting, and vote count. Emerson M. S. Niou (2002:18–31) has recorded the diversity of voting methods and their effects, such as the

three simultaneously held elections, three sequentially held elections, the transferable vote method, and the chairmanship method.

In this chapter, I focus on how democratic procedures have evolved and taken root in local conditions. I will examine the development of electoral procedures and bring out some of the major characteristics of rural democratization in China. I will also examine the current status of township leaders' compliance with electoral laws and procedures, the functions and limitations of procedures, and the manipulation of procedures by local actors.

2.1 The Development of Laws

The legal status of village committee was defined in the 1982 Constitution of the PRC: The urban residents' committee and village committee are responsible for community affairs and welfare, including peace-making, security, and public hygiene. They should also report to the people's government the opinions, demands, and suggestions of the people. The constitution thus lay the legal foundation for the later development of village democracy.

Village democracy was perceived as "self-education, self-management, self-building-up and self-service" in the Circular of the CCP Central Committee and of the State Council on the Creation of Rural Grassroot Self-Governing Institution (September 26, 1986). The circular stressed that the village committee should further improve village regulations, make great efforts in the campaign for village civilization and five good model families. It should mobilize the villagers and residents to participate in the democratic management of social life so that the various committees will play a full role in terms of self-education, self-management, self-building-up, and self-service.

On November 24, 1987 the Provisional Organic Law of Village Committee was promulgated although it was obviously marked "provisional" to pacify those who opposed it (Sheng Yansheng 1998:13–14). Given the opposition from various levels of the government, it took much time and energy for the law to get passed. It took three years, over thirty revisions of the drafts, three meetings of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), one national conference of the NPC, and seven speeches by Peng Zhen, then chairman of the NPC. The long years involved in revising and passing the law are a clear indication of the difficulty of achieving rural democratization.

At the twentieth session of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress, Peng Zhen outlined his vision of village democracy. He stated,

> At the grassroots level, let's consider direct democracy, which means that the masses can make their own decisions on matters of interest and welfare. With the joint efforts of the leadership and of the people, we can speed up

> the process of socialist democracy. If the village committee proves to be successful, the 800 million villagers will embark on a democratic process. A successful village committee will be like a training school of democracy, in which the 800 million villagers will learn the democratic way of doing things. In a word, this is an important first step towards socialist democracy. (Bai Yihua 1998)

In 1989, the Ministry of Civic Affairs held three conferences exploring the practices and theories of village autonomy including implementation of village organic law and theoretical debates over whether rural China needs democratic elections respectively. In August 1990, a national meeting on the construction of village institutions was held jointly by the Organization Department of the CCP Central Committee and the Ministry of Civic Affairs in Laixi, Shandong province. It decided on calling for undisputed implementation of the election law. Consequently, in September of the same year, the ministry issued a circular on Setting-Up Models of Village Autonomy in All Rural Areas, and village elections were held nationwide (Bai Yihua 1998).

The Provisional Organic Law was revised as the PRC Organic Law of Village Committee in 1998, and the word "provisional" was dropped from the new law (Yawei Liu 2001b:3–23). The new law specifies, "The village committee is a grassroots autonomous organization of the people for self-management, self-education and self-service. It is formed by democratic elections and for democratic policy-making, democratic management and democratic supervision" (Article 2). Here, democracy has found its expression in specific terms. Village elections and village autonomy have come a long way from the "four selfs" to the "four democracies". It took more than 20 years since the first village committees emerged in Guangxi. The change of terms reflects a positive step in the development of village democracy.

The 1998 Organic Law introduced a number of new electoral procedures, such as making the voter list public before the election, banning all forms of organizational nomination, setting up secret ballot booths at voting sites, public counting of ballots and immediate announcement of election results (Yawei Liu 2001b:3–23; Gadsden and Thurston 2001). Some regulations were introduced on the basis of villagers' experiences and innovations, such as, the practices of *haixuan*, the village representatives' assembly, and the briefings on village affairs.

Over the past four to five years, there have been calls to establish new village committee election laws. Numerous proposals for such a new law were submitted to the NPC. It has been suggested that there is an asymmetry to the 1998 PRC Organic Law: six articles about democratic elections, but only six articles in total on democratic policy-making, democratic management, and democratic supervision. Introduction of additional provisions on the latter areas are clearly needed in order to improve and consolidate village

democracy. In particular, new articles need to be introduced to regulate the relationship between the village party secretary and village heads.

New laws also need to address the question of an independent electoral commission. In Western democracies, local government elections are conducted under the auspices of an electoral commissioner and a deputy, both of whom hold independent statutory appointments, and are responsible for the impartial administration of electoral law. Such a system prevents local government from intervening in and manipulating the electoral process. I was involved in an internationally supported project to develop such an institution, but this attempt failed in 2003–5.

2.2 Administration

Village democracy can work only if the electoral administration is sound. If the electoral administration is corrupt, feeble, and incompetent, fraud is easy and readily becomes endemic, and elections turn into farces (Mackenzie 1958:99–106). Many times conduction of elections fail owing to administrative failures (Pastor 1999:1–27).

Electoral administration at village level is conducted by the village election working group, which normally consists of five–seven members. The working group has the following essential responsibilities: drawing up plans for the election, identifying election methods, mobilizing the villagers, facilitating the nomination of candidates, finalizing the list of formal candidates and publicizing it, and choosing the date of election.

The Ministry of Civic Affairs favors the following of one of the three methods of producing the village election working group: election by an all villagers' meeting, village teams, or the village representative assembly (*Xiangzheng luntan* 2000, no. 8:12–13). However, the common practice is that the group is designated by the previous village committee, the village party secretary, or township leaders.

Local regulations tend to stress the role of the village party branch. For example, the first part of the Regulations concerning the Elections of Village Committees in Changshan County states that the elections of village committees shall be organized by village election working groups, who are recommended by the party branch and the village committees, and approved by the township election leading groups.

In Duoren village of Pukou township, the party branch sets up an election committee at an expanded branch meeting. Even in 2002, in Xiwu district in Hangzhou all village party secretaries were the directors of village election working groups. Despite the regulation and improvement in many areas of procedures as we will see later on, the village party secretaries control village election working groups.

Villagers have welcomed the police personnel, judges, or scholars rather than villager leaders to be implementers, for those are thought to be independent and neutral. Nevertheless, there still lacks an independent organization, such as an electoral commission, to administrate elections. So far, the party/state has ensured its significant presence in the whole process of elections, as it checks on candidates to prevent criminals from becoming village chiefs, takes care of the vote boxes and counts votes, and disqualifies those who buy votes. Although it is vital for the party/state to maintain fairness in the whole process, there are also opportunities for manipulation.

A slight improvement was observed with respect to the role of township leaders. In May 1995, local township leaders with whom I had interviews strongly expressed their role as "leaders" not as "guiders." In the past, township leaders decided and examined candidates. Many townships exclude those who breach the birth control policy and who were former criminals. The situation changed in 1999 when according to Article 6 of the Election Procedures for Village Committees in Zhejiang province, "It is the responsibility of the village committees or village election committees to organize elections." From thereon, village election committees took charge of elections and the township leadership provided general guidance rather than leadership. The latter would pass a list of their preferred candidates to the village election committee who discuss and examine candidacy.[1] The change was made under the pressure of villagers who wanted to achieve true autonomy for the village committee and to reduce the level of manipulation. It was also facilitated by the realization of township leaders that village autonomy and *haixuan* (naming from the floor or direct nomination for candidates which is explained and discussed in detail in the next section) could reduce their workload.

The 2005 National Survey found that nearly 60% of respondents reported that the village election committees were formed through an all village assembly, village group meetings, and an assembly of village representatives. Only 4% confirmed that they were appointed by the village party branch and 2.6% by township leaders (table 2.1).

2.3 Nomination Procedures

The nomination procedure involves the selection of candidates who will contest in elections. It is one of the most important procedures in village elections. Controlling candidate nomination was the decisive phase in the Communist election (Friedgut 1979:81). The nomination procedure decides whether an election will be democratic or not. A citizen's right to vote first of all ought to entail the right to nominate candidates. In other words, a set of procedures that guarantees the villagers' right to nomination is an institutionalization of a genuine self-governing autonomy.

Table 2.1 How the Village Election Committees Are Formed

	No. of Respondents	*Percentage*
Elected by All Villagers Assembly	1,006	39.4
Elected by Village Group Meeting	235	9.2
Elected by Village Representative Assembly	249	9.7
Appointed by Village Party Branch	103	4.0
Appointed by Leaders of Township Authority	66	2.6
Others	17	0.7
Not Clear	880	34.4
Total	2,556	100.0

Source: The 2005 survey conducted by the Ministry of Civic Affairs and the Institute of Sociology, CASS.

The nomination procedure was not specifically defined in the 1987 provisional Organic Law. Article 9 of that law put the question in general term:, "Village head, deputy head and members of the village committee should be elected directly by villagers." In practice, there were four models of nomination procedures across the country. The first is direct nomination, individually or jointly by villagers or by the candidates themselves. The second is indirect nomination, either by village representatives or by household representatives. The third is the nomination by the village election leading group, by the village party branch, or by the township government. The fourth and the last is a joint nomination by villagers, the party branch, and township government, or by an assembly of village representatives, branch-village heads, party members, and village cadres (Tianjian Shi 1999d:8–14).

My earlier field trips found that party secretaries appointed candidates in the village elections in Zhejiang. In Jiangxia village of Chengguan township, village cadres chose their candidates through negotiation and consultation amongst themselves. Beizhang, Pukou, and Cangyan townships each had one village where the candidates were secretly selected.

Such a practice was justified by one official in the Ministry of Civic Affairs in 1994 as normal since party leaders choose candidates in all elections in China.[2] In 1994, Wang Yongfei, an official from the Department of Civic Affairs in Zhejiang, stated that villagers did not have the time and knowledge for complex procedures, so the normal practice was that the party secretary or party branch would decide on the candidates. He also argued that it was too

costly for villagers to take more than 20 days and to run 4 or 5 preliminary elections to choose the candidates in a village in Jinghua.[3]

The appointment of candidates by party secretaries, however, faced resistance from villagers who did not vote for the official nominated candidates. Sometimes official nominated candidates lost elections, sometimes elections failed to produce any village leader, thus leading to a vacuum in village governance. Only 35% of respondents, in an empirical study , reported they were satisfied with the election process when a township nominates candidates. Conversely, that percentage increases to 70 when the villagers are able to nominate the candidates (Kennedy 2002:477).

To overcome the above practical problems, some villages experimented with direct nomination by villagers, and township leaders had to make a compromise in letting villagers nominate candidates. In the process of resisting manipulated elections, villagers invented and practiced *haixuan* (naming from the floor or direct nomination for candidates), which originated in Lishu county, Jilin province in 1993 (Jing Yuejin 1999; The Division of Local Governments, the Ministry of Civic Affairs 1994:40–48). From 1993 on, all the 336 villages in the county have used *haixuan* as the sole procedure of nominating candidates. In one village, 571 out of 693 eligible voters took part in *haixuan* (Sylvia Chan 1998a:511). *Haixuan* was quickly adopted in the Xiangtan and Suining counties of Hunan province as well as five counties and two districts in Gansu province. This was then a small minority in national terms (Ma Yang 1999:112). *Haixuan* was ultimately endorsed in the 1998 Organic Law. Article 14 stipulates, "In village elections, candidates should be nominated directly by the eligible voters of the village, with the number of candidates exceeding the number of positions available" (*Zhejiang Ribao*, November 5, 2003:5).

In Zhejiang, starting in 1998, villagers increasingly nominated candidates directly, and the number of candidates has increased accordingly.[4] Article 8 of the Procedures for the Election of Village Committees in Zhejiang province stipulates, "Candidates can be nominated by 10 or more eligible voters or villager groups" (*Zhejiang Daily*, September 10, 1999:6). In 1999, leaders of the CCP Organization Department in Ningbo municipality supported the practice of *haixuan*. In order to acquire some experience in using this mechanism, they selected a number of towns to participate in a pilot project. In cooperation with their counterparts in Yuyao municipality, they produced a TV program of the election in Yaojiaqiao village of Laofangqiao township, to be shown later in Yuyao and other cities. Township leaders in Xianju county even "imposed" *haixuan* on the villagers during the election.[5] In the 2005 village elections, 16,546 villages constituting 48.8% of the total voting area, adopted the *haixuan* method in Zhejiang province; some counties achieved a 100% rate (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Zhejiang province 2005).

For township leaders, abandoning the appointment of candidates meant losing one control mechanism, which could affect their client relations with their favorite in villages. Why did they support *haixuan*? There are four reasons: First, some economically less-developed mountain villages had been unable to produce a village committee with the old indirect method. However, with the introduction of *haixuan* these villages were able to successfully produce village committees, for example, in Xianju county.[6]

Second, village governance is made easier, as the *haixuan*-produced village committee could solve some of the toughest problems, such as the common refusal to pay taxes and fees, which had in the past seemed intractable. The previous highly manipulated election had been unpopular among villagers, and in consequence, there was usually a lack of support on the part of villagers for the village committee. Owing to its unpopularity, the village committee in turn tended to be so ineffectual that even its backer, the township leaders, frowned upon it. With the adoption of *haixuan* in the election, villagers are more satisfied with their chosen committee, as are the township leaders who ultimately want a committee that is capable of fulfilling the various tasks set by the township government. In November 1998 in Chengdong township of Shaoxing municipality, village elections with *haixuan* proved to be the most effective way to solve tough problems in the village. Without a village election, these problems would just pile up.[7]

Third, elections will become fair (Bernstein and Lu 2003). One survey finds that villagers with *haixuan* were more likely to consider the election to be both fairer and more competitive than villagers with non-*haixuan* method. When asked to rank the level of fairness, 69.7% of the respondents in *haixuan* villagers and 52.3% of non-*haixuan* selected "much fairer" or "fairer." Of *haixuan* villagers 70.9% and 59.1% of non-*haixuan* villagers "strongly supported" or "relatively supported" the statement that after several rounds of elections, villagers now, as compared to the past, more strongly support the government's policies (Zweig and Chung 2002).

Fourth, *haixuan* reduces electoral costs and the workload of township leaders. In the past, townships had to spend a lot of time to select candidates, to consult with village leaders, and to listen to the feedback from villagers. With *haixuan*, townships can save time and energy. In Zhejiang, some areas even adopted a "once for all" voting model, in which nomination and approval of candidates as well as the final voting were accomplished at once.

The nominations often involve two separate processes: producing a list of initial candidates and subsequently reducing that list into final candidates. The result of the 2005 National Survey reveals that both processes have witnessed significant increases in the percentage of villager nominations as well as the dramatic reduction of the party's nomination (tables 2.2 and 2.3). In

Table 2.2 How the Initial Candidates Are Nominated

	No. of Respondents	*Percentage*
Nominated Directly by Villagers	1,211	48.1
Nominated Directly by Election Committee	278	11.0
Nominated Directly by Village Party Branch	139	5.5
Nominated Directly by Township Authority	95	3.8
Not Clear	797	31.6
Total	2,520	100.0

Source: The 2005 survey conducted by the Ministry of Civic Affairs and the Institute of Sociology, CASS.

Table 2.3 How the Final Candidates Are Decided

	No. of People	*Percentage*
Voted by Whole Villagers	1,458	58.0
Voted by Village Groups	151	6.0
Discussed or Voted by Village Representative Assembly	163	6.5
Decided by Village Party Branch	69	2.7
Decided by Township Authority	64	2.5
Not Clear	607	24.2
Total	2,512	100.0

Source: The 2005 Survey conducted by the Ministry of Civic Affairs and the Institute of Sociology, CASS.

some places within Zhejiang, the party organization no longer possesses the right to nominate. It belongs to individual citizens only.

2.4 Voting Procedure

The voting procedures specify whether the election is a contested or uncontested one, direct or indirect, whether voting is by secret ballot or open ballot, and in person, by proxy, or by post. The 1987 Provisional Organic Law did not specify these though the regulations at the provincial level were more specific.

In 1994, the local officials in Ningbo, Tiandan, and Jiaojiang advocated indirect elections, that is, letting households elect representatives, who then elect village committee members, who in turn elect village heads. The officials were opposed to direct elections, for elected village head tended to confront with township leadership. In 1995 local officials in Lishui prefecture informed me of their "creative" method in which village committee members can elect heads if elections fail to elect village head.[8]

The 1998 Organic Law stipulates that members of village committee should be elected directly by the villagers. Article 11 states clearly, "No organization or individual should appoint, assign or replace village committee members." Article 14 further stipulates that the election should be a competitive one: "the number of candidates should be larger than the number of posts." In the past, some village chiefs and deputy chiefs were elected without competing candidates. Single-candidate elections (that is, one candidate for one post) were common practice. In some villages, there were no separate cubicles, and secret ballot was not enforced (Ma Yang 1999:114).

The new Organic Law has necessitated three significant changes in the village elections in Yuyao, Shengzhou, and Xikou of Zhejiang province in 1998–2000. First, the candidates, instead of being nominated by the party branches, were nominated directly by the electors. Second, single-candidate elections were replaced with multiple-candidate elections (that is, more than one candidate contesting for one post). Third, direct involvement in the village elections by the township leadership was replaced with general guidance. These three changes did much to increase participation and competition (Xiang Hui 1999).

After 1998, multiple-candidate elections were held (for detailed discussion see chapter 4). This procedural improvement came from villagers who demanded a choice to make change in village leadership possible. Lack of choice means that there is no solution to the practical problems in villages. A choice made by the vote of villagers is indispensable to village democracy. A well-designed and arranged electoral system is a powerful means of improving conditions under which choices can be fully made.

Article 14 of the new Organic Law says, "The election should utilize secret ballots and include a public counting of ballots, and the result of election should be announced immediately after the counting. Places should be allotted for the secret ballot." Separate cubicles have been used at the voting stations of many counties in Gansu, Sichuan, Hunan, Jiangxi, Jiangsu, Anhui, Ningxia, and Henan (Ma Yang 1999:113). No election used hand-raising as a means of voting. In Zhejiang, 98.4% of villages set up secret voting cubicles in the 2005 elections (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Zhejiang province 2005). At the national level, 28.6% of the respondents reported the existence of secret voting cubicles in 1998, this number increased to 50.2% in 1999, 66.4% in

2000, and 77.8% in 2001 (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie* 2002:601). However, the 2005 National Survey finds that only 48.5% of villages had provided secret voting cubicles.

As to the validity of the voting, Article 14 of the new Organic Law stipulates, "In village election, a voting is valid when it is participated by 50% or more of the eligible voters. A candidate wins an election if s/he gets 50% of ballots or more." The requirement of absolute majority is there to ensure that an elected village chief has the democratic legitimacy to govern effectively. However, a practical problem often crops up, when no candidate sometimes wins a majority of the votes and, as a result, the village election fails to produce a village leadership. Among 23 villages of Kang Lin township, 14 elected village committee members, 6 failed to get the majority required in the first time, and the other 3 failed in the end. As a result, the township appointed village leaders in those villages.[9] The same has happened in Lishui where more than 20 out of 70 villages failed to elect village committee members. To deal with the problem of failing to gain majority votes, the new Organic Law specifies that the candidate who wins one-third votes is the winner in the second round election. The change from absolute majority rule to the one-third requirement is an attempt to successfully elect village committees so as to ensure the presence of a village authority. This procedure has been widely welcomed by township and village officials.

2.5 Procedure to Decide Village Committee Profile

The normal procedure for choosing village heads is that whoever wins the majority vote is elected village head. In some areas, village committee elections produced the village chief who automatically became party secretary. In Wuyun township, however, the members of the village committees were elected first and then they were given different portfolios by township authorities in 1996–98. Such a method was ultimately regarded as illegal and abandoned in 1999–2000.

In Aihui province, Professor Xin Qiushui has invented, experimented, and promoted the "cabinet" election model (CEM), under which each candidate for the head of the village committee will name the members of the village committee to form his/her "cabinet," and villagers vote to elect the head and his/her proposed "village cabinet."[10] This model intends to provide some solutions to problems involved in other election models such as *haixuan*. Under the *haixuan* model, villagers cannot possibly have any prescience about the interrelationship among members of the committee. When people with discord or feud are elected into the same committee, the committee cannot be expected to function well. Electing people with intimate relationships

like those between father and son, brothers, and uncle and nephew into the same committee may also be a hindrance rather than a help to the normal functioning of the committee.

In addition, CEM may also reduce the kinship's influence on the village election. Normally, villagers will name three to four people as candidates for the head of village committee. When forming his/her cabinet, each candidate has to strike a balance between different interest groups in terms of family and clan background, and so on. To get enough votes to be elected and to find a smoother job once elected, the candidate would try to include into his/her cabinet people with ability, reputation, and influence, and from different clans and different village teams. Fearing the loss of support from villagers, the candidate is not likely to form a cabinet that is chosen entirely on the basis of intimate personal relationships and will also refrain from selecting individuals who have disputable reputations or who represent only one particular interest group.

In Zhejiang, local officials and villagers have developed a procedure that allows candidates to compete for all three different positions (chief, deputy-chief, and committee members) simultaneously. The ballot contains the names of the candidates without specifying the positions the candidates are running for. Voters are required to tick the positions that they want each candidate to fill. The candidate who receives more than half the number of the total votes for the position of committee chairperson wins the position. Once the chairperson has been chosen, the votes cast for the losing candidates in the chairperson race are then transferred to the race for the next position, and added to their respective votes for that position. Thus, the total number of votes an individual receives for the position of deputy chairperson is the cumulative sum of the votes—the votes for the position of chairperson and the votes for deputy position. Similarly, the total number of votes a candidate receives for the position of committee member is equal to the number of votes he or she receives for the position of committee chairperson plus the votes he/she gets for the deputy chairperson position plus the votes he/she receives for a committee member position (Niou 2001:22–23).

Although the votes for chairperson can be transferred and added to the votes for the deputy or committee member position, the votes for deputy chairperson or committee member position cannot be transferred and added to those for the chairperson position. The procedure is to ensure fairness because those who vote for one candidate for chairperson will most likely support him/her to be deputy or committee members if that candidate fails to become chairperson; thus the vote can be transferred and added to the vote for deputy or committee position if the candidate fails to win the chairperson position. Conversely, those who vote one candidate for deputy or committee members will not necessarily support him/her to be chairperson, thus the vote cannot be transferred.[11]

2.6 Recalling Procedure

Village democracy is incomplete if it lacks the right to dismiss the elected. Democratic rights must include the right to recall that gives the voters some leverage in scrutinizing the performance of the elected members. At the same time, it is a check to the possible degeneration of the elected village committee members.

The 1987 Provisional Organic Law made a very general and vague reference to this issue. Article 11 merely stipulates, "the villagers' assembly has the right to recall village committee members or call for by-elections to elect new members" (The Division of Local Governments, Ministry of Civic Affairs 1994:4). It was insufficient to simply have a law that grants voters the right to recall the elected official but that does not lay out a procedure to do so. What is important is to put in place procedures that enable them to exercise that right. What makes village democracy valuable and workable is a *complete* system of procedures.

Specific dismissal terms ultimately were written in the 1998 Organic Law, Article 16 of which states, "A proposal of dismissal of committee members is valid when it is put forward and signed by 20% or more of eligible voters in the village. Reasons must be given for the dismissal. The members involved have the right to defend themselves. The village committee should in due time convene a meeting of villagers to vote on the proposal, which takes 50% or more of votes for a pass" (*Zhejiang Daily*, November 5, 1998:5).

According to the Organic Law, the dismissal should be handled by the village committee. The several cases we have at hand indicate that the village committee may be unwilling to carry out the process, in particular if the dismissal involves the village head. To solve this concrete problem, Article 27 of the Regulations of Village Election of Zhejiang, passed by the sixteenth session of the Ninth Provincial People's Congress, stipulates,

> A proposal to dismiss a committee member is valid when it is put forward and signed by 20% or more of eligible voters in the village. The proposal should be submitted to the village committee in written form with reasons given for the dismissal. Copies of the proposal should be sent to township governments as records. Upon receiving the proposal, the village committee should convene a meeting of villagers to vote on the proposal no later than within a month. Meanwhile, the sponsors of the dismissal should have their representatives state their reasons at the meeting. Committee members involved in the dismissal proposal have the right to defend themselves. It takes 50% or more of votes to pass the proposal, and the result should be reported to the township government. If the village committee does not convene a meeting 30 days after it has received the

proposal, the township government should intervene and help to hold the meeting of villagers (*Zhejiang Ribao*, September 10, 1999:6).

It is apparent from this regulation that township governments have an important role to play in the recalling of committee members. Township intervention has proved to be invariably crucial in the dismissal of village chiefs.

Since the promulgation of the new law, there have been quite a lot of dismissal cases. According to the estimation of the Ministry of Civic Affairs, 4.7% of villages have experienced dismissal at the national level (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2002*:597). In 2000, 517 village chiefs and 783 village committee members were dismissed in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region; and 317 villages had the dismissal cases in 2000 in Zhejiang (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2001*:584 and 561).

Almost all motions of dismissal are triggered by corruption in village affairs. In Yiwu county, 305 village leaders were dismissed through village representative meetings in 2000 (*Zhejiang Daily* November 22, 2000). Below is a case of the dismissal in the village of Bailian in Pandai township (Zhou Lifeng 1999:2). We describe this case in detail to elaborate on the detailed procedures and the whole process.

1. *Put Forward a Proposal of Dismissal*. Because of an "irregular deal" that involved the selling of a hundred *mu* of land and "mismanagement of economic affairs" by the village committee, tension built up between villagers and the village committee in Bailian. On November 13, 1998, 451 villagers signed on a motion to dismiss He Guangshou from his post of village head. The motion was directed to the leadership above.
2. *Approval*. On March 29, 1999, the township government sent its representatives to check on the signatures on the dismissal motion and found that those who had signed amounted to over one-fifth of the total number of voters in the village. The next day, the deputy township head came to the village to announce the start of the dismissal procedure.
3. *Villager Representatives' Meeting Chaired by Township Government and the Making of Rule*. On April 6, the township government held a meeting of 10 village representatives, during which the Procedures of Voting on the Dismissal of Village Head in Bailian were passed.
4. *Villagers' Meeting and the Hearing of Charges*. On April 9, a villagers' meeting was held at Bailian Primary School, during which the township head Ding Shichun asked the villagers to "speak truthfully and vote prudently." Then, Li Jiankai, a member of the supervisory group of village finance, listed reasons for the dismissal.

5. *The Village Head Defending Himself*. As stipulated in the Organic Law of Village Committee, "village committee members who are facing dismissal charges have the right to defend themselves." Accordingly He Guangshou presented a different story on the issues of finance and the land deal.
6. *Voting*. At the end of the meeting, voting took place. The result was that 413 votes were for the dismissal, 248 against it, and 3 abstained. On the afternoon of April 9, township head Ding Shichun announced that the dismissal proposal was passed on the base of the 664 votes collected out of a total of 666.

The above process is a clear indication that a key component of village democracy is the villagers' meeting, which by law has the power to dismiss corrupt leaders; and the dismissing power is a form of villagers' supervisory power. We must point out, however, that many villages, for one reason or another, have difficulty in convening a meeting of all villagers. The voters of Baoziying village in Hebei province, for example, were not so successful in their bid to recall their committee. Incensed by corruption, heavy taxes, and a number of other problems, the villagers took the initiative and held a meeting on December 11, 1998 to vote on the motion to dismiss the village committee. Over 100 representatives took a petition to Shijiazhuang, Hebei's provincial capital, but they were blocked on their way by the police. Zhao Zengbing, Wang Liying, Fan Zhengjie, Zhao Lijun, Liu Yanfang, and other young villagers were detained on December 23, 1998, and later arrested on charges of "disturbing social order" and "interfering with official business."[12]

2.7 Path Dependence and Coherence of Procedures

Path dependence can account for the development of electoral procedures partially. Path dependence process involves complementary configurations of organizations, institutions, and procedures (Katznelson 1997:81–112; Pierson 2000:251–67). Peter Hall and David Soskice emphasize the role of institutional complementarities. The benefits of particular economic institutions and organizations are more if they operate in an environment populated by specific kinds of institutions and organizations (Pierson 2000:264). D. North (1990:95) stresses that institutional arrangements induce complementary organization forms, which in turn may generate new complementary institutions.

The presence of one democratic institution leads to increasing returns, demands institutional integration, and constitutes an institutional need. To build a coherent system, one procedure already in place requires another

compatible and complementary procedure. This process becomes progressively self-reinforcing. The logic of democratic institutions lies in their demand for autonomy and coherence. Institutional coherence requires the reduction of conflicts between institutions, and compatibility between old and new institutions. Tensions between institutions require coherent treatment and the spread of democratic institutions backed by democratic forces.[13]

This chapter has substantiated the notion of procedure coherence with numerous examples. The need to overcome practical problems and ensure institutional coherence has become a force driving reform of electoral procedures. For example, serious problems of corruption by village leaders have in the past led to complaints, petition, and resistance by villagers, who realize that it is dangerous for them to elect village committee members, while having little or no control over the committee's powers. In turn, the right to dismiss a corrupt committee member has been institutionalized as an integral part of their rights in village democracy. To further strengthen procedural coherence, a set of procedures has been developed to regulate public speech in electoral campaigns and institutionalize village assembly meetings. These revised norms led to further procedural improvements in village democracy.

The procedural coherence thesis must take into account different levels of institutions. Micro-institutions at the same level strongly require maximum coherence. In particular, the conflict between village committees and party organization needs to be reduced. This is why villages have introduced election of party secretaries and why procedures to determine the composition of village committee by township leaders was deemed incompatible with well-established procedures of open nomination by villagers.

Institutions at different levels also require procedural coherence. Institutional incongruence exists when village heads are elected but township leaders are appointed. To deal with this problem, some local townships have introduced elections for township heads and in some cases, township party secretaries (chapter 12). Institutions at different levels, however, allows for some inconsistence and contradictions. There is a space for such contradictions. This is partly because there is no urgent pressure to resolve them, and partly because local actors refuse to fix them and attempt to benefit from resulting institutional contradictions. The incoherence between central and local electoral laws is an example. The center takes account of and allows for local variations, while some local actors use this opportunity to inhibit democratic development.

The increasing return thesis, which is understood as a self-reinforcing process, needs to be modified in the case of Chinese village elections. Village electoral institutions are embedded in the political structure where the party dominates over the whole election process. This creates a "lagging effect" and sets limits on the effects of increasing returns from specific reforms.[14] Village

democratic institutions and the national authoritarian system contradict each other. In order to strengthen the compatibility of existing institutions, democratic forces attempt to reform the party system by promoting intraparty democracy. By contrast, the antidemocratic forces deliberately used institutional contradictions to frustrate further democratization, for example, ban direct township elections. An evolutional model of Chinese transition must therefore be understood by analyzing interactions between self-reinforcing democratic forces and antidemocratic institutions. If the former exceed the latter, there will be a democratic breakthrough. Currently democratic trends are insufficiently strong to overcome antidemocratic institutional forces, and therefore only a piecemeal strategy is viable.

2.8 Conclusion

As suggested by the above, there is a trend of improvement in the rules and procedures for elections, which has been achieved through a piecemeal and slow process. While acknowledging the progress in improving democratic procedures, I should point out that manipulators have developed their skills. The various forms of manipulation discussed in chapter 9 continue to exist. In the struggle against such manipulation, efforts need to be made to ensure that procedures are clear and specific and that loopholes in the electoral laws and regulations are dealt with. A successful battle against manipulation for better elections will lead to further improvements in the democratic-ness in village elections.

In historical terms, despite the "mass line" coupled with the idea of "people's democracy" that Mao Zedong advocated, the late Chinese leader knew very little about how to institutionalize the democratic principles needed to support participatory government. Today, Chinese villagers have been innovative in their efforts to develop and improve electoral procedures. Individuals in the provinces previously discussed have made significant progress in developing a set of relatively fair and democratic procedures. Still, new procedures are needed to further define the role of party, produce guidelines for electoral campaigns, establish an independent electoral commission, and facilitate the synchronization of Election Day. These new developments have the ability to deepen the democratization of politics in rural China.

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CHAPTER 3

Village Citizenship

A strange phenomenon is taking place in several villages in China. Instead of going to cities and desperately seeking to gain residential status in the urban areas, as was the trend, today's villagers, in particular married-out women, are striving to retain their villager status, and migrant workers are fighting to obtain rights and status in villages where they have worked for a long period.

The question of villager status is about village citizenship. Village citizenship emerged before the modern citizenship granted by the state. It was common in Europe, the United States, and Asia. The European practice of marrying within one's village has often been attributed to a desire to keep property in the hands of village residents because daughters or sons who leave for other places would pass on their inheritance rights to outsiders (Heady 2001). One needed to also apply for village citizenship upon his/her upcoming marriage.[1] In the United States, Jefferson's republican conception of citizenship held that only "yeoman farmers possess the virtue and independence that [make] sturdy republic citizens" (Sandel 1996:169). In Vietnam, Samuel L. Popkin (1979) has explored the concept and practice of village citizenship.

In 1999, the Chinese Ministry of Civic Affairs and the United Nations Development Program commissioned Professor Xiang Jiquan at the Central Normal University of China to write a training textbook on village citizenship. Local officials responsible for elections have been concerned about the controversial question of villager status. Their concerns highlight the importance of this issue, which has not yet been fully studied in the English literature on village elections and democracy.

Merle Goldman and Elizabeth J. Perry (2002) have surveyed the development and changing meanings of citizenship from the later Qing dynasty to

contemporary China. Goldman (2005) highlights the importance of citizens' initiative and struggle in the post-Mao era by individuals and groups asserting their political rights rather than waiting for them to be granted by the government. Kevin O'Brien (2001:407–35) has been at the forefront in addressing the specific question of citizenship with regard to village elections. He has convincingly documented the daily political struggles for citizenship and correctly pointed out that citizenship is a claim to community membership. Nevertheless, the focus of the previous studies on political dimensions overlooks the political economy of village citizenship (see section 10.2). More importantly, there is a need to distinguish universal citizenship granted by the state from a particular form of village citizenship that is practiced in a small community.

This chapter aims to examine the idea and practice, as well as the implications, of village citizenship. It spells out the context and content of village citizenship, describes struggles for villager status, and addresses the puzzling question of why and how villagers seek to retain this status. It further examines the logic of how such struggles lead to the establishment and improvement of village democratic institutions. The paradoxes and problems associated with village citizenship are also discussed. Finally, the chapter explores the significance of village citizenship for achieving meaningful citizenship in general.

3.1 The Concept of Village Citizenship

By definition, a villager or a peasant is one who resides and works permanently in a rural area and one who not only has household registration in the village but also ownership over some land in the village. Indeed, residence and land ownership are the two requisites for one to be a villager. Though residence is an important condition for one to be a local villager land ownership is a decisive factor. If someone has rights over some of the village land, he/she naturally becomes a member of the village and is granted household registration in the community, including full rights in the village elections.

Village citizenship refers to privileged villager status and a set of rights enjoyed by villagers, including entitlement to collective land property and village welfare. Villager status is an inherent right. In Wenzhou, for example, migrants who have stayed in Paris for decades still have the right to demand a piece of land to build a house or tomb in their home villages. The shared tradition, history, and culture in a village play an important role in the definition of village citizenship.

In the modern world, village citizenship includes both rights and duties granted by law and by the constitution to all citizens of China, and those that arise from village autonomy. Here it is important to distinguish *gonmin* (state citizenship) from *cunmin* (village citizenship). A villager's rights combine

citizen rights as defined by the constitution and villager rights as defined by China's Organic Law of Village Committee.

In terms of participating in village governance, a villager has the right to vote, nominate candidates, elect the village head, deputy head, members of the village committee, village representatives, and leaders of branch villages, dismiss corrupt village leaders, participate in village decision-making processes, and monitor village affairs. S/he has the right to attend village meetings and village representatives' meetings. Villagers' other rights include a role in formulating village regulations, rights to know about and supervise village affairs, to comment on and, where necessary, propose dismissal of village officials. During the process of elections, villagers choose candidates, cast ballots, and count votes. They thus enjoy extensive democratic rights in the village's decision making and the running of village affairs.

The village meeting is an important institution that gives villagers an opportunity to voice their opinions before major decisions are taken. According to the Organic Law, village meetings should involve all villagers aged 18 or above. The meeting should have a minimum quorum of half of those eligible to attend or, alternatively, two-thirds of the household representatives of the village. The village committee is responsible to the representatives' meeting and is obliged to report to the meeting about its work. The meeting reviews at least once a year the committee's work. It is called by the village committee, but can also be summoned if demanded by at least one-tenth of villagers.

According to Article 19 of the Organic Law, it is necessary to hold a village meeting to discuss and decide on any of the following issues: (1) levying tax for the township government, or collection and allocation of village fees/tax; (2) allocation of allowances; (3) allocation and distribution of gains and profits from the village collective economy; (4) collection of money for projects such as village roads and schools from villagers; (5) village economic projects such as business deals and village construction contracts; (6) in-village business contracts, namely those between the village and individual villagers; (7) land allotted to villagers for building new houses; (8) other issues that the villagers' meeting believes are important and should be discussed and decided in the meeting. Beyond the rights and obligations specified above, it should be ready for transparency in its handling of village matters in case the villagers demand it.

Villagers must abide by laws and regulations in exercising election rights, participating in democratic decision making, democratic management and democratic supervision. They also have a responsibility to carry out decisions or resolutions made at village meetings or village representative meeting.

Village autonomy also covers economic activities, as villagers are engaged in activities such as, farming contracted lands, opening-up wastelands, working in village enterprises, and paying legal taxes and fees. Their economic

responsibilities accordingly involve (1) taking care of public properties and respecting the legal rights of others; (2) using the natural resources in a reasonable way, maintaining and improving environmental conditions; and (3) paying timely taxes and fees as defined by law.

Village citizenship functions as "a license to do business and a right of access to crucial institutions" (Popkin 1979:46). Village residents are grouped into insiders and outsiders. Insiders have full citizenship within the village, although they do not necessarily play decision-making roles. By contrast, outsiders are allowed to reside in the geographic confines of the village but have fewer rights and benefits than insiders. Village resources and jobs tend to be distributed among village citizens, and insiders often run village shops. Village citizenship also entails gaining a share of welfare distribution and favorable protection from outside competition.

With the introduction of democratic elections, village leaders confront the question of who eligible voters are. With economic development, urbanization, and the increase in-migrant workers, assigning village citizenship and defining the membership of villages have become increasingly problematic. Villages are confronted with the question of who should have villager status and how village citizenship should be assigned. This involves the politics of inclusion and exclusion. If a village is poor, most villagers exercise their right to exit. If a village becomes rich, married-out women demand the right to vote, as do in-migrant workers who have lived there for a certain period.

3.2 Village Citizenship and Eligibility

As defined in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, "All citizens of the People's Republic of China, who are eighteen years old and above, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, profession, family background, religion, education, economic status, period of residence, have the rights to elect and to be elected, with the exception of those who are legally deprived of political rights."[2] The Zhejiang Provincial Regulations on the Implementation of the Organic Law of Village Committee Elections (1988) defines voter and candidacy eligibility in line with the national law. Provisional 1999 Village Election Regulations in Zhejiang specifically defines the eligibility of electors as follows.

First, an elector's age is defined on the basis of the elector's date of birth as recorded in his/her identification card or household registration, and the date of election in the village. Second, electors should register in the village in which their household registration is lodged. In some exceptional cases, an elector can register in a village regardless of his/her household registration condition. However, an approval from the village election committee must be obtained in such cases. Third, those who suffer from a mental disorder and

are consequently unable to exercise their election rights can be excluded from the electors' list.

In the township of Laofangqiao, where an election was held between March and April 1999, village election regulations stipulate that those eligible electors who have lived in the village for a year or longer because of marriage or other family ties, and who have carried out duties as villagers, should register, even if their household registration has not yet been transferred into the village. Those who have had no contact with the village for a year or longer and have not carried out village duties are not eligible for registration, even though their household registration is still in the village. Those who suffer from a mental disorder and consequently are not able to exercise election rights can be exempt form the electorate list, if approved by the village election committee. Those who have been working away from the village for more than two years but meanwhile have carried out their duties in the village should either come back to the village at least two days before the election or ask others to exercise their rights for them; otherwise they are not counted as electors. Nonvillagers who work in village enterprises or other economic organizations are not eligible for registration.

3.3 Politics of Village Citizenship

3.3.1 Fighting for Village Citizenship

The following examples highlight the key aspects of struggles for democratic village citizenship:

- Retired cadres, who were members of a village, had household registration in a city but who are now living in his/her home village, demand the right to vote.
- Those who have gained household registration in cities, after their collective lands were appropriated by the government or other agencies in the cities, demand their original villager status and their right to vote.
- Married-out women demand their right to vote in many townships, as they attempt to retain their household registration in their native village and refuse to acquiesce to the village leaders' demand that they should reregister their household in their husbands' villages. One woman who did not have proper marriage registration and was therefore deprived of her right to vote demanded its restoration.
- Migrant workers demand their right to vote in the village where they have worked for a long period.
- Ordinary villagers demand the right to vote. During the 1998 village election in Tianli, Huiping township, votes from one household were

somehow left uncounted. Though the electoral working team tried to convince the family that it was owing to a technical mistake, the family was very angry. They went all the way to the township leaders to protest against "being unlawfully deprived of voting rights." The leaders had to apologize profusely before the family's anger was appeased.

- Those who were deprived of their right to vote, owing to their breach of state laws under the one child policy, have fought for their right to vote and the right to run for election.
- Ordinary villagers demand the right to run for election. Zhang Yubin who was deprived of his right to vote by township leaders appealed to a local court and won back his right to contest the village election in 1998 (Ding Dakang 1999:32–34).
- Even family members whose parents died in the wake of the village's first round of elections argue that their parents should have the right to vote in the second round of elections (Wei Ronghan 2001:65).

The above events, related to electoral processes, highlight the importance of villager status and citizenship.

3.3.2 The Politics of Exclusion and Inclusion

The Election Regulations of Yangxia Village, written in September 1997, stipulate that those who are defined as psychiatric patients by hospitals at the county level or above, and consequently are deemed unable to exercise their rights to vote, can be exempt from elections. The same applies to those who have been away from the village for business or for other reasons and who have had no contact with the village for more than one year.

Provincial regulations specify that one is not an eligible elector unless one meets four conditions in terms of age, residence, political qualification, and behavioral ability. Of the four conditions, the one of residency is the most likely to trigger a dispute. This is because, since the start of economic reforms, the household system has been seriously challenged by the ever-increasing social mobility of Chinese individuals. The household system makes elector registration difficult and affects the exercise of electors' rights, particularly for those who work away from the village. The law stipulates that they should register in the village of their household registration. But voting for those who have moved away is essentially meaningless. Asking others to vote for them would achieve little beyond a higher voting turnout and might lead to irregularities or conflicts during elections.

The residence issue affects those who leave the village to work elsewhere and those who come from elsewhere to work in the village. In recent years

many villagers have left their home villages in provinces like Sichuan, Hubei, and Henan for work in better-developed provinces like Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong. For example, in Wuyan township of Wenzhou municipality, the local population of 40,000 is outnumbered by 50,000 migrant workers. A survey shows that many of the migrants have worked there for years without visiting their home village. Some have married locals, and for these people the chance to return to the home village is low, as they have formed close ties with the villages where they live and work. But, because they lack local household registration, they have no election rights.[3] Naturally, the problem of guaranteeing democratic rights to these individuals has become a significant issue.

Two cases in the 1999 election are particularly revealing. In one instance, a migrant had set up a factory in a village of Xianju county. Besides job opportunities, he brought many other benefits to that village. During the 1999 village election, the villagers wished to elect him as village head, and the man himself was interested in running for the post. However, by law, he was not eligible for the local election, and the local leadership insisted on his ineligibility. The disappointed man then shifted his investment in the village to elsewhere.[4]

The other case occurred in the better-developed Yuyao municipality. Shunyu was a well-known and prosperous company with a large number of employees. In the 1999 election, the general manager of the company, who was not a local person, wished to run for the post of village head, and it seemed that the villagers would be happy to have him as the village head. However, the man gave up when he could not overcome the problem of household registration.[5]

The provisional 1999 Zhejiang Village Election Regulations stipulates in Article 11, "in some exceptional cases, with the approval of the village election committee, one can register as an elector even if his/her household registration is not in the village." Viewed in this light, the above two cases could have easily been solved, because in both cases the villagers and the village election committees would certainly have granted an approval. In general, a nonvillager asking for exceptional treatment in electoral registration may gain approval if the villagers and the village election committee think this is in the interests of the village. Alternatively, the request may be refused, even if the nonvillager has close ties with and has carried out his/her duties in the village. There are many reasons for such refusal, perhaps the most important of which are concerns among villagers that nonvillagers will gain entitlement to welfare and economic benefits if accepted as eligible voters. Here, the reasoning behind both approval and rejection is rooted in villagers' concerns for their own economic interests. In both cases, the democratic rights of nonvillagers are treated as secondary.

3.3.3 Who Defines Village Citizenship?

In most cases, governments at the township or higher levels decide who is eligible to participate in an election. The Office of the Leading Group of Village Elections in Fuyang municipality (1997) issued a directive before the 1997 village election, laying down that

> all those who by household registration and identification card are eighteen years old or above (i.e. born before 12 p.m. 30 September 1978) should register, with the exception of those who are legally deprived of political rights. Lists of electors should be made public and measures must be taken to avoid errors.

In facing different kinds of disputes over the right to vote, one township leader made an "arbitrary" decision that all who do not have household registration in villages are ineligible as electors (Wei Ronghan 2001:64). This decision excluded retired cadres who were village members but had a household in the cities, migrant workers, and married-out women. It aimed to solve all disputes over citizenship quickly and prevent the issue from being manipulated by troublemakers. However, the administrative decision invited criticisms and complaints by villagers.

Soon, township leaders discovered an effective and democratic way of delegating their responsibility. Faced with increasing disputes and difficulties in deciding whether villagers who work outside for more than one year or migrant workers living in the village for a long time have the right to vote, township leaders decided to shift their burden to village leaders. As criteria for village citizenship are always subject to dispute and each individual case often takes too much time, township leaders preferred to let village leaders decide the matter. Although some village leaders make such tough decisions, other village leaders are smart enough to shift this burden to the village assembly/village representative assembly; it is easy for village leaders to defuse any criticism when the decision about villager status is made through discussion and voting at village assemblies and representative assemblies. In the case of the village assembly, the vote can be seen as a sort of village referendum over the membership question.

Such democratic practice sometimes leads to decisions disfavoring minority groups, who then appeal to local courts. In turn, local courts play an independent role in settling disputes, defending minority rights and interests, and constituting a counterbalance to the majoritarian rule of village representative assemblies. It is interesting to note, by way of comparison, that in Vietnam, "such conflicts over village membership serve to emphasize the importance to villagers of control and access to courts, both within the village and at higher levels of authority" (Popkin 1979:45).

3.3.4 Equality and Differences

Village citizenship has normative requirement that demands equal treatment within a village. The citizens of a village have the right to share equally in a portion of village wealth. In turn, the differentiated treatment sometimes imposed by the majority of villagers upon a minority challenges this fundamental aspect of village citizenship. Systematic injustice committed by a majority through the democratic process is, in a broader sense, undemocratic. A village democracy must be morally committed to substantial justice as part of what it means to be democratic. I will now examine a detailed case to illustrate this theme.

Jianshe village in Wuyun township in Lishun city has a population of 872 (400 male, 472 female) and consists of 6 village teams. It has 171 *mu* of land (One mu equals 667 square meters), of which 109 *mu* are to be contracted to the villagers during the new contract period, and 62 *mu* are managed by the village committee. In 2000, the total income of the village was 625,000 yuan, and total expenses 697,000 yuan. Its annual average per capita income was 3,366 yuan.

On August 18, 1999, the first village representative assembly was held to discuss the new contract. The task was completed on March 18, 2000, after seven months. The proposal that the first contract be continued for another 30 years with a few modifications was passed, with the support of 72.7% of votes in the second village representative assembly.

A dispute occurred during the process. The key issue was whether the fifth team should be treated equally. Historically, the fifth team was amalgamated into Jianshe village in 1958 by an administrative order. Geographically, it is located on the top of a mountain, far away from the rest of the village and the site of Wuyun township, so that its lands have little commercial value and contribute little to the collective wealth of the village. For these reasons, the other five village teams demanded that the fifth team maintain their old contract and that it should not enjoy the same benefits as all other village teams. While the villagers of all other five teams were given the amount of money equal to 12.5 kilograms rice/month, the fifth team was denied this benefit.

Subsequently, village representative meetings were held 10 times. Each time the fifth team lost its appeal because its four village representatives were outnumbered by the other 36 representatives. It then appealed to the township authority and local newspapers. In the end, through compromise and persuasion inside and outside village representative meetings, a deal was reached. Although the villagers of the fifth team were entitled to the most benefits, a differentiated policy toward contracting and village welfare provision was also adopted.

In this case, the fifth team demanded a fair share of collective benefits. Village elections, village representative assembly, and majority rule proved insufficient to protect the interests and rights of the minority group. At the same time, basic village citizenship and the right to appeal enabled the minority group to defend its rights and interests.

This case reveals that village democracy is making progress in which compromises can be made, a balance struck, and relative fairness achieved. Despite the dominance of majorities, village assemblies provide forums in which minority groups can express their needs and dissatisfactions, and ultimately reach accommodations. As Ross Zucker (2001:273) agues, "Though morally supreme, justice has no authority without democracy. Since its rules are not self-enforcing, justice must come under democracy's dominion in order to be actualized."

3.4 Conclusion: Meanings of Village Citizenship

Villagers' willingness to fight for status and the right to vote signals a broad trend toward development from peasants to citizens. It might be argued that village democratic institutions have turned peasants into modern citizens, as villagers empower themselves by using democratic institutions and procedures to defend their interests (Goldman 2005). They are simultaneously active in establishing, consolidating, and entrenching the democratic institutions of the village assembly or village representative assembly.

Villagers are fighting to realize their political, social, and economic rights and to force local cadres to respect and honor these rights. They equally defend their rights against the misuse of power by village cadres. For example, a widow defended her right to inherit the properties of her husband against the village leaders' decision that the properties should go to her son. An ordinary villager who was contracted to run a village enterprise defended his right against the decision of the village committee to end the contract before the term expired. Increasingly some villagers know more about electoral laws than village and township cadres and use them to advance their interests and defend their rights. In short, the increasing importance of village citizenship is changing local political culture and establishing a rights-based political morality. In such a context, we should use the term of "villager" seriously and give up the older term of "peasant," which seems inadequate to describe peoples in rural China. Of course, it should be noted that village citizenship is related to economic interest and inherently limited; it is not equivalent to a republican version of active citizenship.

Economic interests have driven villagers to fight for villager status and economic rights, as well as for the right to vote. Their struggles have raised the question of which institution and who should be able to settle the

dispute. To avoid their responsibilities, township leaders have allowed the village assembly or village representative assembly to decide this difficult and controversial matter, thus turning them into key democratic institutions in solving disputes over the question of village membership. This has consolidated democratic processes in some villages. But ironically, the village representative assembly has occasionally violated minority rights of women, who in turn have appealed to the local courts for justice. This has pushed local actors to consider the tension between majority rule and minority rights and created a demand for local courts to intervene and counterbalance the majoritarian tendencies of democratic institutions.

It is also important to stress on the contribution of migrants' fighting for village citizenship. In some villages, the decision on whether to grant village membership to a migrant is made by village meetings on a case-by-case basis. Some village committees respect and guard the legal rights of migrants in the running of their business and consult them when migrant affairs are involved. In village enterprises, migrant workers participate in management through their representatives. In Beicun, Wuyan township, the local population is outnumbered by migrants. Taking this fact into account, the village has set up a system of multilevel consultations with the aim of collecting opinions from various groups, including migrant workers and business people in the village. All these models of decision making contain democratic elements.

Charles Tilly once remarked that citizenship can be thin where it entails few transactions of rights and obligations and thick where it occupies a significant share of all transactions (Faulks 2000:10). To be thick, village citizenship should be about both economic rights and the right to participate in decision making and village supervision. Indeed, village citizenship entails the people's power to make village leaders responsive to them. Meaningful village citizenship is evidenced by the capacity of villagers, empowered by democratic institutions and procedures, to influence collective decisions. Political participation (chapter 5) is the key to realizing this objective.

While celebrating the development of village citizenship, we should be aware of some of its inherent limits and deficiencies. There are the following problems: the right of migrants to vote is largely window dressing: two classes of citizenship exist within a village based on distinctions between insiders and outsiders. Village citizenship raises the question of fairness toward outsiders. Conversely, outsiders who fight for and obtain village citizenship pose problems of "free riders" and associated issues of balancing duties and rights.

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CHAPTER 4

Competitiveness of Village Elections

Scholars hold two different theses on the question of the competitiveness of village elections: the noncompetitive thesis and the semicompetitive thesis. Jasper Becker (2000) asserts that village democracy often falls short of real competition. In contrast, Tianjian Shi (1999a:1135) and Baogang He and Lang Youxing (2000a; also Baogang He 2003a) identify the existence of semicompetitive elections. Similarly, Robert A. Pastor and Qingshan Tan (2000:509) regard about half the number of village elections they have observed as "competitive, as indicated by a winning margin of less than two-to-one."

Tianjian Shi views the number of incumbent leaders being removed as an indicator of competitiveness. However, as Robert A. Pastor and Qingshan Tan argue (2000:509), the level of reelection for village chairs is not necessarily a sign of competitive election. In order to measure the competitiveness of village elections, I develop and examine a list of indicators. These indicators include competitive elections for positions on village committees, multiple-candidates, the degree of difficulty entailed in winning the majority vote, the rate of reelection of village committee members, campaign activities (such as speeches and meetings), and the incidence of vote-buying in the elections.

This chapter aims to make a systematic inquiry into the following questions: How do people get to run for positions on the village committee? Are the positions hard to win? How competitive are the elections? What are the factors affecting the competitiveness of village elections?

4.1 Semicompetitive Elections

Elections to positions on village committees have become increasingly competitive since they were introduced over a decade ago. The election, held

in November 1998 after the Organic Law of Village Committee came into effect, was particularly competitive. The practice of direct and open elections, called *haixuan* in many localities, has dramatically increased the competitiveness of the village elections. One indication of this was the gap between the number of candidates and that of open positions: there were more number of candidates than positions. Between April and July 1999, 786 villages in the Yuyao municipality held elections under the Organic Law. The ratio of candidates to positions was 48:1, which was unprecedented in the history of village election (Dept. of Organization of Yuyao Committee of CCP 1999). In Laofangqiao, a township selected by the Yuyao municipality for test elections, the villagers nominated 959 candidates for the 57 open seats. The candidate-seat ratio was 17:1, promising intense competition (CCP Committee and Township Government of Laofangqiao 1999b).

Competition was also intensified as elections shifted from "one-candidate" elections, which dominated in 1994, to "multiple-candidates" elections, which dominated in 1998–99. In Linhai, for example, the number of candidates in 1995 was generally the same as the number of positions. In 1998–99, however, multiple candidates were nominated for position of the village head.[1] In 1995, the Ministry of Civic Affairs assessed the degree to which elections across the country met three criteria: competitive electoral process, public campaigning, and secret ballots. Judged by these criteria, Zhejiang was behind Fujian, Heilongjiang, Shanxi, Jilin, Hunan, Henan, Sichuan, and other provinces (Howell 1998:96). Take the Tongxiang municipality of Zhejiang as an example. In late 1992 Tongxiang county held its second round of village elections. Of its 306 villages, 244 (86.9%) took the noncompetitive approach: the same number of candidates for the same number of positions. Only 40 villages (13.1%) held semicompetitive elections. By 1998, however, as Zhang Biao (1998) has found in his case study of the elections in the 10 administrative villages of Taoyuan township in July of that year, competitive elections were common. Quite a large number of villagers nominated themselves as candidates for village committee positions. As the township government made no effort to limit the number of candidates, elections became very competitive. My survey has found that most elections had multicandidates in most areas of Zhejiang (table 4.1). David Zweig's survey also finds that almost 70% of 2,400 respondents reported that their community had multicandidates elections between 1996 and1999 (Zweig and Chung 2003). In 2002 in Xiwu district, Hangzhou, 65.8% of 104 villages held multiple-candidates elections. In 2002, 95% of all the villages of Fujian province held multiple-candidate elections. The 2005 National Survey found that 2,064 respondents (88.7 percent) confirm that the elections for village heads are competitive in the sense that there are more than two candidates for the post.

Table 4.1 The Number of Candidates Who Ran for the Position of Village Head in the Latest Election

Answer	*No. of Respondents*	*Percentage*
One	155	12.4
Two	287	23.1
Three	288	23.1
Four	162	13.0
Five or More	268	21.5
No Response	85	6.8
Total	1,245	100.0

The need for competitive elections has also been affirmed in the Organic Law (1998), Article 14 of which says "The number of candidates should be larger than the number of positions." In Zhejiang, this Article specifies that "The number of candidates for village heads or deputy heads should be one more than the positions. The number of candidates for village committee members should be one to three more than the number of seats in the committee."

The distribution of votes is to some extent also indicative of the degree of competitiveness. Our field study in Zhejiang found that in each succeeding election, it was more difficult to win the majority vote than in the previous one. For example, in the 1999 election in Wanzhangqiao village of Laofangqiao township, with a margin of only one vote and a few invalid votes, neither of the candidates was able to get an absolute majority. This entailed a second round of elections, in which candidate Liu Linnan won, but only with a nine-vote majority. The situation across the township was similar. Of the 18 candidates, only one got 80% of the votes; 10 candidates won with less than 60%. Candidate Mao Dengdian, of Datou village, won the election with a narrow 50.5% majority.

It is not easy to win a village election let alone by a large majority in increasingly affluent rural communities. Take for example, the election in September 1999 in Xia village of Tangxia township. Of the 1,054 qualified voters, only 979 actually turned out to vote. Of these, 546 (55%) voted for the winner Xie Zuoyan, 421 votes went to Xie Zuoshui, the former village head(only the people for the two frontrunners have been discussed here).[2]

In some cases, the election was unable to produce a full village committee because the competition was so stiff that no candidate was able to win an absolute majority. Wuyun township, for instance, held elections in its 36 villages in 1997. In 5 villages (Mubai, Shangzhang, Xiaqianhu, Xianyan, and Xiashanglong), the election failed to produce a village committee. Another

village (Xiayang) was unable to elect a village head, although it elected other members of the committee, including the deputy head. The votes were so divided that no one could win a majority. In the village of Shangzhang, the turnout rate was 100%. However, when the 2 leading runners respectively received 98 and 89 votes out of a total of 210, neither could win the election. The village of Xiashuanglong presented a similar case. There were 185 eligible voters in that village, and again 100% of the voters cast their votes. The 3 leading candidates got 65, 62, and 49 votes respectively (votes to minor candidates not discussed here, Office of Wuyu Township Government 1997). Success was not guaranteed even when a second vote took place (Yan Yujiang 1994).

Another indication of increasing competitiveness is the declining rate of reelection of village committee members (Zhang Jing 1998:145). In the village elections of Wuyun township in March and April 1997, only 15 (52%) of the former village heads were reelected.[3] When the Chengzhou municipality held elections in its 1,111 villages in 1999, only 395 (35.6%) of the village heads were reelected (Qiu Zhengjun 1999). In the Yuyao municipality, 786 villages held elections in 1999. Among the 783 elected village heads, 483 (62%) were new faces, and among the 923 committee members, 493 (53%) were newly elected (Dept. of Organization of Yuyao Committee of CCP 1999; Office of CCP Committee and Government of Laofanqiao township 1999b). In the Laofangqiao township, only 3 of the 18 village heads were reelected. The newly elected amounted to 15 (82%). As for the committee members, 25 (65%) were new faces, including a woman deputy head.

4.2 Campaign

In 1994–95 when I took my field trips around rural Zhejiang, township leaders often told me that they opposed any campaign (*jinxuan*) and perceived it as "bourgeois." Because "campaign" was a sensitive term, local actors such as village leaders and candidates used the term "introduction" in village elections. In 1997 one official from the Bureau of Civic Affairs in Hunan province proposed to write campaign into the Provincial Law on Village Committee Election, but her proposal was rejected in the People's Congress of Hunan.[4] The famous example was Miao Liangxing, village chief in Xikou village, Zhanghu township, Nanping city, Fujian province, who broadcast his speech on the village TV network. For this "illegal" activity, he received an administrative warning from the township party committee, and was fined 10,000 yuan by the local court in 2000 (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie* 2002:386–94).

In contrast to the official restriction on campaigning, villagers demand introductions. In my interviews with villagers, many expressed such a desire. A villager in Wuyun township, Jingyun county, stated "The candidate should

make public speeches, telling villagers about his/her blueprint for the village collective economy and welfare, so that the villagers can vote with knowledge of the candidate. A village head thus elected would be more competent, and villagers will be more at ease about their choice."[5] A villager in Shuige township, Lishui municipality, said, "candidates should run for the position of the village head. They should make known their ideas for the development of the village as well as the measures to be taken."[6]

In the past few years, *jinxuan* has been regarded as a neutral term, organized campaign activities, such as calling voters and giving public speeches, are deemed as valuable to prevent underground activities from occurring. Zhan Chengfu, a higher official in the Ministry of Civic Affairs recognized campaign as legitimate and necessary for a competitive election in 2001 (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2002*:255).

Candidates have organized their own campaigning activities, formal or informal. In order to regulate and control these activities, local governments have started to allow formal campaigns such as public speeches. For example, Article 16 of the Election Procedures for Village Committees in Zhejiang province states that the village election working group should introduce candidates to all electors according to the principles of equality, objectivity, and fairness. Candidates should deliver their public speeches and answer the questions from villagers. In Qixi county, Hubei province, 15 provisions were written down regarding how to conduct a public speech.

Campaign speeches are highlights of the village elections. In Lishu county, Jilin province, known as a pioneer of *haixuan*, heated speeches took place to loud applause. One such occasion occurred in January 1993, when several people were running for seats on the village committee of Liujiazi village. Originally only two candidates were supposed to make speeches at the meeting. However, as soon as the two chosen candidates ended their speeches, three villagers unexpectedly took the floor and announced that they would also run for the village head. Now there were five competitors. The audience became very excited at this dramatic change (Tang, Wang and Bai 1996:9).

Other examples can be found in the rural areas of Zhejiang, where campaign meetings are often held by township leaders or by the villagers themselves. In Yaojiaqiao village, Yuyao municipality, for example, voting took place on April 7, 1999, the first village election since the New Organic Law came into effect; 489 (99.6%) of the 491 eligible residents cast their votes. Prior to the voting, a meeting was held, at which each of the two candidates running for the village head spoke of their grand vision for the development of the village. The audience was deeply impressed (Office of CCP Committee and Township Government of Laofangqiao 1999c). Public speeches and the broadcasting of debates in villages' internal TV systems have increasingly taken place in some villages in Wenzhou and Linhai in 2000–2002.

Nevertheless, campaigns are not widespread. Only 22.4% of the respondents reported that candidates made speeches before the election (Zweig and Chung 2003). As Gadsden and Thurston (2001:20) point out, "currently, campaigns are minimalist and the rules are stringent. If candidates campaign at all, they are limited by law to giving speeches at designated meetings or over the village public announcement system."

There are various forms of informal campaigns, however. One candidate, for example, threw a birthday party ahead of his real birthday and legitimately invited his fellow villagers to his place and "advertised" his plan if he were elected to be village chief.

There are also various campaigning strategies. The first one is a disruptive strategy. For instance, two or three days before the election date, one candidate sent his close friend from another area to his opponent's place, this friend pretended to offer the opponent a wonderful business opportunity so that the opponent was fully engaged in the business meeting and had little time for his informal campaigning activities.

The second strategy is cooperation. In some villages of Xiwu district, Hangzhou, there were five or six groups fighting each other for their own candidate. As a result none of them won in the 1997 elections. Learning a lesson from that experience, these groups have developed a cooperative strategy and formed one group to run for elections. After realizing this new development, other groups also formed another cooperative faction in the 2002 election. As a result, in the functional sense the village had two factions (functionally they are two "parties") competing for village power (Shea and Burton 2001).

4.3 Vote-Buying

In practice, local officials make distinction between two behaviors with regard to voter mobilization. *Labiao* means canvassing for votes or winning votes through appropriate channels such as public speeches. This is distinguished from *maibiao*, the practice of offering money to voters. Now *labiao* is allowed, while *maibiao* is illegitimate and is punished by local governments. According to official Chinese theory of rural democracy, vote-buying is illegal and should be prohibited; by comparison, the Taiwanese government tolerated vote-buying in local elections. As Bruce Jacobs (1980:147) points out, in the context of local elections in Taiwan, through vote-buying efforts candidates advertise themselves and make voters aware that they are running for elections.

Competition takes various forms in village elections. Some of the nouveau riche are known to have flown home to run for village headships or committee positions, often through the mobilization of factions, some of which are based on clans. Competition is also associated with the increase in vote-buying

in the elections. Candidates buy votes in many different ways. Some give out packets of cigarettes; some offer money (200–400 yuan for each vote); and some invite people to dinners. In Fuyang municipality, the first two elections saw little buying of votes; by contrast, vote-buying was common in the third and fourth elections. Local governments have come down hard on vote-buying and corrupt practices. Over 10 people were arrested in Tonglu county, Zhejiang province, in 1998. My survey found that 388 respondents constituting 31.2% of the sample reported that they witnessed various activities of vote-buying; and 774 (62.2%) thought that voting-buying is more common now than in the past.

Vote-buying clearly does two things. First, as James Scott (1972:101, 149) points out, it redistributes village wealth. Rich villagers exchange their wealth for power, while poor villagers exchange their voting "power" for economic gains. During elections, some money from the rich goes to the poor. Poor households benefit to some extent, as candidates from rich families give presents to villagers and treat them to dinners and banquets, or offer them money. Rich individuals form their own groups and factions. A village chief in Lishui told me that he normally spent 20,000–30,000 yuan to ensure that that he would get enough votes in 1996. The price of ensuring electoral success amounted to 100,000 *yuan* in Wenzhou in 2000 (He Zengke 2002:29). Behind the competition in the village elections is a competition of wealth: whoever can afford it, whoever spends the most, wins.

Second, in the Chinese context, the vote-buying issue can be looked at from another angle. In the past, villagers counted for nothing in the political appointment of cadres. Today they are granted a vote, and their vote can be sold for money. To some degree, this is one way of "materializing" their rights. The right to vote can be materialized into a packet of cigarettes, or a bottle of wine, or something more significant. This is by no means the best way to enhance political participation and awareness of individual rights in the rural areas, but it appears that these are enhanced significantly, perhaps at least partly as a result of vote-buying, meaning that voters are much more important than before. It should be noted, however, that in richer areas, an offer of money for votes is often considered an insult. During my conversations about vote-buying with some well-off villagers, they made it very clear to me that they were not interested in money or presents but wanted to ensure that their village had an able and upright village chief.

4.4 The Determinants of Competitiveness

This section examines the factors that affect the competitiveness of village elections namely economic, procedural, and institutional factors, and presents the reasons behind the different degrees of competitiveness of village elections.

4.4.1 Economic Conditions and Collective Assets

During a research trip to a rich village in Fuyang, I observed there was little competition because the party secretary controlled the village enterprises, and he simply appointed candidates as he pleased. In that village, election was reduced to a formality. The village cadres could manipulate the electoral procedure and buy votes with collective wealth. As Thurston (1998:v) points out, "genuinely competitive elections have a greater likelihood of success in more pluralist villages, that is, villages where neither economic nor political power is very concentrated."

When it comes to the incentive to run for posts, I find an interesting pattern. There is more electoral competition in economically developed villages than in less developed villages. If a village is able to offer high salaries for village leaders, competition for the post is very high. For example, competitiveness was extremely high in Huilong and Beichuan, where the yearly salary of village chief is above 20,000 yuan. In rich villages, candidates as well as voters are politically more mature and they have a strong sense of contesting. Moreover, such village committee positions usually lead to economic gains. The handsome salary and allowances plus the power in issuing land-use permits and offering official documents are good motivations for running for village positions (Schiller 1996:164–73). The post of village committee has the following incentives: power over village assets (e.g., one village assets worth seven million Chinese yuan), ability to secure easy contracts from village enterprises if there are any, control over the use and transfer of collective land and the renting of village houses for commercial purposes, and finally handsome salaries.

A poor village tends to have lower competition because with the absence of a strong collective economy, the village cannot afford to pay allowances to its committee members. For example, the poor village of Xianjiahaidou was unable to pay the basic salary for the village chief, and the total election budget was only 2,000 yuan. No wonder little competition was there in the past election. Take another example of six underdeveloped villages in Wuyun township, Lishui, a below-average region in Zhejiang province. In these six villages the village leaders could not even get a reasonable allowance, not to say a salary, and village positions were hardly attractive. In an extreme case of a village in Liuzheng, one with a populace of 300-odd, village leaders got an annual allowance of only 60 yuan. On the eve of the election, few villagers showed interest in the position of the village head and still fewer would care to run for it. It was a rare case since the village has an experience of having a candidate making great effort even to the point of trying to bribe voters with a cart of watermelon, to run for a position. It should be noted that although the competition was low, there were still some incentives for villagers to run for

election. In some cases, the township would pay the salaries for poor village leaders. In other cases, poor village leaders still controlled and utilized the resource of the land.

Electoral competitiveness has to do with the collective economy and assets. Where such an economy is strong and assets are many, campaigning for village committee memberships tends to be more competitive. On the other hand, it is less competitive in villages that have only an insignificant collective economy and limited assets. It might be formulated that the competitiveness is in proportion to the village economy and the resources in the hand of the village committee. Village positions are not attractive in the less affluent villages, least of all in the poor *kongkecun* (put literally, empty-shelled villages). Such *kongkecun* can be found in some mountainous villages of Wuyun township and a small village in Liuzheng township, in these villages competition in the election is minimal. Nevertheless, the level of family income is irrelevant to the level of political competition. Cross-tabulation analysis of my survey data reveals that the level of family income has no statistically significant impact on the number of candidates standing for village chief.

4.4.2 Political Interference and Informal Social Forces

Political factors, such as the capability of the party secretary, the power of kinship, and institutional rules, have significant impact on the level of competitiveness of the election. If elected village chiefs are not given economic power to control village enterprise, the competition in the election decreases. In poor villages where villagers always delay or resist paying taxes and various fees, township leaders do not dare to allow or encourage open competitive election. In one village, a candidate won the election by promising to waive taxes and fees if he were elected.[7] Township leaders therefore tend to restrict electoral campaigns and to manipulate the election process to ensure that their trusted subordinators are elected so that these subordinators will complete the task of collecting due fees and taxes. Conversely, rich villages do not have problems paying taxes and fees. Township leaders do not need to worry about this issue, and the issue does not constitute a motivation for township leaders' control of election. It should be noted that township leaders' incentive structure has been changing with the new policy of the elimination of agricultural tax.

One significant feature of the village elections is the absence of multiparty competition. To put this in a comparative context, in India, numerous political parties have competed with each other in township and village elections (Arora and Prabhakar 1997; Mitra 1979; Kantowsky 1968). In Sedaka, Malaysia, local elections have been competitive, because village households are affiliated to political parties. While the majority of rich households are

members of the ruling party (UMNO), the majority of poor households are members of the opposition party (PAS) (Scott 1985:130–33). By contrast, in China, the Communist Party does not allow political parties to mobilize villagers for elections. The party initiates and implements village elections, and controls the whole election process. The party's domination determines the extent of competition allowed and shapes the way the competition is conducted. When the party branch in the village has tight control over economic resources and the nominating procedure and other electoral processes, competition tends to be low. When there is another force to balance the party's power, be it an economic one, such as village businesses, or the existing village committee or a kinship force, competition tends to be high. Noninstitutional factors such as kinship, factions, or relationships of former schoolmates or comrades-in-arms sometimes play a significant role to intensify competition. Sometimes kinship and factions challenge the party secretary and demand their right to nominate candidates.

4.4.3 Nominating Procedure

The competitiveness of elections is also related to the nominating procedures. The intensity of competition very much depends on how candidates are nominated, how many can be nominated, and whether the number of candidates is larger than the number of posts. In past elections in Liuzheng township, candidates were chosen by the village branch of the CCP and were approved by the township party committee and government leadership before they were introduced to the voters. Voters actually had no right or opportunity to nominate candidates. In addition, in the case of elections for village heads, the official policy allowed one candidate for one position. Thus, competition was simply not expected. Township leaders, out of concern for either employment or vested interests, would have a hand in the nomination process, particularly the nomination of the village head. Sometimes they even manipulated the nominations, ruling out the possibility of real competition.

After the April 1999 elections in Laofangqiao township, we interviewed a number of villagers and asked them to compare the recent election with past ones. During the past elections, they said, the candidates were all handpicked by the township leadership . The number of candidates was exactly the same as the number of positions open to election. As a result, villagers did not think much of the election, because their will was ignored and all they were expected to do was draw a yes-circle around the names of the appointed candidates.[8] However, nominating procedures in the new elections, such as *haixuan*,

encourage much competition. In such cases, the authorities cannot control or dominate the nominating procedure.

In 1995, when we interviewed officials in the Departments of Civic Affairs of Zhejiang province, Ningbo municipality, and Lin'an county, they were all opposed to competitive elections. Township leaders had numerous objections to electoral competition. These included the arguments that (1) articulate speakers with little substance or few practical skills would come to power; (2) factional struggles would increase, and tension between factions or clans might split the village and lead to violence; and (3) villagers sometimes elected "bad guys." The most important reason, of course, was the loss of control—that is, those who were favored by township leaders were often voted out. Township leaders had many incentives to control candidates: according to CCP tradition, the center controls cadres at all levels, and township leaders thus wanted to control village leaders in order to carry out administrative orders. In Fuyang, township officials suggested using an electoral method that works with recommendation and consultation instead of competition. Their argument was that the basic purpose of elections could be achieved through consultation with, say, 20 people. Such a process, they argued, would not only represent the whole village and maintain stability in the village but also reduce electoral costs.[9]

Nevertheless, in recent years local officials have changed their attitude. When the National People's Congress issued the new law on village elections in 1998, officials of the Zhejiang Provincial People's Congress and provincial government moved quickly to prepare for the implementation of the national law in the province. It is obvious that the *haixuan* method has been viewed more favorably after their investigations and inspections (meaning more and more officials endorsed this method). This changed attitude contributed to the Provincial Law of Implementing the National Organic Law of Village Committee and the Drafted Provincial Law of Electoral Procedures of Village Committee (both issued on September 10, 1999). It is interesting to observe that now township leaders, such as in Ma'an, Shaoxing municipality, even "force" the villagers to adopt the *haixuan* method.[10] Our study in Yuyao, Chengzhou, and other municipalities indicates that in the 1999 election, there was quite ease with the new nomination procedures and the multiple-candidates approach. Consequently, competition dramatically increased.

4.5 Conclusion

This study confirms the semicompetitive election thesis. It shows the existence of tense competitive elections in some areas and noncompetitive elections in other areas. Given the diversity of the Chinese countryside, it is reasonable to

assume the coexistence of noncompetitive, semicompetitive, and competitive elections in different areas during different periods.

This study demonstrates that one-party domination does not preclude competition in village elections. It suggests that village elections have gone through different stages, evolving from a noncompetitive to a semicompetitive, and finally to a competitive stage. Between 1994 and 1996 in Zhejiang it was common for the number of candidates nominated for election to be equal to the number of positions. The village party secretaries had control over the nomination process. In 1998, after witnessing many cases of noncompetitive elections, the Carter Center recommended to the Ministry of Civic Affair that the village election committees should always ensure competition for the post of village chair, and that a minimum two candidates should vie for each position on the committee (The Carter Center 1998a). *Haixuan* was adopted in Zhejiang in 1998–99 and in many localities; it dramatically increased the competitiveness of the village elections. This experience seems to fit well with a more general pattern of political development observed in other countries. Before developing fully competitive elections, many European countries held noncompetitive elections, and developing countries such as Kenya and Tanzania experienced semicompetitive elections (Hermet et al. 1978).

Compared with elections in Chinese cities, village elections are more meaningful and more significant, as shown by the increase in competition, the generally lower rate of votes won by candidates, and a declining rate of reelections. The increasing intensity of the competitiveness of village elections indicates a growth of meaningful village democracy associated with fighting for different interests. And this is simply indicative of the fact that competitive elections are effective mechanisms for the articulation of pluralist interests in rural China. Different groups with their interests are able to compete for village power, thereby forming a political "market."

Truly meaningful democracy differs from nominal "democracy" in that the former is immune from predictions. In the former case, voters do not know beforehand who will win the election. In the latter, on the other hand, voters know the results even before they are released. Voting in the latter situation is primarily a gesture or a ritual. Moreover, truly meaningful democracy is noted for its competition, while nominal "democracy" is noted for the lack of it.

Thurston (1998:v) points out, "the competitive election of village committee is a major advance over high-level appointments of village leaders, election by acclamation, and non-competitive elections." In 1990, only 37% of village elections were competitive; the figure went up to 51% in 1993 (Tianjian Shi 2000:4) and jumped to 80% in 2000 (Kennedy 2002:482).

The degree to which names of winners are not foregone conclusions before elections has been increasing significantly. The party's past monopoly on power in the villages is undermined through open competitions for power and influence, and village powers have been redefined and redistributed. In short, political competition, a hallmark of village democracy, has come on the scene in rural China.

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CHAPTER 5

Voting Behavior and Political Participation

Two existing models explain the constrained participation in the communist system. The mobilization model suggests that participation was so mobilized by the party/state that it was largely meaningless, while the disengagement model supports the idea that many communist citizens adopted nonparticipatory behaviors such as nonvoting as a means of protest. While Tianjian Shi's (1997:268–70) study finds the inadequacy and limitations of the mobilization model, Yang Zhong and Jie Chen (2002) suggest that villager participation in elections in Jiangsu fits the disengagement model. Although both the models hold some degree of validity in a few cases, they are not totally explanatory of the situation in China, where what Kent Jennings calls "autonomous" participation is emerging. This chapter attempts to demonstrate the importance of a third model—the emergent democratic culture model; that is, a growing number of voters are developing citizen-initiated participation with complete awareness of their rights.

To demonstrate that the emergent democratic culture model is useful, we need to give an account of survey research in rural China and offer a thoughtful critique of the use of voting and nonvoting as the sole indicator of political participation. Following Almond and Verba's (1963) classical work *The Civic Culture*, this chapter will provide a number of tables that describe the general trend of voter behavior and political participation. This approach is different from that of some academic papers that provide very sophisticated regression analysis to test some existing theory or hypothesis, but offer readers minimal insight into general trends. Such highly acclaimed and legitimate

analysis nevertheless narrowly focuses on one or two issues, which can be likened to developing detailed knowledge of one specific tree without recognizing the whole forest.

This chapter studies voting behavior and villager participation and makes a contribution to the literature on political participation in rural China in the following ways. First, after reviewing the survey work on participation and village elections it examines the advantages and disadvantages of the methodological strategies that have been used to study the political participation of villagers, and outlines my methodological strategy. Second, it examines and investigates voting behavior and participation of villagers in the election process. Third, it considers the key determinants of political participation.

5.1 Survey Study of Political Participation and Village Elections

Sinologists have studied local political participation throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Townsend 1972, Falkenheim 1987, Burns 1988). Since the 1990s China specialists have utilized survey methods developed in modern social science in their studies. In his study of villager participation Kent Jennings (1997) recognizes the emergence of a democratic culture at the local level and finds that the autonomous political participation of villagers is higher than commonly expected and that their actions are just as rational and strategic as their Western counterparts. David Zweig's (2002) 1999 survey confirms that villagers strongly support the "democratic idea" in rural China. Yang Zhong and Jie Chen's study of nonvoting behavior shows that villagers with higher levels of internal efficacy and democratic orientation tended to avoid village elections (Zhong and Chen 2002; Jie Chen and Yang Zhong 2002). This type of behavior can be interpreted as further evidence of the emergence of a participant culture. Nevertheless, others such as Kuan and Lau (2002) find that Mainland Chinese political culture remains dominantly traditional and authoritarian. On the basis of 3 surveys carried out in 40 Chinese cities in 1988, 1991, and 1993, Torstein Hjellum (1998) was unable to reach a definitive conclusion on whether there is an emergent participant culture in China.

Survey work on participation and village elections in China have been dominated by Western scholars or Western-trained Chinese scholars (table 5.1).[1] The field sites of most surveys on village elections were village, township, county, city, or province. These surveys were of different sizes and were carried out at different times and in different localities with different questionnaires; it is difficult to compare them in any significant way, but they can help us to identify trends and patterns.

Table 5.1 Surveys on Democratic Culture and Village Elections

	Kent Jennings	*Jean Oi and Scott Rozelle*	*Baogang He and Youxing Lang*	*David Zweig*
Year	1990	1996	1998	1999
Field Site	4 Counties	8 Provinces	4 prefectures in Zhejiang	Aihui and Helongjiang
Survey Organization	Beijing University	A team of social scientists in Beijing	Zhejiang University	Unspecified
Interviewees	Rural individual	Villager leaders	Villagers	Villagers
Survey Worker	Well-trained advanced undergraduate and graduate students	Not specified	Well-trained advanced undergraduate and graduate students	Unspecified
Size	1,270	160 (?)	1,245	2,637
National or Local?	Local	National	Local	Local
Method	Face-to-face, approximately one hour per person	Unspecified	Face-to-face	Unspecified
Random Method?	A combination of purposive and accidental/ convenience, Selecting 4 out of 30 counties	Random	A combination of purposive and accidental/ convenience plus random sampling of individuals	Random
Main Issues	Local government and political participation	Village elections, Village assemblies	Village elections	Cultural value and trust

Continued

Table 5.1 Continued

	Liangjiang Li	*John Kennedy*	*Yang Zhong and Jie Chen*	*Guo Zhenglin*	*Ministry of Civic Affairs*
Year	1999	2000	2000	2002	2005
Field Site	T county in Jiangxi	34 villages, 6 counties in Shanxi	12 counties in Jiangsu	26 villages, 3 areas in Guangdong	130 counties across China
Survey Organization	Universities and party school in Jiangxi	Northwest University, Xi'an	Anonymous research institute	Zhongshan University and Guangzhou Academy of Social Science	the Institute of Sociology, CASS
Interviewees	Villagers	Villagers	Villagers	Villagers	Villagers
Survey Worker	From universities and party school in Jiangxi	12 graduate students	Well-trained advanced undergraduate and graduate students	Undergraduate students	Well-trained undergraduate
Size	400	408	1,162	1,852	3,500
National or Local?	Local	Local	Local	Local	National
Method	Face-to-face	Face-to-face	Unspecified	Unspecified	Face-to-face
Random Method	Selection of township, Random sampling of villagers	Random	A multistage sampling procedure	Unspecified	Random
Main Issues	Village elections	Village elections	Village elections	Village elections	Village elections

Source: Kent Jennings 1997; Jean C. Oi 1996; Zweig 2002; Baogang He and Lang Youxing 2002; Lianjian Li 2003; John Kennedy 2002; Yang Zhong and Jie Chen 2002; Guo Zhenglin 2003.

5.2 Methodological Considerations on the Indicators of Political Participation

Measuring political participation is difficult. Previous studies have used various measures to capture villager political participation. For example, Jennings studied three modes of "autonomous" participation: cooperative action such

as attending local party meetings and working with others in solving local problems; voicing opinions to cadres by writing letters to officials to offer opinions or suggestions; and contacting representatives. Similarly, Bai Gang examined the full range of participant acts, including electoral participation, decision making, administration, and supervision. By contrast, Tianjian Shi (1999a) used voting behavior as an indicator for participation and found that people who tended to vote were the ones who had stronger internal efficacy and supported democratic values. Yang Zhong and Jie Chen (2002:692) confined their study to those who cast their vote at the central polling station.

The focus on voting or nonvoting has a methodological advantage in the sense that we are able to employ a regression analysis to handle concrete statistical figures on voting behavior. Nevertheless, there are several methodological disadvantages. Casting a vote is not necessarily a good indicator of political participation because many activities such as protest and participation in village representative assembly can and should be seen as forms of political participation. The focus on voting or nonvoting excludes the study of other types of political participation, such as participation in village management and supervision, which are crucial but where we often lack statistical data. Nonvoting can be interpreted as a protest vote or a form of participation by which villagers resist unfair and manipulated elections (Zhong and Chen 2002). In the village where corruption has shaken villagers' faith in politics and in the party itself, some refuse to participate for fear that their participation would be seen as helping "the bad guys" (Jing Yan 1998). Nevertheless, some forms of nonvoting cannot be equated with participation and might be taken as a sign of disinterest in village elections (see section 5.5).

The voter turnout in village elections has been high. In 1998, Huiping township, Zhejiang, 3,080 (96.5%) cast their votes. Lingfen municipality of Shanxi province had a voter turnout rate of 87.5%. In the 26 villages of Yangcheng township, Wushe county, Henan province, the rate was 95%. The average provincial rate in Fujian was 97.3% and, of the 875 villages in its Putian municipality over half the number had a turnout rate of 100%. Of the villages in Xianyou County, 254 had a rate of 100% (Bai Gang 1996:10). In Lishu county, Jilin province, the turnout reached 93.1% in 1988, 94.3% in 1991, 95.1% in 1994, and 98% in 1998 (Zhang Jing 1998:145). Despite the above figures voter turnout has dropped in the past few years. The 2005 National Survey found that 1,931 respondents (76.6%) said they cast their vote, while 554 (22%) said they did not.

Voter turnout is generally considered an important indicator of political participation and "mass interest in elections, since villagers who remain uninterested are likely to vote" (Manion 1996:742). Does a high voter turnout necessarily correlate to a high level of political participation? Many factors, other than the genuine interest of villagers, can contribute to a high voting rate.

First, local governments take effective measures to ensure a high voter turnout. Local officials regard voter turnout as an indication not only of the voters' interest in politics, but also of their support for township governments. In Shangdong's Huantai, for instance, a village needs to achieve 1,000 points to become an official model village. This works by township leaders assigning a certain number of points for each step of the electoral process. A voter turnout rate of more than 90% is assigned 20 points (Weixing Chen 1999:127). In order to achieve this quota, government officials take pains to ensure a high voter turnout in all elections, sometimes organizing a second vote despite the additional financial burden and workload this might entail. Other measures aimed at increasing the voter turnout include allowing a family member to cast votes for his/her relatives; creating a mobile ballot box to collect votes from door to door; and allowing proxy voting (Bai Gang 1996:11).

The second is the economic factor. Villagers often receive an allowance for their voting activity, as compensation for missing work. In Zhejiang province, the sum varies from 2 to 60 yuan. In Wuyun it is normally 40 yuan.

Third, village committees sometimes contact the so-called migrant workers outside the village to seek their opinions about village affairs. When there are important events, such as village elections, the migrant workers are asked either to come back to vote in person, or to cast a postal or proxy vote.

Clearly, therefore, the level of voter turnout is affected by the various factors outlined above; and high voter turnout does not automatically constitute a criterion for success, or an index for political participation. This is not really surprising when we make comparisons between voter turnout levels in different countries. For instance, the turnout rate is low in the elections held in places such as Burma and the Philippines, while the turnout rate is high in Communist societies because of political mobilization and economic incentives.

The value of the high voter turnout rates is doubtful if we consider practices such as sending a family member to the ballot as a representative and casting invalid votes. An example of this occurred in Nan-er village. It had a voter turnout of 96.5%, but 158 or 13% of the votes were invalid. When the 269 absentees who cast their votes but did not tick any candidate were added, the number grew to 22.2%, leaving the total of valid votes at only 74.9% (Xie Zhuofeng 1998). In the 1996 election in Dongjia village, the voter turnout rate was 87.8%, but only 55% of all the votes collected are valid (Wang Zhenghua 1998). Thus the high voter turnout rate becomes less impressive when one takes into account the fact that there were up to 25% of invalid votes and absentees.

Zhong and Chen have realized the problems associated with using voter turnout rates to measure political participation levels. Their study excluded all proxy votes and only counted people who physically attended the central polling station. On the basis of this revised measure they found that approximately 48%

of eligible voters reported that they went to the central polling station to vote. According to the survey I conducted in Zhejiang, about 53.3% of the respondents stated the same. Zhong and Chen argue that their method is a more accurate and reliable way to record voter turnout. Though I share their skepticism about high voter turnout levels, I must admit that their method has its own drawbacks. For instance, central polling station is located in a "natural" village. Residents of that "natural" village can get to the polling station within one to five minutes, while it takes other village residents much longer, often more than half an hour or even several hours, to reach the polling station.

Below I will describe a different method I have developed for assessing the level of political participation. The purpose of the research matters here. If the previous researchers' purpose is to explain voting or nonvoting behavior, it is important for them to distinguish subjective from objective factors and examine the influence of subjective factors. My aim, in this chapter, however, is to demonstrate the emergence of democratic and participatory culture through measuring the level of political participation and political consciousness. To do this, I have employed a special approach that synthesizes objective and subjective factors. In other words, it includes not only voting activities but also their attitudes toward and knowledge of elections. In my view both categories are necessary if we are to measure political participation effectively. While acknowledging that the use of subjective knowledge and attitudes as indicators of participation is fraught with danger due to the increasing influence of behaviorism in the standard Western literature, some scholars do take these subjective items seriously in their study of political participation and political culture. Participation is seen as a function of cognitions and beliefs (Milbrath 1965:64–72, Arterton and Hahn 1975). Subjective knowledge and attitudes do influence people's voting behavior especially in the Chinese context. There is a close correlation between citizens' perception of fairness of village elections and the level of their participation (see section 5.6). Notwithstanding, I recognize the problem associated with using subjective knowledge items. For example, it is very probable that certain respondents may overestimate their knowledge levels. In addition, only a few citizens have a high level of knowledge of electoral laws and this is so throughout the world not just in China.

Recognizing the advantages and disadvantages of using subjective knowledge, I use seven variables as the indicators of participation, including self-registering as voters, casting a vote, participating in the selection process, engaging in public debate over the choice of candidates, filing complaints to officials about the violation of rights, voters' attitudes toward elections, their attitudes toward candidates, and their understanding of electoral law. Using these seven variables instead of a single one is beneficial in decreasing the level of measurement error.

Table 5.2 Scores Assigned to Survey Questions

No.	*Question*	*Score*	*Score*	*Score*	*Score*	*Score*
10	Understanding the electoral law	3	2	1	0	—
12	Attending campaign events	1	1	1	1	1
14	Knowing Candidates	3	2	1	0	—
20	Attitude toward voting	3	2	1	0	—

The participation index that I have constructed is a coding of several attributes that are associated with an elector's attitude toward elections and his/her behavior in an election. These attributes include levels of understanding of electoral laws, attitudes toward the need to know candidates prior to elections, and the campaign events an elector attends. For questions 10, 14, and 20, a measure of degree is assigned to the corresponding attributes. For example, we assigned a score of 3 to the record with "know well" in the case of knowing electoral law, 2 to "know in general", and so on, as shown in table 5.2. Question 12 is a multiple response question about campaign activities, such as attending electoral meetings, nominating candidates, participating in the deliberations that decide on the final set of candidates, speaking for candidates on election day, and going to vote. Here the score is based on ticked choices.

The participation index is formulated by adding up all the scores assigned to responses to the above four questions. For example, if an voter believes that he generally understands the electoral law and chooses number 2 as his response to question 10, he is assigned a score of 2 for this particular question in table 5.2. Meanwhile, if he only took part in the election and did not attend any other campaign events; his score for that question would be just 1. If he answers question 14, by choosing number 3, that is, "it is sort of necessary to know the candidate before an election," his score turns out to be 1 according to table 5.2. If the elector considers his/her own vote to be important, he or she gets a score of 2 for question 20. I then add up all the scores for individual questions to obtain a total score of 6 ($2 + 1 + 1 + 2 = 6$) to find the participation index of the voter.

5.3 The Trends of Political Participation

There is no doubt that villagers now participate in politics with more awareness and interest. It might be hypothesized that those who have

Table 5.3 Participation Indices Related to the Number of Elections Voters Participated In

No. of Elections Participated In	*Average Political Participation Indices*
1	9.46
2	9.83
3	10.84
4	11.34
5	13.43
6	12.39

three rounds of electoral experience are likely to possess a higher participation index than those who have only one or two. This hypothesis is confirmed by table 5.3, which indicates, with the exception of the sixth election, the voter participation index is directly proportional to the number of elections in which they have participated. (There is an exception in Linhai where, for example, the first two elections revealed certain difficulties and problems. As a result, the third and fourth ones were suspended. However, the fifth election was conducted again due to the pressure from the center and media.) In other words, the index rises in proportion to the number of elections participated in.

Our survey found that 843 respondents (67.7%) regarded voting as their right or responsibility and nominated it as their primary motive for voting. The motive that ranked second was "to get those I trust elected" (33.3%). In addition, 30% of respondents regarded voting as a "sacred duty" and almost 90% of respondents saw elections as either "important" or "very important."

The favorable attitude of villagers toward democracy is confirmed by other surveys. For instance, a 1999 survey of 2,637 individuals in 4 counties in rural China, conducted by David Zweig (2002:41), reveals a strong support for democracy among the respondents. In response to the statement "If the existing cadres are capable and trusted, there is no need for democratic elections," about 55% "disagreed somewhat" or "disagreed strongly." Only 23.9% "agreed somewhat," and 12.4% "strongly agreed." In response to the statement "I know what goes on in my village, therefore I have the right to participate in village affairs," 24.4% "strongly agreed," and 39.3 "agreed somewhat." Only 15.8% "disagreed somewhat," 14.4% "didn't agree very much," and 6.1% "strongly disagreed." Both Zweig's and my surveys demonstrate that a significant number of villagers have participated in election-related activities and possess democratic learning (tables 5.4 and 5.5).

Table 5.4 Participatory Activities by Villagers in Zhejiang, 1998

Activities	*Number*	*Percentage*
Going to Vote	663	53.3
Attending Electoral Meeting	429	34.5
Nominating Candidates	333	26.7
Participating in Deciding on Final Candidates	234	18.8
Introducing Candidates	121	9.7

Source: The author's 1998 Survey.

Table 5.5 Participation in Election-Related Activities in Rural China, 1999

Activities	*Number*	*Percentage*
Participating in Propaganda to Encourage People to Vote	542	20.6
Nominating Candidates	346	13.1
Voting for Village Committee Members	2,092	79.3
Participating in Village Assembly or Party's Members' Assembly	259	9.8
Never Participating in Anything	263	10.0
Don't Know	65	2.5
No Answer	20	0.8

Source: David Zweig's (2002:43) 1999 Survey of rural China.

5.4 Patterns of Voting Behavior

Cheng Zhiyuan and Liu Dongjing (1994:13) found that villagers chose their leaders according to six criteria, displaying preferences for those who

- were knowledgeable and competent in science and law;
- demonstrated a capacity to lead villagers toward prosperity through hard work;
- were considered honest, enterprising, and knowledgeable in the field of economics;
- appeared to be caring, fair-minded, and even-handed;
- were principled;
- were willing to listen to the people.

Voters were unlikely to select those who were known to abuse village power, or those who were considered autocratic and conservative (Chang Yumin 1994:14). Table 5.6 indicates the voting criteria of villagers. Drawing

Table 5.6 The Reasons of Your Vote for Village Head

Reason/criteria	*No. of People*	*Percentage*
Will Represent My Interest	83	6.7
Will Speak for the Common People	678	54.5
Will Do a Good Job for the Party	462	37.1
Will Take a Leadership Role in Developing Village Economy and Welfare	711	57.1
Will Represent Kinship-Interests	47	3.8
Will Speak on Behalf of People in the Same Kinship	40	3.2
Is Well Respected	119	9.6
For Other Reasons	135	10.8

Note: This is a multiple-choice survey and respondents were allowed to select more than one answer.

Source: The author's 1998 Survey.

on the above data and remarks written on the back of our survey papers, we classified voting behaviors into three groups: the competence-oriented, the morality-oriented, and those oriented toward self or kinship-interest.

5.4.1 The Competence-Oriented

In response to the open question "do you have any suggestion for village election?" in our questionnaire, a doctor in Liuao township of Samen County suggested "Candidates for village heads should be able to lead the village to prosperity, have good education and be knowledgeable."[2] A teacher in Liuao commented that "They should speak for the people and be able to lead the villagers to more wealth. During their term of office, what counts is their achievements rather than who is the boss backing them."[3]

Data in table 5.6 indicates that 57.1% of respondents selected a candidate on the basis of the belief that "s/he can lead the village to prosperity and more communal welfare." When choosing village committee members, particularly the village head, voters tended to put competence in work as a first priority. Often villagers believed that a man who has been successful economically

would be able to play a leading role in bringing about wider social and economic development (Xu Yong:1998).

In the 1980s and 1990s, capable rural entrepreneurs became increasingly influential in village affairs and this had a significant impact on voter behavior in village elections. In October 1993, for example, in the village election held in Yaoyu township, Yuncheng municipality, Shanxi province, 40% of the 28 elected leaders were first-timers, and 35.7% of these were directors of private enterprises (Shao Xingliang et al. 1994:11).

It is natural that villagers, who want to protect their own interests and ensure village development, hope that competent people will manage village affairs. This became clear in the 1999 village election in Laofangqiao township, where voters had expected a village entrepreneur to become the village head. The man was certainly competent and resourceful, and villagers believed that he would be able to improve the village economy and their own living standards if he became head.[4] A similar case was found in Yuyao, where an able entrepreneur from another village wanted to run for the position of village head in one village. According to the village electoral law he was ineligible to run for the position because he was an outsider. Nevertheless, the villagers wanted to elect him as village head and they pressured the township leaders to "bend the law a little bit" and let him run for the position.[5]

The new rich are influential not only as candidates, but also as voters, for they are able to influence the voting behavior of other villagers. Some peasants follow the voting choices of the rich. In the village of Yijiacun, for example, some peasants said, "We will vote for whomever they [the new rich] vote for." As a result, the elected village committee appeared to represent the will of the new rich. When interviewed, another peasant replied, "to be honest I have no idea of who is a better candidate. But we must be right if we pick the richest guy in the village." This demonstrates that wealth has become a criterion for villagers to decide on the candidate (Chen Xiang 1999).

5.4.2 The Morality-Oriented

Several answers to the open question "do you have any suggestion for village election?" in our questionnaire clearly demonstrated the morality-based model. A villager in Tangxia township, Reian municipality, said that "Village heads should be trustworthy and will speak for the people. They should be practical, should care about the communal interest and will work hard for the local economy."[6] Another villager in Wuyun township said,"They must follow the party's principle of serving the people. Not to abuse power for self-interest."[7] "They think of the people. No abuse of power, no bullying over villagers and no currying favor with leadership above—a teacher in Liuao

township.[8] "They ought to be fair-minded and even-handed. Not to be too selfish."—a villager in Wuyun township.[9] "They should be well-known and well-respected in the village; and should be elected by the villagers."—a villager in Liuao.[10]

Data from table 5.6 indicate that 9.6% of respondents selected a candidate because s/he was "well-respected." 54.5% did so because the candidate "will speak for the people" and 34.6% said they would vote for those with "good characters and a fair mind." People in this category tend to view candidate selection from a moral perspective and this approach has a long tradition in Chinese political culture. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of Confucianism was the selection of officials who were scholars and who had high moral standards.

5.4.3 The Self- or Kinship-Interest–Oriented

This group voted on the basis of maintaining and promoting self- or kinship-interest. When asked how they decided which candidate to vote for, 19 (1.5%) respondents to our survey ticked the item "vote for people from my own kinship." Asked the reason for voting for a candidate as village head, 10.5% of respondents indicated they voted on the basis of self or kinship-interest, with 6.7% selecting the item "s/he can represent my own interest" and 3.8% opting for "s/he will represent the interest of my kinship." In other words, they suggested that they would not participate in an election if they did not see any benefits for themselves or their families. In such instances, organizational, administrative, and economic strategies were employed to get these villagers involved in the election (Jing Yan 1998).

Voting for candidates on the basis of kinship ties means that lineage considerations outweigh those of policy, character, and concern for village affairs. Such behavior is not compatible with a modern approach to village citizenship. A modern village citizen can be understood as one who cares about village affairs rather than kinship ties. Thus the movement away from lineage loyalty constitutes an indicator of modern village citizenship. From the above data, it is clear that lineage considerations have only a limited effect on voter behavior. For example, the majority of survey respondents indicated they did not take kinship ties seriously when casting their votes. Neither did elected village heads think their success was dependent on lineage voters: they did not see lineage interest as strategically important to maintaining their positions. Generally, this indicates that villagers and village heads in Zhejiang exercise a rational interest calculation that transcends kinship divisions, and that villagers and village heads are becoming modern village citizens (See chapter 3).

5.5 Apathy toward Village Elections

We should be aware that a democratic culture coexists with a parochial political culture. Anyone who carries out informal interviews or chats with villagers will encounter a number of villagers who do not care about elections and village democracy; they take nondemocratic behavior as normal, often as something deriving from their customary way of life. Some villagers experience a degree of political apathy. Indeed, this is just as much a problem for Western democratic societies as it is for nondemocratic societies. Most citizens even in democratic societies do not live up to the ideal of participatory citizens held by classical liberals.

The 2005 National Survey found that 1,325 respondents constituting 56.3% of the sample said that they have never attended any meeting with regard to the recent village elections; 1,655 (70.1%) respondents had never been involved in any activity of nominating themselves or nominating others as candidates. In my 1998 survey, 5.9% of the respondents said they voted just because others did, while others (5.1%) voted at the request of cadres. In other words, passive voting was evident among 11% of voters, who appeared relatively indifferent politically. When asked their opinion on the importance of their vote, in total, 25% of respondents displayed an attitude of indifference toward the electoral process (9.2% of villagers said they did not think their vote was important, and 15% said they thought their vote made no difference).

In addition to those people who appeared indifferent, there were others in parts of Zhejiang, who behaved irresponsibly. For instance, some villagers failed to take seriously the Taoxufeng village election, held in March 1999. Some wrote on the ballot papers that they would vote for "the First Emperor of Qin" or "Clinton"; even dirty words could be found. Others drew a turtle or the like on their own or other's ballot papers (Song Peihua 1999). Some villagers found excuses to vote through representatives. Others, who knew nothing about the candidates and did not even bother to listen to candidate briefings, just voted blindly.

Some peasants even allowed the person who carried the vote box to vote on their behalf. In this regard, Xu Xu, a peasant in Huamin village of Kaihua county, gave the following account. "On the day of the election, village leader Yunxiang and his men gave me three names and asked me to circle one, which I did. I did not give much thought to that. I care only about my meals and money." Wang, a vegetable grower, said, "Now the land is tilled by each individual household; who gets elected makes no difference to me. Anyway I can only depend on myself for my daily bread." A wealthy villager, indeed a millionaire, shared Wang's view: "I only hope that the party's policy will remain unchanged and individual economy will always be encouraged.

I don't care who gets elected"(Fu Xia 1998). Zhaozhai is a wealthy village in Yiwu municipality that has 137 households. In the 1996 election only 43 households went to the ballot, and some did so perfunctorily. Some villagers said, "Officials give orders and we are supposed to follow" (Cao Liwei 1998).

5.6 The Determinants of Participation

Scholars have already explained the variations and levels of political participation. For instance, Jennings uses variables such as age, gender, education, and membership to explain different types of participatory acts. In explaining voting or nonvoting behavior, Zhong and Chen use subjective variables such as internal efficacy, democratic value, attitudes toward corruption, and levels of attention toward public affairs. I do not want to repeat what they have done. Instead, I will take the index of participation as the dependent variable, and examine what Jennings calls, "some contextual properties" as independent variables. It is my understanding that contextual properties should include the village power structure, the role of the village elite, the regularity of election procedures, the perceived worth of elections, the competitiveness and fairness of elections, the level of economic development, and literacy standards. The following contextual properties can be understood as key determinants of political participation.

5.6.1 The Fairness of Electoral Institutions and Rules

If villagers see elections as a formality, or as being manipulated by the village party secretary, they feel their votes are worthless and therefore adopt an indifferent attitude toward elections. In other words, when township leaders or the village party secretary try to manipulate the electoral process, villagers will likely perceive the election as nothing but "fake democracy" and be reluctant to participate. It is no wonder that Zhong and Chen found that villagers in Jiangsu with higher democratic values did not vote when party secretaries controlled the nomination process and when candidates were not allowed to have electoral campaigns. I encountered something similar during my research trips in Zhejiang, when survey respondents were asked to assess the fairness of electoral institutions and rules. By analyzing the survey results we were able to examine how the villagers' assessment of electoral fairness affected on their participation in village elections.

5.6.2 The Value of Elections

Another key determinant is whether villagers perceive elections to be valuable political activities. In some cases elections are perceived to have little or no

direct benefit to villagers and their welfare. If voters believe they cannot get rid of those they do not like or if elected village heads feel they cannot achieve certain aims on their own participation levels are likely to be lower. An example helps illustrate this point. Villagers in Xingsheng township had displayed some interest in earlier elections. Their enthusiasm cooled, however, when they discovered that the village committee played a relatively insignificant role in village life and was unable to accomplish anything substantial so that certain problems such as corruption and poor service were unresolved despite a change of leadership.[11] In order to gauge how villager perceptions of the value of elections affect their participation index, we asked survey respondents to assess the value of electoral institutions and rules.

5.6.3 Economic Conditions

According to this explanation, participation is merely a function of economic development and conditions. One case study revealed that 8 out of 10 respondents from villages, where annual family income is only about 2,000 yuan, no longer expected material benefits from the village and were not interested in village elections. Their aim was to increase their family income through their own hard work and initiative (Hu Liwei 1998). Here we will test this folk theorization by examining how family income and the number of village enterprises relate to the level of political participation (note that the impact of economy on village democracy and elections will be examined in detail in chapter 10).

5.6.4 Literacy

Finally, literacy and education levels have an impact on elections and the extent of participation. For example in the 1999 Chengzhou municipality village elections the voter turnout was 92.3%. Unfortunately, many of the voters were illiterate or semi-illiterate and some could not write down their names, others did not know how to indicate yes or no in the right places on the ballot paper. Ultimately, there were so many errors that four voters in Zhongye village went to the leadership to request that those ballot papers not properly filled in be deemed invalid (Qiu Zhengjun 1999).

In examining the respective influence of these variables on political participation, I will first look at the correlations, on the basis of the assumption that these variables are not inter-related. The higher the correlation, the more the factor influences political participation. The results demonstrate that participation is influenced by three major factors: the perceived worth of the election itself (0.30), regularity of electoral procedures (0.19), and the fairness of electoral procedures (0.17). In other words, if the

election is deemed to be fair and legitimate and follows regular procedures, there will be a higher degree of political participation, and vice versa. Literacy (0.13), family income (0.12), and gender (−0.11) also have some impact on elections, but to a lesser extent than the previous three. Finally, the number of village enterprises (0.036) is shown to have little impact on participation levels.

The above analysis does not take into account the interrelationship between the variables and its impact on participation. In this case, a multiple regression analysis would be better (table 5.7). As space does not permit a full examination of all the figures, we will limit ourselves to the analysis of coefficients. The higher the coefficient of the variable, the more influential that variable is on political participation. The worth (0.3) and procedure (0.1) of the election are still major factors. However, in this case fairness only has a Beta of 0.022 and a significance level of 0.51. This is because of interaction effects. The factors of literacy (0.097), family income (0.074), and gender (−0.075) are lower than the worth and regularity of elections. The number of village enterprises (−0.009 and significant level is 0.779) does not contribute much to the level of participation.[12] It is clear now that the number of village enterprises does not have a direct impact on the index of political participation. This does not mean, however, that economic conditions do not impact political participation (for detailed discussion on the impact of economic conditions, see chapter 10).

In conclusion, the level of participation is influenced by three major factors: the perceived worth of election itself, regularity of electoral procedures, and the fairness of electoral procedures. It is clear that in order to raise the level of political participation of rural voters, it is essential to improve the electoral system and the institutions themselves so that villagers will appreciate the worth and significance of elections. It is also

Table 5.7 Multiple Regression Coefficients

Variables	*Coefficient*	*Std. Error*	*Sig*
Intercept	1.563	1.224	0.202
Gender	−0.075	0.284	0.15
No. of Village Enterprises	−0.009	0.085	0.779
Average Family Income	0.074	0.000	0.018
Literacy	0.097	1.224	0.002
Election Procedure	0.105	0.284	0.001
Worth of Election	0.300	0.064	0.000
Fairness of Election	0.022	0.503	0.510

Note: Dependent Variable: The score of political participation.

important to improve electoral procedures to ensure villagers have full rights and the opportunity to nominate candidates. In order to guarantee their fairness there should be little or no manipulation of elections. To help mitigate this villagers have invented *haixuan* through which to directly nominate their own candidates.

5.7 Conclusion

It is the active participation of villagers that turns written electoral rules and institutions into enforced norms (Hu Rong 2001b). Villagers have rightfully resisted manipulated elections and demanded fair and free elections (O'Brien 1996). They have resisted electoral procedures they consider unfair, irregular, or corrupt by refusing to pay tax. Such resistance has forced officials to adopt open and transparent procedures. For example, prior to September 1999, 1,111 of the Shengzhou's 1,146 villages had completed their elections, while 35 had postponed them. During the elections, the city received over 1,900 telephone calls, letters, and personal visits. Approximately 10% of the calls, letters, and visits sought election information, 60% protested about violations of regulations by electorate staff and party secretaries, 20% complained of violations of the Organic Law by election staff, and 10% reported on financial mismanagement. Petitioners demanded that action be taken before elections could continue (Qiu Zhengjun 1999). Faced with pressure from above and below, township officials have complied with procedural guidelines and endorsed *haixuan* to resolve practical problems.

The survey results show that the participation index is in proportion to the number of elections in which a villager is involved and that a democratic and participatory culture has taken place. Villagers' participation is one of the forces that have transformed formal democratic institutions into functioning ones. Concerned with a fair distribution of village wealth, many villagers demand the regular and frequent holding of village representative meetings. In this way political participation becomes meaningful and villagers empower themselves by using formal democratic institutions to minimize corruption and to demand a fair distribution of village wealth. The villagers' participation in regular elections and village representative assemblies reconfirms the early conclusion made by Townsend (1972:218) that political participation will be "a less revolutionary, less populist, more institutionalized, and more bureaucratic political style" and that "the political awakening of the Chinese people will still stand as one of the most significant political changes in modern China."

Voting patterns in Chinese village elections reveal that villager behavior is rational and strategic and correlates with rational choice theory predictions. The three types of voting orientation are based on different calculations.

Those who vote for a competent leader expect as a "return" that the elected village head will lead villagers toward greater wealth and prosperity; those who vote for a moral and upright leader expect a different "return"; they hope that the elected village head will ensure a fair distribution of village wealth; and those who vote on the basis of their kinship ties expect an elected village head to look first and foremost after their own kinship-interest.

Despite the emergence of a democratic culture, parochial political culture and political apathy still exist, and the emergent democratic consciousness falls short of an ideal democratic standard. The contradictory coexistence of democratic and nondemocratic political cultures is one of the factors that contribute to the variations of village democracy in China. While a highly democratic culture helps to develop village democracy, the apathetic attitude continues to support the authoritarian leadership and structure in many villages. As Gadsden and Thurston (2001:19) point out, "The lack of a democratic political culture is obvious at several levels. The complex web of personal and political relations that permit township officials continuing power over the lives of villagers is one example. At the village level, local emperors not only exist but are also often elected." As long as there is a sizeable percentage of villager citizens who are active, autonomous, and participatory, village democracy can take root and develop even if there is passive peasantry.

A long time ago, Milbrath (1965:153) asserted, "moderate levels of participation by the mass of citizens help to balance citizen roles as participants and as obedient subjects" and "balance political systems which must be both responsive and powerful enough to act." Indeed, the Chinese government has advocated what it calls "orderly participation" to strike a balance between participation and discipline. Too much participation will threaten the CCP's regime, but equally, too little participation will undermine the legitimacy of the CCP.

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CHAPTER 6

Village Representative Assembly

Many Western scholars have examined various empirical questions of Village Representative Assemblies (VRAs). Susan Lawrence (1994:61–68) finds that one VRA was effective but its effectiveness depended on the village party secretary. Kevin O'Brien (1994:33–59) finds that VRAs made policy proposals and impeached village cadres. Anne Thurston (1998) thinks that the VRA is similar in principle to the New England town meeting.[1] Sylvia Chan (1998a:507–21) has undertaken a detailed study of the nature and function of VRAs (also see Baogang He and Lang Youxing 2000c). Finally, while Jude Howell (1998:100) finds "they [VRAs] are often little more than rubber stamping agencies," Bjorn Alpermann (2001:66) observes that VRAs "are largely ceremonial and not signs of the villagers' increased decision-making power."

This chapter discusses how VRAs have been introduced and improved in recent years. How did they originate? How do they work? What is their significance in terms of promoting village democracy? It attempts to add the following aspects to the existing literature. First, I will combine qualitative and quantitative methods to study VRAs. Second, I will examine the question of direct versus indirect village democracy (section 10.6 in chapter 10 will identify and distinguish between the mobilization and distribution models of how VRAs work).

6.1 The Origin of Villager Representative Assembly

Village democracy was originally conceived to include an assembly in which all adult villagers would participate to make major decisions over village

affairs; however, there were many constraints. Many villages have instead instituted VRAs, which involve representatives who are either elected by villagers or households or selected by village party secretaries or village committees.

Many local authorities take the representative assembly as an alternative to the all-villagers' assembly because the latter is difficult to materialize. There are four reasons for this. The first has to do with the size of the village. The village in China today is similar in size to the production brigade in the past. Its population in general is between 1,000 and 3,000 individuals. Some villages can have as many as 8,000–10,000 people. The second reason has to do with range and location. In some mountainous parts, a village committee may cover several natural villages, and villagers are scattered over a large area. The third reason is that with the production mode of household responsibility, land goes to each individual household and is tilled by it. As such, with no commonly set work schedule, it is difficult to find a time that suits everybody. Finally, in some underdeveloped villages the majority of the labor force may have left and is working or doing business in other areas. All these add to the difficulty of holding more than a few villagers' meetings (Working Legality Committee of the NPC Standing Committee 1998:53–54).

As a result, the villager representative meeting, whose form and name may vary in different areas, came to be instituted, and the representative assembly can actually exert a greater influence than the all-villagers' meetings. Through the representatives, villagers' opinions would have an impact on both the village party branch and the village committee. The smaller representative meeting is less costly and can be held in any meeting hall. Finally, participants of the representative meeting have a higher sense of honor, achievement, and responsibility.

The representative meeting was first referred to in provincial laws in 1989 when Hubei province started to implement the national law of village committee. It was subsequently referred to in September 1990 by the Ministry of Civic Affairs in its directive on a national campaign of village autonomy. By 1997, 50% of the villages in China had instituted VRAs. The rate was even higher in the provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, Fujian, Shangdong, Hubei, and Sichuan (Tang and Na 1990; Bai Gang 1996:13). VRAs were further established nationwide when they were said to be a system of democratic consultation by the CCP in its "Decisions on Certain Key Issues in Agriculture and Rural Work," a document passed by the third plenum of the Fifteenth Central Committee of the CCP. According to the document, "The establishment of systems is a fundamental issue in village autonomy. The systems include the democratic electoral system of village committee, the democratic consultation system in the forms of villagers' meeting and villager representative meeting and the democratic supervisory system through openness in

village affairs, democratic discussion, and regular work reporting by the village committee" (*Zhejiang ribao* October 19, 1998:2; also see Qingshan Tan 2006). And the VRAs were recognized by law and included in the new Organic Law of Village Committee passed by the NPC on November 4, 1998.

As early as 1991, Li Qiaobai (1991), the head of party organization in Li Shui prefecture, advocated and promoted VRA. However, many township and village leaders told me in the interview their reservation to the multifunction of the VRA. They would cite the following cases in which the VRA could do little to solve a problem. (1) If a resolution passed by the VRA could not come into effect, help from township leaders would be indispensable for its implementation. (2) If a premade village decision proved to be inappropriate and need some change, it would be up to the party committee and village committee to make the change. (3) The effectiveness of the VRA would be seriously impaired when some representatives express radical views or hold meetings without getting consent. (4) When the head of a village committee proved incompetent, he/she would need help from a stay-in-village cadre with functions such as chairing a meeting.[2]

Local officials in Tangxiang township argued against the frequent meetings of VRAs, contending that they gave too much power to village representatives, who would feel the importance of their positions but whose different views would make it difficult to reach a conclusion.[3] Similarly, the party secretary, Zen Heping, in Tuanjie village in Hongshang district in Wuhan, insisted that the proposal about the privatization of village enterprises could not be discussed in the VRA; he cited this as an example to the inability of the representatives to make a good decision when interests involved.[4] However, in Beiwang village, "the VRA is particularly active, meeting on the third day of every month" (Lawrence 1994:64).

When we conducted interviews in 1997–98, most villagers there knew very little about the system. Only in some model villages did the VRA play a full role and was appreciated by both representatives and villagers. But things have begun to change, starting in 2000 when VRA became more active. For example, Jianshe village held more than 10 representative meetings to decide the tough question of how to carry out the second round of contracting collective land in Wuyun township. It roughly took more than 10 years to make VRA work.

6.2 The Making of Representatives

The Drafted Regulations of Zhejiang province concerning the Implementation of the National Organic Law of Village Committee (September, 1999) specified that "for villages with a population of less than 500, the number of representatives should be no less than 20. Villages with more than 500 people

should have at least 30 representatives" (*Zhejiang ribao* September 10, 1999:6). Local regulations have been made to specify the qualification of representatives. Laiwang village, for instance, forbids those who have violated laws or the family-planning polity, or did not pay their taxes and fees to be elected. Xiacun village forbids five kinds of people to be elected. They included

> those who are serving terms in jail or under investigation for legal offences, past convicts, law-breaker for gambling, drug abuse, prostitution, hooliganism as defined by "PRC Laws for Dealing with Violations of Public Order and Security," people who during the past 5 years have breached the birth control policy, and other offenders. (Tangxia township 1998)

There is great variety in producing the village representatives. According to a directive of the Leading Group of Village Election in Fuyang municipality, Zhejiang, "Representatives can be produced either through election by villagers or by the recommendation by sub-villages," which then must "be approved by the village party branch and village committee and be made known to the public" (Office of the Leading Group of Village Elections in Fuyang municipality 1997:40).

The procedure to produce the representatives, according to the provisional Regulations of Villager Representative Assembly in Diyiqiao village, Chengguan township, involved the following steps: subvillage nominating candidate(s) on the basis of consultations with households, approval by the party branch, election in the subvillage, and announcement of the elected.

In Beicun village of Wenzhou municipality, those who made up the representatives were committee members of the party branch and the heads of the 13 subvillages.[5] In Laiwang village of Cixi municipality, members of the party branch committee, village committee, and representatives of the people's congress at all levels automatically became representatives. Others had to be elected by subvillages at the rate of 1 for every 15 households (Luo Mengjun 1998). In Baicun village, members of the party committee automatically became representatives. The same thing happened to members of party committee, village committee, and representatives of the people's congress at all levels in Laiwang village.

In villages where clan forces were strong, villager representatives might actually only represent the interest of a major clan. They were either yes-men to power-holders or spokesmen of their clan(s) (Bai Gang 1996). "In some cases, they [VRAs] are dominated by the village's senior, most experienced and respected men. . . . The successful transition to grassroots democracy will also require accommodations to Chinese tradition, including respect for villager elders" (Thurston 1998:41).

There were new developments in 1998–2001. In Shuinan village, Wuyun township, the election of village representatives was introduced in 1998 to replace the practice of appointment by the village party secretary. In 2001, the members of village committee and party branch no longer automatically became representatives in many villages we revisited.

There is also the practice of electing village representatives through households. According to the "Regulations of Villager Representative Assembly in Xiacun Village, Tangxia Township, Wenzhou Municipality" (passed on September 10, 1998), "Every 15–30 households elect a representative, and there should be a certain percentage of women representatives." (See below original record of the election results.) In the past, as Thurston (1998:17, 41) observed, village representatives are not always democratically chosen and election procedures are often very informal. However, in Wenzhou in 2002, most village representatives were not selected but elected directly by villagers. In Xiwu district, Hangzhou, villagers used *haixuan* method to elect village representatives. The 2001–2 National Survey found that 48.3% of the respondents reported that village representatives are elected by village team members, 40% by households, and 2.8% by both village committee and village party secretaries (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2002*:598). The 2005 National Survey found that 1,093 respondents (35.6%) confirmed that village representatives are elected by village team members, 314 (10.2%) by householders, with 403 (13.1%) being appointed by village leaders.

6.3 The Nature and Functions of the VRAs

In some areas the VRA has assumed the superior power position. For example, in August 1997, Caiyuan village in Guangdong province set up a Forum of Village Representatives as the highest village power institution (Sun Baozhao 1998). The VRA exercises the power for the villagers and has the role of a "representative parliament" (Bai Gang 1996:13). The VRA is viewed as a legislature, as well as a decision maker on village affairs. A typical case was found in Diyiqiao village, Chengguan township, Rei-an municipality. Responsibilities and rights of the VRA there included

1. approving the annual plan of the village committee for local economic and social development;
2. supervising the committee's work, and replacing incompetent members;
3. checking the committee's report on financial transactions;
4. making decisions on policies and major projects;
5. hearing and commenting on the work report of the standing body of the VRA;

6. taking decisions on the make-up of the supervisory group of village affairs, hearing and commenting on its work report;
7. ensuring the openness of village affairs, organizing and taking the lead in public activities aimed at democratic management;
8. discussing draft version of "Rules and Regulations of Village Autonomy";
9. discussing village rules and revision(s) of the rules;
10. Supervising their implementations.

The VRA is defined as supervisory institution. VRAs have supervisory groups for finance and other affairs in some villages. In Wuyun township, the finance group consisted of seven people who examined all financial transactions and receipts.

The VRA is also seen as a participatory institution. Bai Gang has observed that VRA may allow for more and better political participation on the part of Chinese villagers. Now, through their representatives, villagers might have an impact on all major decisions affecting the village, while in the past they were excluded from any decision making. For two reasons, as Bai Gang (1996) put it, the manipulation of village affairs by a handful of cadres now seems more difficult. One is that the representatives can essentially exercise veto power on undesirable proposals, and the other is that representatives have the right to put forward proposals of their own. Kong Wanmei, a representative who had participated in almost a dozen meetings in Zhanghui village, a trial and model village of autonomy in Zhejiang since 1992, thought highly of the VRA, saying "I like the VRA [because] it is very practical. Villagers should be let to handle their own affairs" (*Zhejiang Daily* July 24, 1998:3).

Nevertheless, the VRA could become a club of village elite and in turn restrict the chances of ordinary villagers to participate. In Shanmen township, Zhejiang, the VRA, for example, was merely an extended meeting of village party members, committee members, and the team heads. In Lishui, local officials insisted that the VRA must have a certain number of party members and village cadres so that it can carry out the decisions made by party branch and village committee. They even suggested the use of VRAs to replace popular voting in electing the village chief.[6]

The VRA is also defined as a consultative body. For example, according to Tangxia village Self-governing Regulation, "The VRA is villagers' democratic consultation body under the leadership of the village party committee. It represents the villagers in exercising democratic management of village affairs." Indeed, some village leaders have clearly told us that the VRA should not be a decision maker. Rather, it should be a barometer of public opinions.[7] In Wenzhou, VRAs must be consulted if an expense exceeds 5,000 yuan (O'Brien 1994:45).

6.4 The Working of VRAs

According to the Organic Law, villagers' meetings and villager representative meetings should be presided over by the village committee. However, many local regulations, as we found out, allow either the party branch committee or the village committee to chair the meeting. In Wuyun township in 1998, the party general secretary stressed the VRAs should be under the control of the village party organization. The 2005 National Survey found that 789 respondents (34.1%) said that VRAs were convened and chaired by village chiefs, 473 (20.4%) by village party secretaries, and 70 (3%) by the chairperson of VRAs. Contingent meetings are possible at the proposal of one-third of representatives for special reasons. Normally, a two-thirds majority is needed to pass resolutions at a meeting short of that majority.

Issues for the meeting can be raised by the village committee, by representatives themselves, or jointly. A representative first needs to put his/her proposal in a written form and get an approval from the village committee. However, a proposal put forward by one-third or more of the representatives does not need such an approval. It takes an absolute majority for a resolution to be passed. Once it is passed, any change to the resolution requires a two-thirds majority. The village committee is responsible for making known to villagers the decisions taken at the meeting. In Laiwang village, there were minute records of each meeting, including files of work report, discussions of issues, voting results and resolutions, and decisions (Luo Mengjun 1998).

Some VRAs have a standing body. The standing body in Diyiqiao village, Rei-an municipality, consists of a chairperson, a deputy, and a secretary, whose function is to lead and organize activities of the VRA. Members of the standing body are elected from the representatives. Members of the party branch committee are also eligible for the posts of the standing body, but at least one seat is reserved for nonparty committee members.[8]

The provincial regulations of Zhejiang stipulated that the villager representative meeting should be held at least once a year. The timing and the number of the meetings varies in different areas. Diyiqiao village was said to hold at least two meetings each year in July and November respectively. Xiacun village also had two meetings, but the time was March and September. Laiwang village had four meetings each year, presided over by the village committee.

Oi and Rozelle's (2000:513–39) survey found that the average number of meetings of VRAs is 2.76 meetings a year. According to a survey by Yang Min (2000:67–75), 57.8% respondents in 1990 and 73.3% in 1996 confirmed that they participated in VRAs only once or twice a year. Those participating several times were only 32.7% and 20.7% respectively. In Kent Jennings'

(1997:363) survey, 47% of the respondents reported that they went to all-village meetings. The 2005 National Survey found that 283 respondents (12.1%) said that their villages held 2 village representative meetings in 2004, 169 (7.2%) three meetings in 2004, 210 (9.0%) more than 4 meetings in 2004, while 1,388 (59.3%) said that they did not know whether village representative meetings were held.

The VRA may serve as a body to decide the final candidate for village elections. My survey demonstrates that 40.5% of the final candidates for village elections were decided through VRAs in 1998 in Zhejiang. In Fujian, 97.26% of the final candidates for village committee elections were decided through VRAs in 1997 and 90.46% in 2000.[9]

The VRAs have been able to make important decisions and to dismiss corrupt village leaders. For example, on July 23, 1998, a VRA meeting with 25 participants was held in Zhanghui village, Jiashen county. The main issue at the meeting had to do with the next term of land use, a top concern of every household in the village. Ji Qinfa, head of the village committee, chaired the meeting. The first speaker, a representative by the name of Yang Minzhong, raised the question of whether people who immigrated from other villages had the same right as the natives to the use of the farming land. There was a heated debate, which ended with a proposal by a subvillage head Lu Dexin that was passed with a majority. Then, other issues were discussed. The meeting went on for two and a half hours. All participants were registered and minutes of the meeting recorded. The meeting concluded with a decision that further meetings in subvillages and of household heads were to be held shortly, before the VRA came to a resolution on the next term of land use (Xie Guoyi 1998:3).

Peerenboom (2002:429) is doubtful whether villagers "will challenge local officials and demand a say in the decision-making process given longstanding patterns of deference to authority." Increasingly more and more villagers however, are using VRAs to challenge village leaders. For example, one village chief in Yuhuan county signed a contract with one factory without consulting with the representatives of the VRA in 2000. Some representatives sued the village chief in the local court for violating the 1998 Organic Law and they won the case. Such a successful story inspired many villagers who went to local courts to sue their village chiefs who failed to consult with VRAs when they made significant decisions.

Liaodong village in Wenzhou municipality, Zhejiang, is another example of VRAs taking an important role in governance. On May 24, 1999, a villagers' meeting was held to vote on a motion of dismissal. The result was that 87% of the people voted yes for the dismissal of Pan Hongchong as village head, who three years ago was voted into office with a large majority. Pan was charged with, among other things, abuse of power and mismanagement of village affairs. As the check of village accounts revealed, during Pan's three

years in office, he and others had squandered 660,000 yuan or one fourth of the village income for their social entertainment (*People's Daily* [overseas edition] June 14, 1999).

In the village of Lucheng township, Wenzhou municipality, villagers there were angered by corruption among some village leaders and put forward a proposal for their dismissal in 2000. However, the village committee refused to hold a meeting to vote on the case and even resigned to avoid the dismissal. The township government made no effort to intervene. The villagers, however, did not accept the collective resignation of the committee and insisted on a dismissal through the VRA.[10]

Village leaders are more frequently using the VRAs in their decision-making process in recent years, recognizing the importance of these meetings. One such example is Shuangqiao village in Chengjiao township of Wenzhou. Believing it would pay off in the long run, the village leaders bought a multistoried office building from a business company at 8 million Yuan. However, since the deal was made without any consultation in advance in the village representative meeting, some villagers grew angry and suspicious. They challenged village leaders and demanded a say in the decision-making process, and they went to the leadership above to voice their anger and suspicion, which did not die down until half a year later. Drawing from this incident, the village committee began to realize the importance of VRAs. Consequently, in the latter half of the year 2000 alone, there were as many as 10 meetings held. A record of these meetings shows the topics of discussion. (table 6.1).

In summary, there is a great variety in the functioning of VRAs. Some VRAs are undemocratic in the sense that the party secretary selects representatives, chairs the meeting, and controls the agenda. Villagers feel cheated and fooled and therefore demand change. There is, in turn, evidence to support the view that some VRAs are breaking through the party's defense line and moving in a democratic direction, as villagers are able to put their agenda on the table of VRAs, dismiss corrupt villager chiefs or members of village committees, and displace the party branch meeting as a final decision-making body. In answering the question of whether village representative meetings decide village affairs in my survey, 41% of the 1,245 respondents said they believed the meetings could influence the village's decision making; 14.3% disagreed; and 39.7% were unsure. According to Bai Gang and Zhao Shuoxing's (2001:252–65) survey study, 21% of the respondents out of 34 village leaders confirmed that VRAs have made final decisions on major village affairs in Lishu county, Jilin province; in Hequ county in Shanxi province 82.27% of 51; and 14.99% of 101 in Lunan county in Yunan province. The 2001–2 National Survey found that 66.3% of the respondents reported that the all-villagers' assembly or VRA was the most important institution in village decision-making process; and 74.4% of township leaders' respondents

Table 6.1 Agenda of Villager Representative Meetings in Shuangqiao Village, June–December 2000

Meeting	*Date*	*Agenda and Action*
1	June 8	Discussing and passing the bill to turn the parking lot in the village into a household electronics market
2	June 20	Discussing and passing the bill on welfare distribution on a household base
3	July 27	Discussing and passing the bill to raise the seniors' pension from the current monthly 70–80 to 200 Yuan
4	July 31	Discussing and passing the bill that a woman is no longer allegeable to village benefits once she gets married and lives away from the village
5	August 4	Deciding to get a lawyer to sue on the false report by the *Zhejiang Daily Legal Report*
6	August 24	Discussing and deciding to settle the contract dispute between the village and the packing machinery factory through legal means
7	November 16	Rallying support for the construction of the electronics market
8	November 29	Further discussing and passing the bill to settle the contract dispute between the village and the packing machinery factory through legal means, despite opposition from the township leadership
9	December 7	Ensuring that most representatives stick to the resolution of the previous meeting
10	December 20	Discussing and deciding to reject the shares of one company. The rejection was partly the result of the villagers' dissatisfaction with the deal

Source: A Chronicle of Village Meetings in Shuangqiao.

reported that major decisions were through all-villagers' assembly or VRA (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2002*:598). In answering the question of how decisions on schools and roads were made in last three years, according to the 2005 National Survey, the 298 respondents confirmed that they were decided by all-villagers' meeting attended by each household, 616 (20.7%) by VRA, 744 (25%) by villager leaders and 1,318 (44.3%) were not sure. The same survey also found that the 547 (18.8%) of respondents reported that the decision on village land contracts was made by all-villagers' meeting 524 (18%) by VRA, 650 (22.3%) by village leaders and 1,192 (40.9%) were not sure.

The direct election of the village head has resulted in complicated power relations between the village head and the village party secretary. The establishment of the VRA with legislative power has further complicated the power play. The party secretary, whose power has partly gone to the directly elected village head, has to give up more power to a third party, the fledgling VRA. One village party secretary complained to me that "now every decision needs the approval by VRA, their power is too much, and has constrained my job and made my work difficult."[11] In terms of power balances and pluralism, this power sharing is an essential part of rural democracy. Here, the willingness to compromise is needed for the smooth and effective working of the three institutions, the party branch committee, the village committee and the VRA. The quality of the village leaders is in turn crucial in this institutional arrangement. They need to learn how to balance the political ideal of checking and balancing power with the need for work efficiency and holding themselves responsible to the villagers. Without the leaders possessing such political skill, VRAs would yield nothing but tedious and meaningless debates.

6.5 Direct versus Indirect Village Democracy

"VRAs are obviously a form of indirect democracy, with no legal foundation in the Organic Law" (Ding Yijiang 2001:82). They departed from the original democratic vision of the Organic Law, namely a direct democracy, in which major decisions on village affairs are made directly by all adult villagers' meeting. Sylvia Chan (2003), for example, holds the view that a VRA should be responsible to all adult villagers' meeting and that the current displacement of all adult villagers' meeting by VRAs betrays the idea of direct democracy. Xu Yong (1997a:88) also thinks that the VRA has but limited power because it only gets as much power as the villagers consent to give through the villagers' meeting. Local practitioners also see the adult villagers' assembly as the highest authority in the village power structure and discuss the question of what and how power can be transferred from the all adult villagers' assembly to the VRA.

Much of the above proposal and statement is mere empty talk. As Sylvia Chan (1998b:243) acknowledges, the all adult villagers' assembly "is simply non-existent." How could the all adult villagers' meeting become "the highest power institute" when it never or hardly convenes? And, how could the VRA take responsibility for such a villagers' meeting? As far as the all adult villagers' meeting is concerned, the reality is that many of the villagers are scattered or simply too busy to go to the meeting. Although intellectuals and reformers can design on paper an ideal institution such as the village assembly as either the highest decision-making body or a check on the representatives, it is difficult to convene a village meeting under a highly mobilized economy.

The difficulties experienced by Chinese rural direct democracy practice are not unique. Comparatively speaking, the Greek model of direct democracy became infeasible when it was applied to the modern state. Consequently, there emerged the parliament paradigm. In the former Yugoslavia, workers' councils often made decisions to distribute products, much to the disadvantage of reproduction and capital accumulation. In Australia, in order to save government spending, the commonwealth has been encouraging and even pressing for the merging of local governments. As townships get larger and are run by bureaucratic bodies, local direct democracy is on the wane. In the 1960s, joint management of universities by staff and students was popular. But today, democratic committees, such as the one for research funding, have few resources in their hands. Policies are often made by the administrative body without any consultation. Even the lingering direct democracy at the university is being replaced by a market-oriented higher education policy. Another important factor to take into account is disinterest in politics. A direct democracy would certainly involve considerable time and energy, as well as the participation of all people. The rise of a market economy and the general increase in division of labor based on an ever-greater multitude of social functions makes many people reluctant to spend time on direct democracy. The McDonald world is far more popular and is developing at a much faster pace than direct democracy, much to the annoyance of advocates of direct democracy.

While acknowledging the difficulties in establishing direct democracy, local practitioners have still been searching for new forms of direct democracy in which the basic rights of villagers are highly respected and VRAs can be prevented from becoming an elite club. Indeed, local practitioners have developed a number of innovative alternatives that have more flexibility than the all-villagers' meeting so that decisions can be made in accordance with the principle of direct democracy (Baogang He 1996: chapter 1).

The common practice is to hold an all-villagers' assembly to authorize a VRA. This process of authorization emphasizes the fundamental principle of direct democracy: only through this authorization, can VRAs be regarded as legitimate. In Ningpo city of Zhejiang province, 77.9% of villages held such an authorization practice (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Zhejiang province 2005). Nevertheless, a number of questions remain: what kind of content should the authorization cover? Should the authorization be done only once, or several times as required by specific matters? Should the authorization meeting take place during election time, or in the wake of an election?

Another practice is to hold a village meeting to be attended by a representative of all households; that is, each household sends one family member to attend all-villagers' meeting. The 2005 National Survey found that 596 respondents (19.5%) confirmed that such a meeting was held once, 285 (9.3%)

twice; and 183 (6.3%) more than three times; 120 respondents (4%), said that such a meeting was convened to make a major decision on the distribution of collective income; 298 respondents (10%), said that a meeting was held on the subjects of a village school and roads and 524 respondents (18%) said that a meeting was convened to discuss a village land contract.

An alternative to an all-village meeting is to hold separate villagers' meetings in Hainan province. A village representative tells the villagers he/she represents about the issue to be decided and calls a meeting in the natural village as opposed to the administrative village. Voting results from such meetings are recorded in detail. Then a representative meeting is held, during which results from each natural village are announced and added. A proposal with 50% or more yes votes is passed. The representatives then take the responsibility of reporting the decision to the villagers, while the village committee announces the decision through a public notice board. The national law does not stipulate the above procedures, but the local law of Hainan province stipulates them, thus giving the practice a legal status (*Xiangzheng luntan* no. 9, 2001:12; *Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2002:*324–25).

The "Village Opinion Card" is designed in Shandong and Hainan to ensure that all villagers voice their opinions on a case-by-case base before major decisions are taken. The process involves the designing, handing-out, and filling-up of the card to get feedback. Village cadres, after careful thinking and consultations at village party branch and villager representative meetings, make a proposal and put it on the card. Written on the card is the issue to be decided with clear explanations and, when it is an economic issue, sources of money and intended uses of the money. Also on the card is a table with such items as name, the yes or no choice, other suggestions, and the deadline. Then the cards are handed out to the villagers. The village head does this from door to door and explains the issue when necessary. Then villagers fill up the card, sign their names, and in the case that some villagers are away, opinions are solicited via mail or telephone. Finally, the cadres collect the cards, count them, and if 80% of the villagers say yes, the proposal is passed. If the people who say yes are fewer than that, however, the proposal is suspended or withdrawn. The result seems good, for, on the one hand, villagers are involved in village decision making, and, on the other, decisions are taken without delay (*Xiangzheng luntan*, no. 8, 2001:10).

A mechanism of weekly dialogue is another institutional innovation. In some areas of Shandong province, a weekly dialogue is held between villagers and village committee, during which villagers inquire about village financial or other affairs, and cadres give them answers. Normally each dialogue is focused on one subject, and many believe that the practice of dialogue may enhance the cadres' sense of responsibility and accountability to the village (*Xiangzheng luntan*, no. 9, 2001; and *Banyuetan* no. 20, 1999).

6.6 Conclusion

During my 1994–98 research trips, party secretaries often told me,

> The party branch meeting might well replace the VRA except that the latter could be used to replace or amend the village election. We can choose village committee members from the (26 or so) representatives, which means easier work, easier consensus and less work allowance.[12]

In 2000–2006, the opposite trend, however, was taking place; that is, the VRAs were gradually replacing the party branch meeting as the final decision-making institution to decide the most important matters concerning the welfare of all villagers through a deliberative process (Baogang He 2006a:chapter 9). As Lawrence (1994:64 and 67) observes the VRA is able "to overrule the Party" in the Beiwang village and "has extended the principles of accountability and public disclosure all the way into the Party branch."[13]

At the same time, in recent years however, the VRA usually does not endorse proposals of risk-involved investment or projects. Village and township leaders hence complain that the democratic institution of VRA has slowed down economic development. Moreover, as discussed earlier, more and more new rich are elected members of village committees and VRAs. To ensure their continued control of the village resources, these better-off villagers have taken efforts to restrict the right of active participation in village decision making by establishing an exclusive village elite club.[14]

It is in these areas that the conservative tendency and limits of village democracy is most apparent. Village democracy is conservative in so far as it does not necessarily support risk-involved development, especially when the majority village assembly representatives reject proposed development programs (of course, villagers may be afraid of the official corruption often associated with development programs). It is also conservative in the sense that it enables private capitalists and the new rich to win power through elections, and their acquisition of wealth could be legitimized in this democratic process and further reinforces structural inequalities.

Nevertheless, in the larger picture, democratic control of village wealth is radical, for village democracy ensures that farmers and other ordinary villagers have the right to access village accounts and the right to question the village leaders about the use of village wealth and other aspects of collective interests. A relatively fair distribution of collective wealth can be attained through such a mechanism. Ultimately, the villagers' rights to discuss, debate, deliberate, and vote on the policies relating to their interests represents a significant step toward democracy.

PART II

The Limits of Village Democracy

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CHAPTER 7

Village Elections and Village Power Structure

A growing body of literature has studied the impact of village elections on village power structure and village governance. Melanie Manion (1996:745) concludes that "congruence between village leaders and villagers is in significant part the result of an electoral connection that involves voter choice." Robert A. Pastor and Qingshan Tan (2000:511) suggest "there is evidence that free elections can produce not only better leaders and policy, but also social stability." And according to Jean C. Oi and Scott Rozelle (2000:513–39), elections open up a new source of political power and serve to question the locus of village power. Lianjiang Li's (1999:103–18) study of the two-ballot system highlights the fact that the party secretary's lack of legitimacy has led to an experiment whereby village party secretaries are elected by a popular vote. Baogang He (2002) has examined the impact of village elections on the behavior of village leaders and village power structure (also see Baogang He and Lang Youxing 2000b and 2002). Jonathan Unger (2002:222) also asserts, "the example set by the village elections is contagious." He argues, "the structure of rural governance, which had largely stood unchanged since the end of Mao's era, is perhaps beginning to bend in important ways." In contrast, Jude Howell (1998:101) questions whether village elections have actually affected village power structures. She observes that, while party secretaries continue to wield considerable power in some villages, in one instance the party secretary had to rely on the village assembly to assert his authority. She also suggests, "further research is required to establish how powerful these committees are in relation to the Party and township government."

Overall, this body of literature provides useful data and insights into the subject of the impact of village elections. However, the impact of elections upon rural political structure needs to be further explored. For instance, how and in what ways have the structures of rural governance been affected by these elections? This chapter takes up questions such as this through a systematic empirical study of the impact of village elections upon village power distribution, political behavior, power structures, and modes of governance (Baogang He 2003c).

A group of distinguished political scientists have elaborated on institutional approaches and the important role of institutions in the study of political development (Parsons and Shils 1962; Huntington 1968; Eisenstadt 1965; N. Johnson 1975:271–83; Apter 1987). James G. March and Johan P. Olsen (1984:734–49) and Kenneth A. Shepsle (1989:131–47) have examined the revival of the new institutionalism in recent theories of politics. Huntington's institutional approach regards political institutions as having relatively causal autonomy in terms of institutional needs and as having the capacity to determine, order, and modify individual motives and collective life. Political institutions can thus be determinants of economic and social changes, rather than passive consequences of the process.

Using this institutional approach, I would like to make the argument that elections are the key institution in rural democratization, and are changing village governance. Village elections make a difference to political life in villages. This argument is divided into three hypotheses that can be empirically tested. The first one is that electoral institutions are likely to affect the distribution of resources, wealth, and power. Electoral mechanisms speed up political mobility, and provide new opportunities for the new rich to become village chiefs or village committee members. This hypothesis will be examined by a detailed empirical study of the composition of village committee members (section 7.1).

The second hypothesis is that electoral institutions are likely to change the behaviors of political actors. Electoral norms and procedures influence incentive structures, individual motivations, and behavior. In a political context in which village chiefs are selected on the basis of votes, village chiefs are more likely to be responsive to the villagers (section 7.2).

The third hypothesis is that electoral institutions are likely to affect village political structures. Electoral institutions empower elected village organizations, force the Party Organization to adopt elections, and contribute to the complex village governance. When elections are the source of legitimacy, or an institutionalized way to gain legitimacy, they consequently challenge undemocratic institution of village party branch and enhance the likelihood of the party branch adopting elections (section 7.3).

Certainly, the effects of electoral institutions are many, some are robust, and some are not. We will discuss variations in section 7.4. However, this chapter will not focus on explaining these variations. This is partly because chapters 9–11 will account for these variations through examining the role of township leaders, economy, and kinship. I should acknowledge that the importance of electoral institutions must be understood as a complex process where these institutions themselves are brought out and shaped by political, economic, and social factors (see chapters 9–11); without such an understanding of the conditions in which democratic institutions can operate, a simplistic application of an institutional approach will yield only a superficial grasp of the situation.

7.1 Changes in Power Distribution

To what degree have village elections changed the village power structure and rural governance? To answer this, we have to consider whether village elections have altered the distribution of power at the village level. An analysis of the village committee members in terms of their education, age, gender, political background, and profession reveals some features that indicate changes in village power distribution. Village power has shifted from old cadres to new village chiefs who either had party membership when they were in the army or became newly rich in the commercial economy.

The first is that the age of the newly elected village committee members tends to be younger, as shown. The average age of the village heads in Laofangqiao township is about 44 years old, while the average age of committee members is about 42 years (see table 7.1).

The second feature of the changes in village power distribution is the rise of rural rich men who have been successful in business or industry. They now

Table 7.1 Age Distribution of the Village Committee Members in Laofangqiao Township, 1999

Position	*Age in Years*					*Average*
	20–29	*30–39*	*40–49*	*50–59*	*60 and Above*	
	(No. and Percentage)					
Village Head	0 (0)	4 (23.5)	11 (64.7)	2 (11.8)	0 (0)	44
Com. Member	4 (10.3)	9 (23)	18 (46.2)	7 (17.9)	1 (2.6)	42

Source: Office of CCP Committee and Government of Laofanqiao Township 1999b.

have developed an interest in the village power and the more successful ones have become part of the rural political elite. As a result, *laobanshuji* and *laobancunzhang* (party secretaries and village heads who are also entrepreneurs) are not uncommon in the more developed provinces such as Jiangsu and Zhejiang (*Zhongguo jingji shibao* October 14, 1997). My survey of 111 village heads reveals that 18% of them are managers of village enterprises, private entrepreneurs, or businessmen. Among the 1,000 village committee members of Jiaojiang district, 218 or 21.85% are managers and the like (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Jiaojiang municipality 1994a). In the three economically most-developed townships of a certain municipality of Zhejiang, 20% of the village party secretaries were entrepreneurs in 1996. The figure in Zhejiang jumped to 35.8% (out of 33,370 elected village chiefs) in 2005 (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Zhejiang province 2005).

Three factors have contributed to the phenomenon of the economically well-off elites taking up politics. First, township authorities hope and believe that with these wealthy men in charge, village affairs will be better managed and tasks they set for the villages will be better accomplished. They think that these people can lead the village to prosperity and bring a new look to it because the latter are in control of the village resources, social and economic. Out of the belief that a wealthy person will be able to take care of the public affairs better, local leaders take pains to train the rich man into a politician. They admit him into the communist party, name him as candidate for the post of village head or committee member, and help him get elected. In Zhejiang, Sichuang, and Henan, local townships implemented *shuangqiang* (two strengths) policy, that is, recruiting those who have the capacity of doing well at both business and party work.

The second factor has to do with the business people themselves, who now have a higher sense of political participation. Not content with the economic success, some entrepreneurs become active in politics with an eye on the posts of party secretary or village head (Sheng 1998:23). The political consciousness also manifests in their running for people's representatives in township, county, or municipal People's Congress, or for member of the committee of political consultation at these levels. Moreover, rich candidates are able to "buy" votes with their economic resources. One village chief spent around 20,000 yuan to ensure that he could win a majority. Nevertheless, vote-buying does not guarantee success. There are always exceptions. One rich candidate spent 70,000–80,000 yuan while running for the post of village chief but was not elected.

The third factor lies in the villagers, in whose eye these capable men are appealing models of success. One such example is Jianshe village, where most of the economically successful villagers had been nominated as candidates (Zhang Gang 1998). This indicates that villagers want some of the newly rich

to take charge of village affairs so that the whole village will also get rich. Liu-ao township, as another example, is an underdeveloped area, with an economy dominated by agriculture and with few secondary and tertiary industries. As a result, many villagers, in particular the younger ones, leave the village to find work elsewhere. There, the wish among villagers "to elect someone with education, technology and the ability to lead the village to prosperity" is particularly strong.[1] Such a strong desire once led to a dramatic event. A nonnative entrepreneur had set up a business in a village, which was fairly large, very successful, and beneficial in many ways to the villagers. In the 1999 election, many villagers would have liked to elect the entrepreneur as the village head, but unfortunately (as an outsider) he was by law not eligible for the election. In spite of this, villagers went all the way and asked the authorities to "bend the law just a little bit" so that they could have the man as their village head.[2]

The percentage of noncommunists on the village committee has increased. This trend is continuing. In late 1993, among the 1,000 village committee members of Jiaojiang city, Zhejiang, 410 or 45.1% were neither communist party members nor communist youth league members (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Jiaojiang municipality 1994a). In 1997, noncommunists amounted to 41.2% of the committee members in Wuyun township. In Laofangqiao township in the year of 1999, noncommunists comprised 41.2% of village heads (Office of CCP Committee and Government of Laofanqiao township 1999b). In Chengzhou municipality, in September 1999 there were 1,111 village heads, of whom 579 (52.1%) were communist, 532 (47.9%) were noncommunist. Among the 3,588 village committee members, 2,380 (66.9%) were noncommunist (Qiu 1999). In the whole province of Zhejiang, 18.9% of elected village chiefs were communist party members in 2002, and this slightly increased to 20.9% in 2005 (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Zhejiang province 2005).

The situation is similar in other provinces. For instance, in village elections in Shandong province, there has been an increasing number of noncommunist village heads. Noncommunists there amounted to less than 1% of the village heads in 1984 and 5% in 1987. However, by 1990 the number rose to 24.8%, with the highest percentage of 70.5% in Zaozhuang municipality (Zhang Kuizhong 1994:12).

At the national level, according to information from the Ministry of Civic Affairs, as of April 1996, about 80% of village committee chairs are not party secretaries and around 40% are not party members (Howell 1998:99). The nonparty village committee members reached 55.7% in 2001 according to the result of the national survey (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2002*:593).

There are variations in different places and times. In Chengdong township, communists make up 89.2% of the village heads, compared with 58.8%

in Laofangqiao and 52.1% in Chengzhou. Among the 111 village heads survey, 77.5% were communist. The high number of communists among village heads is brought about by the efforts of township and Village Party Organizations to encourage communist members to run for the posts, to take the noncommunist village heads into the party or to train them with the aim to take them in at later stages. My village heads survey finds that 26 (23%) village heads became communist after they were elected to the posts.[3]

The fourth feature of changed committee membership is that committee members are better educated than the average rural populace; 60.8% of the members of the elected village committees shared a junior–middle school education background and 27.5% of the members have senior–middle school background in Wuyun township.[4] Junior–middle school education is also a feature found among the village heads and committee members in Chengdong township. In Chengzhou municipality, in 1999, 80.3% of the village committee members had junior–middle school education (Qiu 1999). My village heads survey indicates that of 111 village heads, 64% had junior–middle school education. Of the rest, 18% had primary schooling, 1.53% graduated from senior high school, 0.9% from technical/professional school, 0.9% had tertiary education, and 0.9% had no schooling. The 2001 national survey found that 2.4% of the elected village committee members had university undergraduate degree or above, 20.8% had senior–middle school background, and 45.8% of the elected village committees shared a junior–middle school education background (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2002*:592).

7.2 Elections and the Political Behavior of Village Leaders

With the system of election the removal and replacement of officials has become easier. In the past, an incompetent or corrupt village head could remain in office simply because no one would run the risk of making an enemy of him by trying to remove him. Now with the practice of secret ballot, such a leader can be removed from his post without anyone having to be particularly offensive to him. In a way the practice of *haixuan*, or nomination from the floor, originates from a combination of desire and fear on the part of the party secretary to remove the out-of-favor village head. With *haixuan*, the secretary as well as villagers can remove the unwanted village head without making a personal enemy (Jing Yuejin 1999:14).

With village elections the officially handpicked candidates lose some privileges. Those who have cultivated relationships among township authorities now feel less secure about their prospect of obtaining a post. They now have to face the voters, whose approval is essential for any prospective candidate.

Gone are the days when one could get a post through favorable relationships with township authorities.

Village elections apparently have a direct effect on the political behavior of village leaders. Before the village election system was adopted, village leaders would try every means to gain favor from township authorities, which they took as the primary guarantor of their posts. With an election every three years, however, votes become the primary concern of any would-be village head. Now instead of looking upward to township authorities for their favor, they look downward to the village mass for their votes. When placed in the dilemma of losing support from the villagers or losing favor from the authorities, some village heads choose the former, because they think their roots are in the village. This, of course, does not mean that village heads are always in such a difficult situation. Many village heads are able to balance the demands from both above and below, that is, when there is a conflict between the two, they can manage to reach a compromise.

According to some elected village heads in Wuyun township, though they feel there is pressure from both above and below it is the one from below that they consider to be more important. This view echoes among the village heads in my survey, of whom 43.2% think they should be responsible first to the voters. Only 10.8% put the responsibility to leadership above as their first concern. Some township cadres have been concerned about the possibility that some village chiefs give priority to the village while showing no enthusiasm for township assignments, thereby preventing government policies from being effectively implemented.

The villagers have increasingly higher expectations for elected village chiefs. They expect them to provide quality services, handle things fairly, and further the interests of the village. Unless they meet these expectations, village chiefs will not be regarded as good mangers of village affairs and consequently lose their authority. According to Gadsden and Thurston (2001:14),

> in many villages throughout China, the original hope that village elections would produce better government at the basic levels appears to have become a reality. . . . In a new twist to familiar campaign promises, elected villagers in some places are being held to their word. . . . In well-managed village, governance has also become more transparent.

In addition, Melanie Manion (2006:301–24) finds that competitive elections produced and promoted the belief that leaders are trustworthy.

The various political behavior of elected village heads could be explained through a survey in which the question was what they did when they were elected as village heads. The survey was carried out in 2005 in Zeguo town. Among 77 village heads, 53 heads said that the first thing they did was to make

a suggestion to village party secretaries about discussing the division of labor (Which is the official procedure). However, 11 convened a village committee meeting to discuss the division of labor; 22 convened VRAs to discuss the distribution of tasks concerning village affairs; 12 made appointment for security, conciliation, and night patrol team, and dismissed a village bookkeeper and a liaison officer for birth control; and 8 organized a team to examine village accounts. All these latter actions are seen by township leaders as "incorrect," but indicate that village heads want to use their power independently.[5]

My survey finds that while 42.7% of the 1,245 respondents recognized that village elections could check the power of the village chief, 22.5% disagreed, and the remaining 32.4% of those who responded said they did not know. 45.5% agreed that village elections make village chiefs accountable to the villagers. 38.2% were not sure. And 13.6% considered the elections to have little use, except as a political show. There is a consistent pattern if we look at the percentages. 52.8% of those surveyed think elections are very fair or fair, 70.7, good or basic good. Roughly more than 50% of those surveyed responded positively to the question of fairness and goodness of village elections. But when they were asked the questions concerning the effectiveness and usefulness of elections, only 42.7% believe that elections have a check function, and 45.5% think they are useful, the percentage drops down below 50%.

It should be noted vote-oriented political behavior sometimes produces negative effects. Village leaders, for fear of offending villagers and consequently losing their votes, may turn a blind eye to violations of village rules. In some cases, even unlawful occupations of public land have been tolerated. When there is a conflict between village interest and state interest, as Sheng Yansheng (1998:17) observes, village leaders tend to act in the interest of the village. Much to the concern of township authorities, some village heads put villagers' will before that of the township authorities when they have to make a choice. They think that, as it was the voters who brought them into office, it is only natural for them to put the voters' interest first. They may not carry out every task set by the township unconditionally. The village heads survey also indicate that those village heads who have the next election in mind put village interest before the will of township authorities, and they will do so even at the risk of losing favor from above (table 7.2). Li (2001:19) concludes,

> Whatever policy-makers in Beijing intended, free and fair elections seem to have made villagers more willing to urge elected cadres to resist township's decisions that contravene central policies and harm villagers' interests. This particular form of appealing will expose unresponsive cadres and elevates responsive one.

Table 7.2 Strategies of Village Heads for Reelection

Answer	*No. of Respondents*	*Percentage*
Serve Villagers Well in Hope of Winning More Votes	58	52.3
Remain in Good Relationship with Party Secretary	18	16.2
Work to Best Satisfaction of Township Authorities	18	16.2
No Response	17	15.3
Total	111	100.0

7.3 Electoral Challenge to Village Party Secretaries and Limits

Village elections have challenged the party's domination of the village power structure. In some villages village party secretaries have lost the power to select and decide candidates, and the power to appoint village cadres. In other areas village party secretaries have increasingly faced a dilemma. If village party secretaries follow the electoral procedures, the preference of the Party Organization may not be met because increasing competitiveness of village elections gives rise to uncertainty. If village party secretaries manipulate the electoral process and impose their selected candidates on voters, it is likely to invite villagers' discontent and their appealing to higher level authorities by invoking the 1998 Organic Law. Placed in such a dilemma, most party secretaries do nothing and adopt waiting-and-seeing attitudes.

Village elections have empowered the elected village committee. On a research trip in 2001, I observed how village meetings or assemblies are gradually replacing the party branch meeting as the final decision-making institution to decide the most important matters concerning the welfare of all villagers. Villagers can now use the village assembly to check the power of party branch and village committee, to influence decision making in the village, and more importantly to dismiss a corrupt village head by applying the dismissal codes and procedures. Village elections, the system of village assembly, and the dismissal procedures have changed the power game at the village level, making it more rational, more balanced, and more responsive to villagers.

More significantly, although the village party secretary is specified as the core leader in the village power structure according to the party documents, in practice those who have the most influence on certain village affairs are seen as the most powerful person in the village. Interestingly, some village leaders no longer debate who (village head or party secretary) is the most

powerful person in the village. This is an indicator of the decline of the unquestioned authority of the party secretary.

In Wenzhou, more and more elected village heads have gained control over certain village economic enterprises, the village finance, and village seal. In Lishui, some elected village heads who were fighting to control the village seal were successful.[6] *Tribune of Villages and Townships*, the official journal of the Ministry of Civic Affairs, has supported the elected village heads to command the village seal. To settle the dispute over who should control village seal, the General Office of the State Council has circulated the *Decisions on the Making, Using and Keeping of the Seal of the Village Committee* drafted by the Ministry of Civic Affairs and the Ministry of Public Security in 2001. This document states that the Civic Affairs departments of county and township governments should provide guidance to the village committee in making regulations concerning the application, registration, and recording of the use of the village seal. The seal should be under the charge of a sole person appointed by the joint proposal of the party branch and the village committee, which must be passed at the village representatives' meeting. Normally, the keeper of the seal cannot be the same person who holds the rights to its use. In general, neither the party secretary nor the head of the village committee is fit for keeping the seal. In the cases of important issues like loans and contracts, the seal should not be used unless the village committee has held a villagers' meeting or a village representatives' meeting that gives consent or the village head has signed the document. When a village election is over, the outgoing village committee should hand over the seal to the new committee within a period of 10 days (*China Society News*, August 2, 2001:1). The 2005 National Survey found that the 161 respondents (5.2%) reported that the seal was kept by village leaders who are both party secretaries and village chiefs, 134 (4.4%) by party secretaries alone; 448 (14.6%) by elected village heads; 1,169 (38%) by village accountants; 23 (0.7%) by township leaders; and finally 1,110 (36.1%) respondents were not sure.

Has the elected village committee become the center of village power? The findings of my survey among village heads are striking (table 7.3).

From the survey we can see that only 15% of the village heads think they have more power than the party secretary does, because they are elected by the villagers and thus have a legitimacy of power. The township survey yields similar findings (table 7.4).

It is to be noted that 61.7% of the township leaders do not think the elected village head constitutes a challenge to the party secretary, let alone a change to the power structure with the party secretary in the leading center. In some cases the village committee becomes subject to the Party Organization.

Why has the party maintained its dominance? The most important cause is, of course, the legally defined leading role of the Party Organization. The

Table 7.3 Postelection Relationship between Village Head and Party Secretary

Answer	*No. of Respondents*	*Percentage*
As Elected Village Head, You Have More Power than the Party Secretary	17	15.3
As the Party is in the Core of Leadership, the Secretary Has More Power than You Do	62	55.9
The Secretary Is More Powerful than You Are, As He/She Holds Economic Power	17	15.3
No Response	15	13.5
Total	111	100.0

Table 7.4 Do Party Secretaries Feel Challenged by the Fact that Village Heads Are Elected by the Voters?

Answer by Township Officials	*No. of Respondents*	*Percentage*
Yes	43	37.4
No	71	61.7
No Response	1	0.9
Total	115	100.0

role of the party branch is clearly defined by law. The Organic Law of Village Committee, passed in November 1998 by the National People's Congress, says in Article 3, "The party branches in the rural area work and perform the leading role according to the Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party. They support and ensure villagers' self-governance and direct exercise of democratic rights."[7]

The second cause has to do with the fact that the party secretary controls all the economic resources of the village. The authority in Wuyun township requires that the directorship of the village economic association should normally go to the party secretary. According to the party chief of this township, the idea is to strengthen the party leadership in economic affairs, to ensure that the party is in the leading position, and to control social and economic development programs. The village head can hold the posts of vice president and head of the financial supervision group, he said.[8] In 1994, 80% of village party secretaries were the directors of village economic cooperation in Ningbo

city. In 2001, the No. 23 document of Zhejiang province made a clear provision that village party secretaries should be directors of village economic cooperation. At the same time, there have been numerous attempts and protests against such an arbitrary decision as elected village chiefs demand to control the village economy. In Ningbo city 313 elected village chiefs became directors of village economic cooperation in 2000 (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2001*:567).

Third, township authorities have attempted to weaken elected village heads by supporting village party secretaries who seek to control village seals. In Wuyun township, for example, the township leaders officially ordered that the village party secretary control village seal. Nevertheless, increasingly now, elected village chiefs are fighting for the control over village economic enterprises and village seal, and some have been successful.

In conclusion, it is clear that the contention that the village committee will replace the party branch as the core of village power structure distorts and oversimplifies the reality. Party secretaries have been able to control village power, while elected village chiefs are in the second position in village power structure. This practice reveals a fundamental limit of China's rural democracy.

7.4 The Elections of Village Party Secretaries

Before village elections China had a monopower structure in which party secretaries were in command. Since the introduction of elections, a dual power structure has emerged; that is, villages have two seats of power, the power of village party secretaries, and the power of elected village heads (table 7.5).

Table 7.5 Dual Power Structure in Village

	The Nature of Power	*The Source of Power*	*Methods*	*Authoritative Recognition*
Village Party Organization	Political organization	Party constitution	Leaders are appointed by above, but now increasingly being elected	Appointed and confirmed from above
Village Committee	Mass and autonomous organization	Village Organic Law	Elected	Confirmed by villagers and competitive election

Village elections create or widen the conflict between village party secretaries and elected village heads. The contest for the locus of power comes from two sources. According to the principle of Party Organization, the party secretary should be at the core of leadership in village. However, in the spirit of the governance of law, the village head, rather than the party secretary, should be in that top position. An elected village leader claims to have more authority than that of the party secretary because he/she is elected. Consequently, the elected village head constitutes a challenge to the power of the secretary, and rivalry and power struggle follow (Li and Xiong 1998:154).

Some party secretaries think that as the party branch is the central core of the village, they should be "the speaker at all meetings, the manager of all affairs, and the maker of all decisions" (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Tiantai county 1994). Village heads, however, think that as the village committee is a body of self-governance, there should be no interference either from above or from the village party branch. A village head even told the party secretary in his village, "I am elected by voters of the whole village while you are elected by the dozen or so of party members. What have you got to brag about?" (Qiu 1999). My survey shows that 15% of village heads think they should have higher authority than the party secretary.

As the village committee and the party branch are different organizations with different sources of legitimacy and power, they tend to exhibit different behaviors. Generally speaking, party secretaries care more about the job assigned by township leaders, while village chiefs care more about the interest of villagers. They run into conflict in the handling of village affairs. It is common that the village party secretary and elected village chief fight each other for the power to appoint other cadres, for controlling the village seal, and for the directorship of village economic cooperation. In Yuecheng district of Shaoxing municipality, Zhejiang, 15% of the party secretaries are not on good terms with the village heads; with the tension between these two groups of leaders, the village committees there simply cannot play their full role. In Shaoyou village, Paitou township, village cadres are in two distinct factions headed respectively by the village head and the party secretary. Decision making is impossible whenever there is disagreement between the village head and the party secretary. The result is that problems remain unsolved and things left undone (Bian 1998). Similar cases are found in other provinces. An investigation of 111 villages by the Department of Organization of CCP Hubei province in the 1990s found that there was tension between the village committee and the party branch in 13 villages, or 11.8% of the villages (Sheng 1998:16). In one extreme case, one party secretary assassinated the elected village chief because he feared that the village chief would take control of the village accounts and expose the party secretary's corruption to the village representative assembly (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi*

Jianshe Nianjie 2002:422–23). At the other extreme, in Shandong province in 2001, party secretaries so thoroughly controlled the village accounts that 57 elected village chiefs felt so powerless that they resigned collectively (*People's Daily* March 21, 2001:9).

While village elections contribute to the dual power structure, a close examination reveals that the fundamental source is the domination of the CCP. From a comparative perspective, village elections did not create such dual power structures in Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and India. It was the CCP's refusal to withdraw its power from villages that created the problem. If the CCP had not established its branches at village level, the village elections alone would have not created dual power structure. The dual power structure is the product of the Chinese political system in which the CCP attempts to hold its domination while introducing village elections to solve the governance crisis in rural China.

In order to reduce the tension between elected village committees and the village party branch, the central government has encouraged and pushed the village party secretary to win the position through elections. Beijing has introduced intraparty elections for various reasons, among them, to gain democratic legitimacy for village party secretaries, in order to overcome the phenomenon of the "older party" or "kinship party," that is, the village Party Organization is dominated by the older or one kinship (Gang Lin 2003; Baogang He 2006b). In the past in order to maintain party membership privilege, some village party secretaries did not actively admit new members; if they did, they tended to select those who were not talented and would not pose a threat to their position. As a result, the Village Party Organization became weak.

Party elections aim to enhance the popular legitimacy of the secretaries in order to prevent the erosion of absolute party control. If the local party resists democracy, and if its survival depends upon institutional guarantees and protections from above and immunity from democratic pressure from below, the party will undergo further decay and lose its relevance. On July 14, 2002, the Central Party and State Council issued the important No. 14 document, which guarantees the right of villagers to nominate representatives or candidates, forbids the practice of appointment for party members who run for village elections, and requires the nomination of candidates by villagers. More significantly, it recommends that all those who want to be village party secretaries must first stand for the village elections; and those who fail to gain popular support will automatically lose the candidature for village party secretaries. Document 14 also recommends that elected party secretaries can hold the position of village heads. The party has discovered elections as a new solution that "may [reconcile] the requirements of village self-government and the survival of the Party" (Yawei Liu 2001b:20). There are three types of party elections, and their basic features are summarized in table 7.6.

Table 7.6 Three Models of Party Election[9]

	Shanxi Model	*Guangdong and Hubei Model*	*Shandong and Zhejiang Model*
Method	Villages will elect village committee first and then elect party secretary.	Functionally, two elections are combined. Village committee elections produce the village chief who automatically becomes party secretary.	Two nominations and one election method ("*liantuiyixuan*"), that is, candidates are nominated by both party members and nonparty members, but elected only by party members.
Result	The result is likely to produce dual power in the village power structure, increase power conflicts, but it will help to form checks and balances of power.	The result gives rise to a power monopoly in village power structure, merging the party branch and the village committee, thus preventing power conflict, but not effectively forming checks and balances.	It still maintains dual power structure in village, but strength the authority of village party secretaries who, nevertheless, still lack the legitimacy as they are not elected by all villagers.
Restriction	There is no restriction on nonparty members running for the village committee election.	It is likely to restrict nonparty members from running in the merged election.[10]	The restriction of nonparty member is not an issue as it is merely an intraparty election.

Since 2002, 4,124 village party secretaries have been elected as village chiefs, increasing from 4.27% in 2002 to 16.73% in Jianxi in 2003 (Cai, Yu, and Tang 2005). In Jintan county, Jiangsu province, 92% of the village party secretaries were elected as village chiefs, and 47.6% in Baoying county in 2004 (*Yangzhou Daily*, December 20, 2004). In Qionghai city, Hainan province, 86.7% of village party secretaries were elected as village heads in 2004–5 (*Xiangzhen Luntan*, no. 5, 2005:12). In Shandong, 91.9% of 81,988 Village Party Organizations adopted the "*liantuiyixuan*" method; 5,384 village party secretaries were elected through public speech making and secret ballot by village party members in 2005 (Fenghuang TV news, September 25, 2005). In Linhai, Zhejiang, those who failed to get more than 50% of villagers' vote could not be a candidate for the village party secretary.

The sequence of elections is an important issue. The common practice has been to let the election of village party secretaries precede the election of village committee. This practice still exists in some places in Zhejiang and other provinces; and behind the practice is the old belief that the party has absolute authority, therefore the question of who should be the village party secretary should be settled first. In the Shanxi model, the village election precedes the party election, and in the Guangdong model, those who are elected as village chiefs automatically become party secretaries in a joint election. Such a practice embodies the democratic principle of allowing the populace to have a final say. More importantly, party elections raise an interesting question, that is, if villagers are involved in electing party secretaries, to what degree, in long term, will the party branch change into "people's party" where diverse interests are represented and negotiated and where political power is shared and checked?

Intraparty elections have inherent limits as a response to the pressure from village elections. The party election cannot provide the required capacity of power to implement policy, because township leaders will soon encounter the difficulty of exercising control over these village party secretaries who are elected from below. Nor can it enhance the legitimacy of the Party Organization in terms of electoral and popular support. Empirically, only 6% of the respondents out of 1,415 villagers said they had participated in the election of the village party secretary in Guangzhou in 2002 (Guo 2003). Many places such as Yunana have not introduced an election for the party secretary. In some villages, these limited democratic elements are designed to create a "fake democracy" to weaken the challenge from village elections. It is fake in the sense that popular sovereignty is not fully realized; for example, in Wenling, Zhejiang, while villagers' nominations carry only 20% of the total weighting, and each household's nomination also carries a 20% weighting, party members' nominations are accorded a 60% weighting. In addition, nonparty members

are excluded from running for party elections; and this exclusion undermines the party's effort of turning the CCP into a people's party. Villagers still complained that "our village Party secretary is not elected by us, we should not listen to him/her."[11] At the end of the day, party elections are still exclusive; party discipline ensures the "right" candidate is nominated by party members; the level of competitiveness is low; and township leaders still hold power to control the elected party secretaries by means of party discipline.

If village party secretaries are confirmed by election it is assumed that they enjoy popular support. On this basis, the central government also recommended the *Yijiantiao* policy, that is, one person serves as both village party secretary and village chief. It in fact turns two power organizations—elected village committee and village party branch—into one. It aims to prevent "two tigers in a village" and assumes that a single power center is the best in village power structure. The merged model is a deliberate attempt to strengthen the party branch and to overcome the problems arising from conflict between the party secretary and the village chief. It also aims to reduce the number of village cadres and reduce expenses.

In Linan county, all the village heads were party branch leaders in 1994 (Yu 1994). In Weihai city, Shandong province, 71.8% of elected village chiefs out of 2,679 villages were also party secretaries in 1998 (*Minzheng Luntan*, no. 5, 1999:42). In Lishui region party branch leaders were encouraged to take posts on village committees, and secretaries of villages with a population of 500 or less could also take the post of village head in 1991 (Li Qiaobai 1991). In one township of Fushan, 53 out of 106 elected village chiefs were party secretaries in 2000. A survey of 4,924 villages found that the majority of leaders commonly hold positions concurrently across the three village governing bodies; 80% of the party secretaries act as chairmen of the Village Economic Cooperatives. In small and less developed villages, 466 party secretaries hold concurrently the position of village chiefs; 806 village chiefs act as chairmen of Village Economic Cooperatives, and 92 chairmen of Village Economic Cooperatives act as village chiefs (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Ningbo municipality 1994).

There are serious problems associated with this merged model. It is a backward move, returning to a monopower structure. It lacks checks against corruption and the abuse of power. Such a model tends to foster further corruption. This is the reason Zeguo township and many other rich places resist the implementation of such a model. Moreover, the merged model is based on the mistaken assumption that village party secretaries have gained popular support through elections, but as shown above, three models of party elections reveal that popular legitimacy for village party secretaries may be deficient or questionable.

7.5 Conclusion

Though there are variations, elections have contributed to various patterns of village power structure and rural governance (of course, other factors such as kinship, village economy, and human contingency all contribute to the complex picture of village governance). Village elections transfer power and redistribute power in favor of the elected village committee that attracts young, educated, and rich people. Elections have changed the behavior of village chiefs, who are more responsible and accountable to villagers. Village elections have resulted in significant change in village power-holders. They are empowering elected village organizations and forcing Village Party Organizations to adopt elections. At the same time, there are, as Dearlove (1995:129–30) points out, the danger of village committees becoming captured by the rural rich, thus reinforcing the alliances between party cadres, village leaders, and rural entrepreneurs.

The more substantial inadequacy of village elections is that voter-elected village heads do not represent the center of village power. The fact that village party secretaries are still the core of village power casts doubt on the democratic validity of village elections. At the same time, village party secretaries are increasingly subject to a popular vote by villagers or party members. This indicates that there is a slow grassroots change toward democracy in Party Organizations.

CHAPTER 8

Women and Village Elections

Feminists such as Iris Marion Young, Carole Pateman, and Susan Mendus hold the view that democracy has failed to deliver on its promises to women. Given the facts of history where women were denied the vote, until recently, and confined to the domestic sphere, true democracy has never actually existed. Despite universal suffrage, women's votes were without leverage in the 1920–70 in the United States (Harvey 1998). As Iris Young (1987:58) asserts,

> Since Mary Wollstonecraft, generations of women and some men wove painstaking arguments to demonstrate that excluding women from modern public and political life contradicts the liberal democratic promise of universal emancipation and equality. They identified the liberation of women with expanding civil and political rights to include women on the same terms as men, and with the entrance of women into the public life dominated by men on an equal basis with them. After two centuries of faith that the ideal of equality and fraternity included women has still not brought emancipation for women, contemporary feminists have begun to question the faith itself.

Similarly, Rose Lee and Cal Clark (2000) question the value of democratization for women, coining the phrase "the disappointment of democratization" to highlight the fact that the third wave of democratization, which occurred during the 1980s and early 1990s, did not yield the anticipated benefits to women in Asia. For instance, although well-known women such as Corazon Aquino in the Philippines (1986), Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan (1988), Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed in Bangladesh (1990), and

Megawati Sukarnoputri in Indonesia (1998) have been politically successful, inspiring, and organizing mass protests against nondemocratic regimes, they did so by virtue of the fact that they were the widows, wives, or daughters of political martyrs who were chosen to continue the cause of a male relative (Thompson 2002:515–55). In India, the electoral participation of women in the Reserved Scheduled Caste Category is much lower than that of men (Arora and Prabhakar 1997:163). And in a Mossi village in Burkina Faso, Africa, it is the norm to have no female representation in men's groups, and when women's groups met it was always in the presence of the male village chief or an elder, who has state authorization to oversee the election of and effectively appoint women's representatives (Hannequin 1990:36–49).

The broad issues raised by Rose Lee and Cal Clark (2000:12) need to be addressed in the context of Chinese village committee elections. Has democratization opened up new venues and opportunities that allow women to pursue their own goals and interests? Have village elections promoted gender equality and improved the political status of women? If women have become more politically active, has this enabled them to improve their status in society? Have autonomous women's associations been formed? If so, have they been effective in getting women's issues on the political agenda and developing relevant policy reforms? Does the better representation of women lead to policies more favorable to them? What policies to improve the status and life conditions of women have been enacted? Can representative institutions be effective in addressing these multiple concerns? This chapter attempts to address these questions.

A number of Western scholars have studied the political participation of Chinese women. For instance, Kent Jennings (1997:368; 1998:594–739) has used a macro comparative approach to examine the participation of rural women, and found that higher participation was significantly associated with being male ($r = 0.25$). From another perspective, Stanley Rosen (1995:315–41) has focused on the participation of women in formal high-level politics, comparing the percentage of women in the politburo with those in the National People's Congress. J. Tong (2003:131–50) has found a persistent gender difference in several main facets of political culture and participation, with male respondents scoring higher on media attention, political knowledge, interest, internal and external efficacy, and nonelectoral participation. All authors, however, do not examine the behavior of rural women in village elections.

There are some research papers written in Chinese, which focus on the political participation of women at the local level. For example, Baogang He and Lang Youxing (2001c:65–68) have examined the disadvantages experienced by rural women during village elections. Tian Xiaohong (2002:81–88) has sought to assess the impact of a direct nomination approach on the levels of women's participation, which in itself raises the important question of

whether direct nomination actually contributes to women's participation (Liu xiaohong 2001:498–507;Yang Cuiping 2001:508–18).

This chapter builds on these studies by examining issues surrounding the participation of women in village elections and assessing the impact of elections on women's lives. In so doing, it considers the political status of rural women, offering evidence to demonstrate the disadvantages they experience during the election process. This will be achieved by presenting a quantitative analysis of women's participation in village elections that includes indicators of their knowledge of relevant laws; their familiarity with the candidates for village headships; their attitudes toward elections; and their evaluation of them. The results of the analysis are also compared with male responses to the same questions. The chapter then moves on to assess whether village elections promote the political status of women, by examining the rate at which women are elected to political positions and the type of position they occupy. The final two sections consider the effectiveness and limitations of affirmative action polices, such as legal protection and political intervention, which have been developed to enhance the participation of women.

8.1 Women's Political Participation in Village Elections

When we conducted our survey in Xiayangtan village of Sanmen on October 24, 1998, we found that not a single woman was prepared to fill the questionnaire. In one particular family, we discovered that one of the sons took it upon himself to decide each family member's voting preference in the village election. In Baiyan village, Shuige township, of Lishui city we found that most of the elderly women were illiterate and their husbands filled in their ballot papers on their behalf. And, although many of the younger women could read and write, most expressed little or no interest in the elections. Though the village committees usually release village accounts each year, after New Year's Day, we discovered that few women had ever seen them, and indeed, many made it clear that they were not interested in seeing them. Moreover, many women seemed quite perplexed when we asked them about the elections; they knew very little about them (Fan Guobing 1998). Responses to specific interview questions are documented in tables 8.1–8.5.

Table 8.1 demonstrates the relatively low percentages of female involvement in village meetings and other functions. Interestingly, in some villages, the percentage turnout rate of women was higher than that of men. But this does not necessarily translate into a correspondingly high level of political participation by women. This is mainly because many male villagers work outside their villages leaving women, children, and the elderly as the main permanent inhabitants.

Table 8.1 What Activities Did You Take Part in During the Recent Election?

Answers	*Men*	*Women*
Attending Villagers' Meetings	303 (36.3%)	126 (30.7%)
Nominating Candidates for Representatives	233 (27.9%)	100 (24.3%)
Voting to Choose Representatives	168 (20.1%)	66 (16.1%)
Candidate Briefing	81 (9.7%)	40 (9.7%)
Voting to Elect	459 (55.0%)	204 (49.6%)

Note: Multiple Choice

Table 8.2 How Well Do You Know about "The Organic Law of Village Committee Elections?"

Answers	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Good Knowledge	56 (6.7%)	11 (2.7%)	67 (5.4%)
General Knowledge	201 (24.1%)	76 (18.5%)	277 (22.2%)
Some Knowledge	253 (30.3%)	117 (28.5%)	370 (29.7%)
No Knowledge	300 (36.0%)	199 (48.4%)	499 (40.1%)
No Response	24 (2.9%)	8 (1.9%)	32 (2.6%)
Total	834 (100.0%)	411 (100.0%)	1245 (100.0%)

Table 8.3 How Well Do You Know the Village Head?

Answers	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Good Knowledge	150 (18.0%)	44 (10.7%)	194 (15.6%)
General Knowledge	249 (29.9%)	99 (24.1%)	348 (28.0%)
Some Knowledge	221 (26.5%)	109 (26.5%)	330 (26.4%)
No Knowledge	207 (24.8%)	154 (37.5%)	361 (29.0%)
No Response	7 (0.8%)	5 (1.2%)	12 (1.0%)
Total	834 (100.0%)	411 (100.0%)	1245 (100.0%)

Table 8.2 shows the level of knowledge about the Organic Law differed significantly between male and female voters. Worryingly up to 40.1% of the peasant population displayed a complete lack of knowledge of the law, and of those the percentage of women was greater than that of men (48.4% compared

Table 8.4 Evaluation of Your Voting

Answers	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Very Important	291 (34.9%)	122 (29.7%)	413 (33.2%)
Important	336 (40.3%)	171 (41.6%)	507 (40.7%)
Not Important	77 (9.2%)	37 (9.0%)	114 (9.2%)
Of No Consequence	120 (14.4%)	77 (18.7%)	197 (15.8%)
No Response	10 (1.2%)	4 (1.0%)	14 (1.1%)
Total	834 (100.0%)	411 (100.0%)	1,245 (100.0%)

Table 8.5 Evaluation of the Latest Election

Answers	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Good Enough	205 (24.6%)	103 (25.1%)	308 (24.7%)
Good, but with Room for Improvement	370 (44.4%)	203 (49.4%)	573 (46.0%)
Not Good, with Much Room for Improvement	144 (17.3%)	62 (15.1%)	206 (16.6%)
Too Bad and Its Rules Should Be Replaced by New Ones	94 (11.3%)	33 (8.0%)	127 (10.2%)
No Response	21 (2.4%)	10 (2.4%)	31 (2.5%)
Total	834 (100.0%)	411 (100.0%)	1,245 (100.0%)

to 36.0%). Only 2.7% of women thought they knew the law well, compared to 6.7% of male voters. According to the 2001 National Survey on 2,277 villagers, 16.5% of the women respondents reported they knew the law well, compared to 31% of the male respondents (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2002*:602).

Data gathered in response to this question about the village head (table 8.3) indicated that only 18% of male and 10.7% of female respondents thought they knew the village head well. A further 24.8% of men and 37.5% of women claimed to have no knowledge at all. There were two main reasons why male villagers demonstrated a better knowledge of the village head than the women. The first relates to family structure, where men are supposed to be more involved in public issues than women who concern themselves with domestic affairs. As a result, men tend to be better informed about public

affairs including those that of the village head. The second reason is that under the marriage model that exists in rural China, women are generally married off to men in other villages, where they then live as newcomers and lack local knowledge.

Table 8.4 shows that overall rural voters thought the act of voting was important; 34.9% of male voters thought it very important and 40.3% thought it important. These two groups made up 75.2% of the total number of respondents. Also of significance is that we found a similar total percentage (71.3%) among women, with 29.7% thinking it very important and 41.6% thinking it important. On the other hand, 18.7% of women thought their voting inconsequential while only 14.4% of men were of this view.

Generally, the outcome of the latest village election was viewed positively (table 8.5), with 69% of men and 72.5% of women thinking it either very good or good. It is interesting to note that 3.5% more women than men held such views.[1] On the negative side, 11.3% of the men thought the election had been run very poorly and recommended the development of a new set of rules. Yet, only 8% of women shared this opinion. 17.3% of men and 15.1% of women thought the election was not good. Though there was not a huge disparity in the opinions about the election between men and women, what differences there were can be attributed to two key factors. First, women were less aware of certain irregularities that occurred during elections, such as bribery, kinship interference, and the manipulation of candidates. Second, men had higher expectations of the elections and were less easily satisfied than the women appeared to be. The fact that women generally viewed elections more positively than men does not mean they are more active participants.

8.2 Have Village Elections Promoted the Political Status of Women?

8.2.1 The Violation of the Rights of Women

In Zhejiang, married-out women in rich villages desire to retain village status in their home villages and have refused to register in their husbands' residential area. These married-out women are frequently denied their right to vote and entitlement to economic benefits by village assembly or village representative assemblies (VRAs), which act democratically but in majoritarian fashion against these women's interests. In Zhejiang, several villages I visited held VRA meetings to decide the tough question of whether these women should retain their status. The oft-made decision was that if a woman marries out, she loses her village citizenship. In one village in Wenzou, even if a divorced woman returns to her home village and is registered there, she is still denied the right to vote.[2] Only those who marry in are entitled to village status. In

2002, however, in Shuangqiao village, it was decided that a married-out woman can retain her right to vote within one year of her marriage.

Chinese state policy specifies that married women have the right to choose their household registration and are entitled to a piece of land and economic benefits. Village democracy has been used to deny these and other rights. As village leaders put it, "the decision is made by the VRA and the majority's opinion is often right on this matter! If she wants to sue us in local court, we don't care, and we will still follow the democratic decision!"[3]

In Simen village at Anyang township in Zhejiang 22 women demanded the economic right to village wealth but their request was denied by the VRA. When they appealed the decision, the county leaders did not want to become involved in the case and only requested the VRA to reconsider the decision. The women also approached the local newspaper in hopes of publishing their stories. In a final attempt to reverse the ruling, the women went to the local court, which decided that the question of village status is a matter of village autonomy and should only be decided by the VRA. In addition to the cases mentioned above, a woman also lost her case in Shangdong province. However, six women won a case in 2001 in Jinghua, Zhejaing, and one woman won in Hunan province. In these successful cases, the local court decreed that the village assembly had no right to make a decision that denies women their political and economic rights because these rights are protected by national law (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie* 2002:380–86).

8.2.2 The Decrease in the Number of Women Village Committee Members

In Central and East European parliaments once quotas were abandoned with the transition to democracy there was a marked decline in the proportion of women representatives (Norris and Inglehart 2001:130). Similarly in rural China the number of women village committee members has been decreasing since direct village committee elections began in 1998 and 1999. For instance, pilot elections were held in 121 villages of the Chengguan township in Shengzhou city, in May 1999 and only 6.7% of those elected to village committees were women. This marked a 41.7% drop from the previous election. In addition, only 1.11% of village heads were women, a fall of 78.9% (Qiu Zhengjun 1999).

Women represent 49.9% of the electorate in Shangwang Village, yet all 10 of the village cadres and 20 village representatives elected in 1999 in Zhenhai's Baifeng township were male. Not a single woman won enough votes to be elected (Wang Zhenting 1998). This reinforced Lu Jingyao's 1998 study, conducted in three villages, that found that all committee members were male (Lu Jingyue 1998).

Between September and November 1993, elections were held in the 267 villages of the Jiaojiang municipality (now Jiaojiang district of Taizhou municipality). Among the 1,000 elected village committee members, only 115, or 11.5%, were women (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Jiaojiang municipality 1994b). When the 1997 elections were held in the Wuyun township of Jingyun county, only 2 of the 51 people elected as committee members, were female. And, in the 1998 election held in the Taoyuan township, in Tongxiang municipality, only 8, or 16% of the 50 members elected were women (Zhang Biao 1998). In 2005 elections, the percentage of women committee members in the province of Zhejiang dropped to 9.6% (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Zhejiang province 2005).

8.2.3 Underrepresentation of Women

In spite of legislation aimed at protecting the rights and welfare of women, their lack of representation in the village committee system continues. Women are disadvantaged by the village power structure through an inadequate representation in village committees. Inadequate female representation is demonstrated by the situations in Shuipai and Shuichan villages, in the Yuecheng district of Shaoxing city. The villages have populations of 6,000 and 4,000 respectively and in Shuipai village, only 1 out of 18 party members, 4 or 5 out of 30 village representatives and 1 out of 6 village committee members were women. While in Shuichan Village, 8 out of 40–50 village representatives were women, only 1 committee member was female. Moreover, there has never been a woman village head; the highest position a woman has ever occupied is the head of the Women's Federation.

The highest rate of women representatives we found was in the Chengdong township of Shaoxing municipality, where 10 (28.6%) of the 31 members of its 19 village committees, elected in 1998, were women. Elections held in Yuyao municipality between April and July 1999 were conducted under the new Organic Law. Indeed there were elections held in 786 villages, which produced 923 committee members, 783 village heads, 9 deputy heads, 5,329 heads of subvillages and 24125 villager representatives. Of the total number of committee members elected, 575, or 22.7%, were women.[4] In contrast, elections held under the same law in Chengzhou municipality produced only 6.67% of women committee members (Qiu 1999).

8.2.4 Secondary Role of Women Village Committee Members

Even where women were elected to village committees, those women who are committee members are usually only allocated secondary roles and

responsibilities. Too often women cadres are confined to roles that fit the description of "women's work." Women are rarely elected as village chiefs: with one exception all 111 village chiefs surveyed were men. According to Fan Yu, a female officer in the Ministry of Civic Affairs, elected female village heads constitute around 1% of all village heads nationally, 6% in Huanhuang city, Hunan province, and 8% in Shanghai in 1999. In my various field trips I did not encounter a single female village head and only heard of one in Dingtian, Rei-an county.

Women seldom took a leading role in village institutions such as VRAs, being the subvillage head or working on groups that supervised village finances. Instead they were allocated relatively insignificant roles and as a result had little real power so that their presence in the village power structure seemed largely symbolic. A female committee member told the author that she felt dignity being elected, but was powerless at village committee meeting when she demanded funds to address women's issues. Finally she resigned from her post. By contrast, women play a significant and even dominant role in local urban governance, where the majority of residential committee members are women. For example, in Shangcheng district, Hangzhou, among 385 residential committee members, 304, or 79% are women.

8.3 Affirmative Action 1: Law and Legal Regulations

Clearly appropriate institutions and policies are necessary if rural women are to maximize the opportunities for political participation and break down the tradition of gender inequality that is rooted in various historical, cultural, and societal practices and institutions.

Women are accorded legal status in China through voting, property, divorce and equal rights. Under Mao Zedong's rule a range of legislative initiatives were instituted and these have been added to during the reform era. They will be briefly outlined before we move on to consider the Organic Law in detail.

Certain legal safeguards protect Chinese women, including equity provisions contained in the 1982 constitution. For instance, Article 33 stipulates, "All citizens of the People's Republic of China are equal before the law" and Article 48 dictates, "Women in the People's Republic of China enjoy the same rights as men do in political, economic, cultural, social, and family lives." The state is committed to the protection of women's rights and welfare, to equal pay policies and to the training and promotion of women cadres. Nevertheless, significant gender differences in wage levels exist. While women in state-run enterprises have greater access to equal work practices, there is a less consistent application of these practices in private and collective enterprises, and in rural areas.

Other legislation designed to promote the status of women includes the Marriage Law of 1950 (revised in 1980, 1990, and 2001), which establishes equality of the sexes, free marriage, and free divorce, and outlaws traditional practices such as marriage by purchase. The Law of Succession (1985) guarantees the inheritance rights of daughters and widows and enshrines the right of widows to take property into a new marriage. The Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women (1992) states, "Women have the right to all the accesses to the management of all public affairs, be they state, economic, cultural, or social." It legislates against forms of gender discrimination frequently cited and criticized in the West. For instance, Article 35 prohibits infanticide; Article 36 prohibits the abduction of and trafficking in, or kidnapping of women; Article 37 prohibits prostitution; and Articles 48, 49, and 50 lay out various legal responsibilities, enforcement provisions, and administrative and judicial remedies.

In a comparative context, since 1991 several countries (Argentina, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Italy, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela) have adopted national quota legislation. These laws specify minimum percentages for women on the legislative lists that range from 20% (Ecuador) to 40% (Costa Rica). In Taiwan, specific electoral arrangements reserve about 10% of seats for women, and in India, one-third of the total seats in local elections are reserved for women (Jones 2000:143–44).

In China, Article 9 of the Organic Law dictates, "The village committee should include a certain number of women members." There are differing views on how this national provision should be implemented given variations in provincial village election laws. For instance, in Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Tibet, and Gansu the laws specify that the village committee must have at least one female member, whereas laws in all other provinces, including Zhejiang, only mention a "certain number of women."

Many of the local regulations in Zhejiang guarantee at least one female village representative who is either selected by village leaders or elected by a village team, made up of village representatives rather than village committee members. Out of 40–50 representatives in Shuichan village 8 were female; and in Zeshui village in Dongchen township, Yuecheng district, Shaoxing city, Zhejiang, 4 or 5 out of 30 were women.

The type of electoral system impacts the level of political participation by women. Maurice Duverger (1955) points out that far more women are elected under proportional party-list systems than under the majoritarian single-member-district system. In the Chinese context, Article 14 of the new Organic Law of 1999 specifies an absolute majority of votes is required to earn a seat, making it difficult for women to be elected. This is exemplified in the 1999 election in Shangwang village in Ningbo municipality, held under the

provisions of the new Organic Law. All 10 subvillage heads and 20 subvillage representatives elected were men as no female candidate was able to achieve a majority. Worried by this outcome, an election working committee met to discuss whether some seats should be specifically reserved for women and a few of the elected male members expressed a willingness to give up their seats so that the committee could accommodate some women representatives.[5]

In Hunan province, the provincial government developed a set of special procedures for women. First, women must be nominated as candidates. As long as she has accumulated the largest number of votes, a women candidate does not necessarily need to achieve the majority of votes to win the nomination. Second, if no woman is elected in the village election a separate election should be held to ensure that to some extent, women are represented in the political decision making of the village or province.

Tian Xiaohong (2002) argues that *haixuan*, or direct nomination, promotes competition between women, undermines the monopoly of official women's associations, and allows ordinary women to be nominated as candidates. There is, however, no conclusive evidence to show that *haixuan* increases the percentage of women elected to the more senior roles of village committee chairs. In the case of Qixi, which Tian cites as a favorable example and which I visited in 2000, the election of women as village chairs had more to do with affirmative action programs and active support from women's organizations than with *haixuan*.

The Zhejiang experience indicates that in the past village party secretaries who had the power to recommend candidates were required to consider "a certain number of women" in order to meet specific political objectives. However, this power was lost when the 1998 Organic Law abolished or weakened organizational nominations and Article 14 specified that electors have the right to directly nominate any candidate. Now it is a matter for popular nomination or vote whether women are nominated as candidates for the village committee. As a result, and as discussed in the previous section, some villages in Zhejiang experienced a decrease in the percentage of women elected as village committee members.

8.4 Affirmative Action 2: Political Intervention

As illustrated above, legal protections are necessary but not sufficient to ensure gender equality and the wider participation of women in village politics. For this to occur there must be greater political intervention.

The type and level of political intervention required varies. For instance, during numerous field trips in Zhejiang, Beijing, Jiangsu, Tibet, Xinjiang, Sichuang, and Hubei I never saw any publicity for women's rights in elections. There were no slogans proclaiming the need to "protect women's rights

and interests in elections," nor did party and government leaders mention the issue of women's rights in official documents or speeches. Candidates obviously did not see a need to develop strategies to win women's votes. In contrast, journals such as *Township Forum* and *Know-How for Women* have published numerous commentaries and short essays to promote the political participation of women. In Qixi county, Hubei province, the Women's Federation and the Division of Civic Affairs played an especially crucial role in seeking to empower women.

The Ministry of Civic Affairs has developed a successful partnership with the Women's Federation of Qianxi aimed at increasing the participation of women in village elections and more generally in village politics and policy-making. To this end the president of the Qixi Women's Federation was appointed as a vice chair of the election working committee in charge of propaganda. During the 1999 village election the federation prepared public speeches for women candidates, which were distributed to all the village women's associations. It also contacted the Qixi party personnel department to persuade village party secretaries to actively support women's participation.

The Ford Foundation has financed a law center for women, which provides free services such as consultation and legal representation; and the UNDP has funded a training project aimed at improving the status and conditions of women in Qixi. By July 2001 the Qixi Women's Federation had trained 140 women at a cost of less than US$10,000. Women trainees were encouraged to run for village committee chair positions and they learned how to prepare public speeches and organize electoral campaigns. As a result, they became more knowledgeable of election laws, election campaigns, and the preparation of public speeches than women who had received no training (table 8.6). The training also sought to contribute to the better functioning of village committees. For example, women committee members were encouraged to criticize village chiefs who fail to consult through village meetings when making decisions on major issues.

One month prior to the 1999 village elections, the Qixi Women's Federation selected 21 villages where there were no female committee members. It organized the direct election of the chair of the women's association; and women candidates delivered public speeches that appealed to both men and women. These organized campaigns and activities sent a clear message to villagers that women could and should be elected in the forthcoming election.

The Qixi Women's Federation also persuaded 10 women to run for village head positions and, using organizational sources, they ran campaigns on their behalf. In spite of the political support from the women's organization, the results were disappointing. Among 417 villages only 3 villages saw women candidates being elected to village chair positions and this occurred in small,

Table 8.6 The Effects of Training on Women in Qiangxi[6]

Questions	*Trainees' Answer*	*Non-trainees' Answer*
Do You Know Two Majority Rules?	Yes	No
What Are Women's Rights?	5–7 rights	Only mention two rights
What Are Women Leadership Skills?	6–7 skills	Only very general answer
Will You Run for Village Chiefs in Next Election?	Yes	Yes
How Can You Run for Election?	Various strategies being mentioned	Little
How Can You Prepare Public Speech?	Substantial knowledge about this	Knowing nothing
How Do You Play Roles in Village Affairs?	Speak out, help other village committee members, if necessary criticize the inappropriate behavior of village chiefs	Little

poor, and chaotic villages. In other words, it could be argued that women were successful in these poorer villages simply because men were not interested in running for village chair positions.[7] Similarly, there are some local leaders in Zhejiang who see the absence of women in village chair positions as embarrassing. And, given that very few village women demonstrated political ambition or were eager to participate in the political process, these leaders proactively searched for suitably qualified women who could be encouraged to run for office, employing affirmative action measures to help them win. Strikingly, however, one elected female village chief resigned her position due to opposition from her husband and mother-in-law.[8]

8.5 Explanations

Gender inequality has a long history and appears to be universal and in a male-dominated political world, women are disadvantaged in many respects (Duverger 1955). Unfortunately, they seem to fare no better in village elections. The limits of the affirmative policies and measures discussed above demonstrate the pervasive strength of male-dominated power structures, which act to constrain the political participation of women. According to J. Tong's (2003) empirical finding, structural factors explain gender differences in political participation. The disadvantages pertaining to women are

located not only in the village power structure but also more generally in male-dominated economic, political, cultural, and educational institutions. Below, I will examine the macroeconomic, political, cultural, and societal factors that contribute to hinder women's overall political participation.

The economic reform program has ignored the status of women (Judd 1994). According to the rationale of reform the pursuit of women's liberation is dependent upon economic modernization, without which sexual equality cannot be attained. In other words, the objectives of the women's movement are secondary to the greater national economic development. Such an approach was adopted as party policy at the Thirteenth Congress of the CCP. Although the principle of gender equity has not been abandoned, it has clearly been set aside during periods of economic reform (Beaver et al. 1995).

Thus the position of Chinese women is ambiguous. On the one hand, they are encouraged to participate in the workforce during times of labor shortage and on the other hand are discouraged and discriminated against when there is an oversupply of labor. Given their supposed "female qualities" of gentleness and tenderness, women are expected to play the supporting roles of helper, good wife, and devoted mother, whilst simultaneously fulfilling the role of worker in the public sphere.

Not surprisingly, women tend to be underrepresented in high-paying jobs and overrepresented in low-paying ones. This inverse relation between high wages and the proportion of female employees reinforces the view that men are "worth" more than women, and fosters an environment where women continue to be economically dependent on men. They are further discriminated against on the basis of their reproductive responsibilities: the employment of women is considered less cost effective because they may need maternity leave and other benefits (Zang 1999).

Those most severely affected by the reform era policies are women in rural areas. With the shift from collectives to the household responsibility system much farming production has been placed under the authority of the heads of the household. Thus the household responsibility system has strengthened traditional authority structures so that the household head, usually male, makes the major decisions concerning crop planting and income expenditure. Under such arrangements women are being returned to a prerevolutionary relationship to the means of production (Parish, Zhe, and Li 1995; United Nations University Household 1993; Jacka 1997; Li Zongmin 1993).

The economic reform policies have also provoked an upsurge of violence against women, particularly in rural areas. And certain socioeconomic policies have allowed traditional values and practices to reemerge that adversely affect women. For instance, since its implementation in 1979, the One Child Policy has encouraged fewer births, later marriage, later child bearing, and a eugenic approach to childbirth. It also means that the responsibility for

family planning falls disproportionately on women, who are the usual targets of birth control campaigns. One of the major effects of the One Child Policy is that boys are more highly valued than girls. Thus a family with a married son is perceived to be more productive in labor terms than one with a daughter. There is documented evidence of violence against women who fail to produce a son and the threat of sterilization after the birth of a second child makes infanticide a real option when that second child is another girl. The State's principal response to female infanticide has been a utilitarian one that emphasizes the future shortage of women of marriageable age (Huang Xiyi 1998; Mallee 1998; Xu Feng 2000; United States Department of State 2002).

Not surprisingly the One Child Policy has had a significant impact on the political attitudes and participation of women, especially rural women who experience feelings of powerlessness and oppression and who resent the excessive burden of birth control. On reaching the age of 18 each woman is required to register with the village birth-planning association. Even women who work outside the village are required to fill out a specific birth control form and are subject to close scrutiny. After marriage, the decision to have a child depends on whether she is allocated a birth quota. This decision, perhaps one of the most important in a woman's life, is made by the village committee or the VRA, depending on who is in charge of issuing official pregnancy licenses. The family planning association continues to supervise those who do not receive the quota to ensure they practice appropriate birth control measures. In the most extreme circumstances, women were forced to clinics after giving birth to be sterilized by local officials without their consent. The processes of forced sterilization caused many of the women to lose their sense of dignity. In short, the most personal and private aspects of a woman's life are subject to control and constant monitoring. The most disturbing and damaging aspect of forced sterilization is that the women's body was not treated as her own, but a property of the State, which is subject to control and monitoring. When Women have lost their right to control their bodies, how can women exercise their so-called political right to participate in the political process? Village democracy supposedly fosters village autonomy, yet women do not have autonomy over their bodies. Village autonomy and self-government therefore becomes meaningless when the tangible autonomy of women is deprived in practice.

From a sociological perspective villagers have always been the most vulnerable in Chinese society. Some policies of the Maoist era, particularly those concerning household registration, welfare, and the pricing of agricultural products seriously disadvantaged villagers and even today discrimination on the part of urban communities against the rural populace continues. City governments and councils still make laws that discriminate against villagers.

Urban residents' committees enjoy special governmental resources and finance unavailable to village committees. Moreover, the establishment of village committees can be seen as the government's contingency plan rather than a generous bestowal of freedom and democracy to the villagers. The government's attitude in this respect was revealed by Peng Zhen (1991:609–10), then chairperson of the National People's Congress, a promoter of the Organic Law, who said, "Should we make the village committee a governmental institution? No, otherwise the government would take charge of many things that would be best left for the villagers themselves, such as community welfare facilities and rural infrastructure. The government can't do all that, and its efforts wouldn't be productive anyhow." Indeed it is popularly held that what the government really wants is to "shift the burden."

Traditional attitudes constitute a major barrier to the election of women to important positions. For instance, a significant number of the women I interviewed did not see the disadvantage of women in village committees as a problem of sex discrimination so much as one of merit. There is still a popular perception that a woman's "proper" place is in the home rather than in politics[9] in spite of the fact that essential selection criteria for village committee membership should be based on merit, ability, and management skills rather than gender. Some even thought women were unfit for politics and public affairs because these were seen as primarily men's jobs. Three women we interviewed were of the opinion that politics is not for women. It is not an uncommon perception that women serve as mere "decoration" in the male-dominated world of village politics (Meng Heng 1998). Moreover, women representatives are frequently perceived as "being narrow-minded" and, as a result, the question of increasing the presence of women in village committees has been neglected.

Another major factor that influences women's political participation is the state of literacy among women. In the earlier 1990s it was estimated that of the more than 200 million Chinese who were illiterate, 70% were women (*Qiushi*, May 1992). Moreover, it was found that 80% of six-year-olds (school age in China) who did not go to school were girls. Between 1986 and 1989, there were 4.35 million school-age girls who did not attend school (*China News Analysis*, October 1, 1991:7). In Xiayangtan village of Sanmen county, we found few elderly women who were literate: they had experienced little schooling when they were young and had hardly been exposed to the outside world. Confined most of their lives to the kitchen and the fields, it is hardly surprising that they had little understanding of matters like village elections.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the important question of whether village elections have promoted women's political status and participation. It finds that while village elections have altered some rules of the game, it has brought about little change to the entrenched male-dominated village power structures. Clearly, village elections are dominated by male politics. The results reconfirm J. Tong's finding that gender differences exist, and there is an interestingly consistent pattern. In terms of political participation, women tended to score between 1 and 10% lower than men.

Though the Chinese legal system and various forms of political intervention have provided affirmative action policies to promote the status of women and increase their political participation, they have not gone far enough and the results to date have been disappointing. In the face of longstanding and entrenched historical, cultural, and societal inequalities, there remains a long way to go before women will be able to significantly influence decision making in Chinese village politics.

In conclusion, village democracy, if one acknowledges its existence, is overwhelmingly male dominated. It is therefore appropriate to conclude that village democracy does not benefit women. In some areas, it has facilitated the violation of women rights by disguising gender inequality as part of the democratic process of VRAs or majority rule.

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PART III

The Shape of Village Democracy

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CHAPTER 9

Village Elections and Township Leaders

Township leaders are the most important determinants of the variation in village democracy. Their intentions, understanding and attitudes, working style, methods, and strategies have a direct bearing on village elections and account for the variation and degree of rural democracy. To a large extent, the success of the village elections depends on whether township leaders support or oppose them. As Suzanne Ogden (2002:255) points out, "the preferences of local leaders seem far more important than the level of economic development in determining how much democratization occurs," and "the resistance or support of local town and township leaders for elections and local autonomy has been far more decisive than the ministry's wishes in determining the extend of village democratization."

This chapter examines the important roles played by local township leaders in developing village elections and democracy. It aims to study how township leaders perceive village elections and how local leaders craft, manipulate, and even support them for their utilitarian purposes. It will explore the changing strategies and attitudes of township leaders toward village elections.

The chapter comprises four sections. Section 9.1 examines various administrative roles in implementing village election law. Section 9.2 is concerned with three different attitudes toward elections and the corresponding strategies township leaders use. Section 9.3 discusses how they intervene, influence, and even manipulate elections. Section 9.4 examines the emergence of Chinese Machiavellians who support rural democracy.

9.1 The Administrative Roles of Township Authorities

Local township leaders are often accused of inhibiting the development of village elections and democracy (O'Brien and Li 2000:478–81; Tianjian Shi 1999b:393–94; Kelliher 1997:78–81). Such blame is in part deserved and this will be discussed in next two sections. The administrative roles played by township leaders, however, are largely overlooked. Given that an independent electoral commission is absent in the Chinese electoral administration, all administrative activities related to village elections are organized by local governments. This administrative perspective of village elections is crucial in understanding the complex roles of township leaders in promoting and/or inhibiting rural democracy.

Professor Xu Yong (1997a:257) at Huazhong Normal University points out, "one can't regard the state power and the government simply as a negative force in the process of democratization. Under certain conditions, they can play a unique positive role."[1] Each coin has two sides and the role of township authorities is no exception. Acts of interference and control described in the third section indeed look quite negative. Yet township leaders are also capable of playing supportive roles, providing necessary and indispensable elements for rural elections and democracy. The various roles of the township government are addressed in the following ways.

9.1.1 Setting Up Organizations

All township governments have established leading bodies for village elections. These organizations carry different names such as the electoral committee, leading group or office. They provide an organizational guarantee for an orderly and efficient election. They work out an agenda, make rules and regulations, develop propaganda plans, coordinate voting and ballot counting in villages, and deal with emergencies during elections.

9.1.2 Making Plans and Setting an Agenda for Elections

The plans and agenda for elections are set by the township authorities, so that there can be greater coordination and more regularity. Take Wenyan township of Xiaoshan municipality, for example. The township started preparing for an election in November 1998. Township leaders then went on to develop a work plan for the election, specifying the timetable and procedures. The plan says,

> In terms of procedures, meetings of villagers' representatives and subvillage heads should be held. The present village committees should make a

report of their work to the representatives, who then will review and comment on the report. Then the representatives will in the spirit of the law and related regulations pre-nominate members of the new village committee and new village head and deputy head. The pre-nomination should be made public five days before the election day. The village election committee then will decide about the candidates on the basis of public opinions. Names of the candidates then will be published two days before the election in the order of the strokes of their names. And finally voting will begin. (Office of Xiaoshan municipality 1998)

9.1.3 Regulation

Township leaders make local laws and regulations supplementary to provincial laws and regulations. Complementary regulations are absolutely necessary where no reference can be found in the central and provincial documents. As stipulated by both the national and provincial electoral laws, township government has the right to make local electoral regulations. In most cases, township governments would make local regulations in line with national and provincial laws and regulations, and sometimes issue official documents different from the provincial laws due to their efforts to exercise control over the regulation of elections. Item 6 of the "Qualifications" of "Implementing Regulations for Village Election in Fangcun Township," for instance, states that a candidate should "be active in carrying out all tasks set by the township party committee and government," (Zhu Genghua 1997) therefore cooperation with the authorities becomes a key requirement for the candidate.

The regulations of the township would then become the model for each village. For instance, all the villages in Laofangqiao adopted a model of election proceedings formulated by the township government. They just copied Electoral Regulations provided by Laofangqiao township and put a specific date on it. In some cases, the village regulations are more specific than the township model. There are also modifications to the township regulation.

9.1.4 The Roles of Coordinator, Arbitrator, and Troubleshooter

Village elections are sometimes accompanied by the rise of the clan and clan forces, which may account for some of the irregularities in vote seeking. Timely intervention by the township is necessary when this occurs. For example, the former head of Yangban village in Yuelou township, Tiantai county got his position with the backing of his money and kinship force. During his term of office, he performed poorly and displayed bias toward his

own clan. Villagers felt they could not put up with the man as village head, but they were powerless to do anything about it. Things began to change, however, when in late 1993 the joint county-township working group came to the village. They visited villagers and explained the electoral law. They also helped villagers to get a clear picture of their situation. As a result, the partial and unpopular village head lost his position and a more popular village committee was voted in (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Tiantai county 1994).

Villagers need the township government to act as an arbiter, which is illustrated by an incident in the 1999 Dongyang election. Although Pan Geming, a worker at a mining company, had been a resident of Zhongtang village, Nanma township, at the time of the election, he no longer held a village household registration. According to the electoral law, therefore, he was not eligible either to vote or to run for village positions. With secret support from Shu Tianlong, secretary of the village party branch, and from some cadres in the township, he actively ran for the village head. Shu even sought votes for him. In response to what they called "illegal activities," 62 voters signed a letter and sent it to the head of the Department of Civic Affairs in Dongyang, asking for the case to be investigated (Lou Kana 1999). In Sanlian and Hanxi, candidates literally fought for votes. In Dongshan and several other villages some candidates bought votes with cash. In Shenhu, 10 votes were stolen just before voting began. In Sicun village, people went from door to door asking for votes (Qiu Zhengjun 1999). Clearly such activities cannot be resolved by the village committee, the party branch, or the villagers themselves. Township leaders are needed to help bring about a fair and timely solution.

9.1.5 Role of Township Government in Dismissal of Village Heads

According to Article 16 of the electoral law, when a village head has proved to be unfit for the post, "village committee should at the earliest stage hold a meeting of villagers and vote for the dismissal proposal." This means that the dismissal meeting should be chaired by the village committee. But when the charged village head refuses to hold such a meeting, who will then be responsible for holding the meeting? In such situations it is the township government that is responsible for assisting the villagers in exercising their right of dismissal. Provincial laws in Shandong stipulate that "When the village committee refuses to hold a meeting of villagers to vote on the dismiss proposal, township government has the right to hold the meeting, at which villagers will vote to decide" (Qiu Zhengjun 1999). In the 1999 provisional Regulations for the Village Election in Zhejiang province, it is stipulated that "when a village committee has received the dismissal proposal for a month

but has not held the villagers' meeting for voting, the township government should help to hold the meeting for voting."

9.1.6 The Training of Personnel

The training of personnel involves two groups of people, those working for the election and the newly elected village cadres. Township authorities offer training programs for the electoral workers at both township and village levels. They are acquainted with knowledge of the relevant laws, regulations, and electoral procedures (Zhang Hong 1998). In the election in Laofangqiao, which took place in April 1999, the workers received training before they began their electoral duties. Each was given a copy of the electoral law and an accompanying study guide, the forms to be used in the election, and the 10 directives from the township government (Office of CCP Committee and government of Laofangqiao township, 1999a).

Training is also provided for the newly elected village cadres. Lishui district uses the party schools at the county and township levels to train village leaders. The training program covers basic Marxism and Leninism, the party's rural policy, laws and regulations, the working method that stresses the importance of the masses, as well as new knowledge in agriculture and management (Li Qiaobai 1991). Tangxia township has a New Century Cadre School, which is responsible for the training of village leaders in its 19 villages. In 1997, it conducted 11 programs with 3,283 participants (Office of Tangxia township 1998).

A provincial law in Zhejiang stipulates that township government is responsible for the training of village committee members. Article 17 states that "it is the responsibility of the county Civic Affairs department and the township government to provide training for the village committee members. Each member during the term of office should at least have one training." It also stipulates that the township government should cover training costs (*Zhejiang Ribao*, September 10, 1999:6).

9.1.8 Financial Support

Financial support is of special importance to the less developed villages. Township governments pay part of the costs associated with the election, such as printing, stationery, staff allowances, and some meals. Though the national electoral law does not stipulate that the government should cover the cost at the village level, the underdeveloped villages, in particular those with no collective economy, do need support from the township government. Hence Article 6 of the 1999 Electoral Regulations of Zhejiang states that government at township level should give financial assistance to the village,

"Governments at all levels should include in their budget the cost for their organizing and directing village elections. The village pays for the cost involved in village election and the township government can provide some financial assistance."

Financial support also comes in the form of allowances to pay the village cadres for their work and to pay for training programs. Some villages are too poor to pay their cadres. In light of this, Ningbo municipality proposed that the county, the township, and the village jointly pay the village cadres, so that they could have an income 150%–200% higher than an average villager. Where possible, it is recommended that cadres become salaried professionals with pensions and other benefits. Those who have been awarded the title of "good cadre" for three successive years will be highly ranked as prospective township cadres (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Ningbo municipality 1994).

9.2 Attitudes toward Elections

There is no uniform attitude of local township authorities toward village elections. Rather, there exist at least three different attitudes. The first attitude is *supportive* among the local authorities. Some township leaders have positive attitudes toward village elections. These authorities feel sure that village elections will help with their work rather than erode their power. This group of township leaders does not agree with the view that the quality of Chinese villagers is so low that they are not fit to participate in democratic elections. They seem to understand and sympathize with the villagers' demands for democracy. For them, a villager may not know the system at the national level, but he/she is certainly capable of understanding the essentials of rural grassroots democracy. In my township survey we found that 67.8% of township leaders hold generally positive views on elections.

The second attitude of local government is to *support elections, but never whole-heartedly*. According to O'Brien and Li Lianjiang (2000), since 1990, when village elections and village autonomy were reaffirmed by the CCP Central Committee, very few local officials would publicly criticize and oppose the elections. Some township leaders, however, were more apathetic than anything else toward elections in their area. They tend to lack genuine interest in the election. During our survey in Chengdong township of Shaoxing municipality, some leaders told us that they were never against the election, and would never do anything to violate the national Organic Law of Village Committee. They did not think much of the election, however, considering its significance overrated, believing the results to be far from satisfactory. In their view elections could not solve all the rural problems and therefore should not be regarded as the most important issue. Hence their involvement in the election process was passive and perfunctory.[2]

The third attitude is *opposition*. Those who hold such an attitude think village elections and the notion of autonomy make the implementation of party policies in rural areas more difficult and they fear these may intensify or trigger clan conflicts. Most township leaders whom we interviewed in the mid-1990s thought the electorate law was premature and would not bring about the desired results (Office of CCP Committee and Government of Laofanqiao township 1999b).

In 1988, only 13 counties in Xi'an municipality agreed to implement the then provisional electorate law. A study in 1989 in Shandong province showed that 60% of the township leaders were against village autonomy. A study in 1991 among 150 township leaders in Hequ county, Shanxi province, yielded similar findings, with 40% of respondents expressing opposition to village elections (O'Brien and Li 2000). A 30-year-old deputy township head in Jinzhou, Hubei province, who was a graduate from a prestigious university in Shanghai, put it this way: "I don't think village autonomy will do, because after all it is a product of the 1980s democratic wave" (Xu Yong 1997a:397).

There are three main reasons for the opposition to elections among township leaders. First, they think it is too early to conduct elections at this stage. My township survey indicates that 20.9% of the respondents held such a view. These leaders think the elections are premature because the villagers are not capable of participating in democratic elections. In addition, some leaders think it ridiculous to start democracy in rural areas, where the lack of qualified voters is a more serious problem than elsewhere.[3]

Second, they believe that village elections would clash with party leadership, meaning that it would be detrimental to the dominant status of the Communist Party. People with such views think that the 1998 Organic Law means "more democratic rights to the rural rank and file," but "detriment to the party and government's authority." According to this view, once the leading role of the party branch in the village is challenged, rural work would become difficult (Office of CCP Committee and Government of Laofanqiao township 1999b). Such worries are not without grounds. As was discussed in chapter 7, the two power centers, the party branch and the village committee. may come into conflict with each other. Some villagers would rather see party branch hands off village affairs.[4] In other cases, former convicts are elected to the village committee, much to the concern of township authorities. To try to avoid such unwanted results, township leaders would manipulate the nomination and further interfere with the election to ensure that the election stayed on track.

Third, the oppositional attitudes of township authorities toward village elections are related to their own leadership roles. In cases where township authorities love power too much, they would be very reluctant to grant the villages autonomy, because doing so would diminish their own power. They

also need trusted people in villages to perform the various tasks that have been set for the village. The township government intervenes to make sure that its directives will be carried out. Township leaders will always be concerned with who the candidates are, and whenever they feel necessary, they will interfere, unless the township governments change their nature and functions or there is a law that forbids interference.[5]

In addition, the attitudes of township leaders are also influenced by their priority task of economic development. A study in 1994 by the Ministry of Civic Affairs found that some leaders regard economic development as the most important and treat the construction of democracy at the grassroots level as only secondary. Such thinking makes it unlikely that the building of village committee will be on top of agenda (Ministry of Civic Affairs 1994). Such thinking was still popular five years later in 1999. Some academics, for instance, thought democratic elections were a luxury, which the economically underdeveloped rural area could never afford. In April 1999, when an election was scheduled in Laofangqiao township, Yuyao municipality, some local leaders were not very enthusiastic. They thought the election was unnecessary, because this is the time of market economy, no one would be interested in it. It is more worthwhile to devote the money and energy to the development of village economy than to the inconsequential election. After all, the villagers have no interest in election because what they care most is to make more money (Office of CCP Committee and Government of Laofanqiao township 1999b). Our study and analysis of more than 50 township government reports over the past few years found that while there are specifications about the present economic conditions as well as future plans, little emphasis is placed on the issues of village elections and autonomy. When the wording "promote the building-up of village committee and village autonomy" does appear, it is perfunctory.

9.3 Control and Manipulation by Township Authorities

In China, the overwhelming roles and powers of local governments often provide township leaders with enormous opportunities to control and manipulate elections. A Google search finds that there are 59,000 entries concerning manipulation of village elections by township leaders. This problem will be discussed in this section.

Control, intervention, and manipulation by the township government manifest in a number of ways. First, they make local laws and regulations supplementary to, and different from, provincial laws and regulations. For example, on the eve of the 1997 election in Fangcun township, two documents were issued: Implementing Regulations for Village Election in Fangcun

township and Essential Qualifications for Village Committee Members. Both documents were issued by the township's leading group running for the village election, and were in some way different from the provincial laws. This was the result of the township government's efforts to exercise control over the regulation of the election. Item 6 of the Qualifications, for instance, states that a candidate should "be active in carrying out all tasks set by the township party committee and government," therefore cooperation with the authorities becomes a key requirement for the candidate (Zhu Genghua 1997).

The second is the setting up of leading groups for village elections, through which the township authorities ensure more effective control over village elections. The leading group of Fangcun township, for example, was made up of 10 people, with the secretary of the township party committee acting as group leader, the township head and the chairman of the township people's congress serving as deputy leaders, and all the party committee members and deputy township heads as members. In terms of decision making, the group is effectively just another version of the township government. At the village level, all the 19 villages of Fangcun had the party secretary as head of the leading group running for election. There is no doubt, therefore, about the extent to which village elections are subject to the leadership and control of the township government (Zhu Genghua 1997).

Third, prior to an election, township party committee and government hold meetings attended by village leaders, particularly village party secretaries. In most cases, the meetings are also attended by in-village township cadres. The meetings have two purposes. One is to pass on directives from higher authorities on village elections. The other is to convey to village leaders the intentions of township authorities and to reach consensus with the secretaries on the candidates for village heads.

Take the meeting in Jiehu village, for example—at the beginning of the meeting, the attending township leader proposed a study of the document entitled Essential Qualifications for Village Committee Members and asked each nominee to measure himself against those qualifications. Those who did not meet the requirements were advised to withdraw from the election. As a result five people withdrew. Those who wished to nominate were also advised to consider the qualifications in advance. As a result, six other people gave up their nominations. Then the meeting began to comment on the remaining candidates, finally deciding that 11 of them should be referred to the township authorities for approval. During these discussions, the township leaders were able to convey the intentions of the authorities by saying "I think Comrade So-And-So is well qualified for a candidate." Such comments carried much weight. Five of the eleven candidates nominated by Jiehu village to the township authorities were decided in this way, and all were approved (Zhu Genghua 1997).

Fourth, township leaders can influence the attitude and behavior of the villagers through their authority and personal image. Some township leaders present themselves as the embodiment of power and ability in order to win the trust of the people, who will then vote according to the authorities' desire. A study by Zhu Genghua (1997) of Fangcun township shows that 67% of respondents would take into account, when voting, the relationship between the candidate and the township government and 73% would vote for candidates recommended by the government.

Fifth, township leaders often try by whatever means to influence and interfere with the nomination procedure. In Hefu village of Hefu township, candidates for the village committee had to go through four stages: nomination, recommendation, consultation and affirmation (Schiller 1996:174).[6] The township election regulations stipulate that the township government has the veto power. Those who have passed the consultation stage still need to get approval from the township government before they can become full candidates (Wang Ying 1998). Other township governments likewise have directives and regulations that ensure them the veto power over candidacy.

In the summers of 1998 and 1999, Bao Xiaofeng conducted two studies on village elections and village autonomy in Hexi village of Xiapu township, Ningbo municipality. He found that in that village any of the eligible voters could nominate a candidate. Following this the village committee would gather together all the subvillage heads, household representatives, and party member representatives to comment on the nominee. Then five of the nominees would be chosen and reports submitted to the township governments. This was the extent of the villagers' power. According to the regulations in that township, the village should then send the nominees' résumés to the government to be checked. Only then would the nominees become candidates (Bao Xiaofeng 1998). A study by Wang Liu (1998) in Qingjiang township indicates that with the exception only of Xuanci village, candidates in all villages needed to be nominated by the village party branch and approved by the township party committee.

A literacy test is another effective means of control. During the 1997 election in Xincheng, Ruian city, the township leaders asked the three candidates to sit a literacy test so that two of them could be selected as formal candidates. Ultimately, the two candidates with primary education qualifications passed while the one with junior high school education failed. This caused widespread skepticism and criticism among the villagers, and the township leaders were compelled to make the candidate with secondary education a formal candidate. He was elected by winning 85% of the votes.[7]

Some township authorities violated the villagers' rights to nominate candidates. In Liuao township of Sanmen county, the number of candidates in all previous village elections was the same as the number of available posts, and

candidates were all nominated by the village party branch and approved by township authorities before being presented for election to the villagers. In other words, the villagers were actually deprived of their right and opportunity to nominate candidates. Villagers in Chengzhou put it this way: "we have no more rights than the one to tick those handpicked by the leadership." My township survey indicates that up to 42.6% of the respondents think it better for the leadership to nominate candidates than for the villagers to do so.

In general, interference and control from township leaders varies according to different circumstances. Some are more direct, such as appointing a village head and vetoing a candidate, some are less direct, such as stipulating election rules and regulations, and others are even more subtle, such as cultivating a positive image of the leadership as a potential source of influence. The style of interference has moved from the direct to the less direct. This change of strategy corresponds to the change in the leadership's perception of and attitude toward elections, which has moved from opposition to passivity and then to active support.

Since the Organic Law came into effect in November 1998, interference from the township leadership in the nomination process has declined or has become more sophisticated. With the improvement of procedures, township leaders have lost their power to appoint/dismiss village heads. The institutional space and opportunity in which they are able to manipulate elections have gradually diminished. Increasingly some township leaders have not dared to ignore the procedures written in the new Organic Law in the fear that the media would expose the irregularities in the elections. Now they choose to comply with the rules on the surface, but are developing sophisticated ways of manipulating them behind the scene. In the earlier years, forms of manipulation included controlling information about electoral rules before elections, appointing candidates, limiting the rights of voters in choosing candidates, and using their own faction members as working groups. In recent years these practices have been challenged and regarded as illegal.

Township leaders have developed sophisticated forms of manipulation. For example, some leaders prefer to use the moving ballot box over the central polling station, for the former provides space and opportunity to influence voter's choice. In order to comply with the rule about multicandidates for competitive elections, local officials would select dummy candidates who obey the party and do not threaten the candidate favored by the party. They sometimes secretly and quietly persuade some candidates to give up so that the preferred candidate can win a majority of votes. They will choose certain members of the village election committee to fill the form for proxy votes (*Xiangzheng luntan*, no. 8, 2000:18). While promoting *haixuan*, the township would secretly mobilize more than 10 party members to nominate the candidate they prefer. When *haixuan* breaks down the monopoly of the party

organization to nominate candidates, village party secretaries control the selection and election of village representatives because doing so would enable them to exert a significant amount of influence on the village representative assembly, thus maintaining their dominant position in the village power structure.

Despite township leaders adopting many secret and manipulative measures, they must nevertheless respect the preference of a majority of villagers. This is their "bottom line," which is predefined by electoral rules. If they do not respect the villagers' preference, their favored candidates will lose the elections. As one official said, "it is now impossible to enforce the preference of the Party Organization. We have to comply with electoral rule and use our resources to support the candidates whom we prefer and at the same time who are able to get support from a majority of villagers. This is a new game of politics which we have to learn to play."[8]

9.4. The Emergence of Democratic Machiavellianism

Township governments have been under democratic pressure. Villagers have been resisting the manipulation of elections by township leaders, particularly, the direct appointment of a village head. In 1998, the government of Qianshuo township, Taizhou municipality, bypassed the election and appointed someone as head of a Qianshuo village. The villagers were angered by the appointment and resisted it. In July 1998, the Chinese central television reported the incident in its popular program *Issues in Focus*. In the end, the township authorities revoked the appointment and let the villagers elect the new village committee.

Attempts by township leaders to manipulate village elections have sometimes failed. The candidates nominated by party organization were often not good enough to win elections. In the 1995 election in Songlin village, for example, the township leaders were surprised by the result because their handpicked candidate was beaten by someone else. The township authorities' efforts to control the election had come to nothing. Unable to dismiss the unwanted elected village head, township leaders had to tolerate him for three years before the next election in 1998. Then to the dismay of the authorities, the village head got reelected.[9] In the 1997 election of Xiacun village of Tangxia township, the township government supported the reelection of the village head. Their partiality toward this course of action was revealed by the double standard the government adopted with the two candidates. To vote on behalf of others, a written form of trust was needed in the case of the disfavoured candidate, but it was not needed by the sitting village head. Many villagers were so angered by the double standard that they refused to

cast their ballots. There were frictions between villagers and the township government. At one stage the government even sent the police force into the village. But eventually, the government gave way to the angry villagers and treated both candidates equally.[10] In Zeguo, the township leaders did not like very much the six candidates but had resign to the fact when all six were elected as village heads in 2004 election.[11]

The general attitude of local government leaders toward village elections has undergone a subtle change from outright opposition to passive acceptance and then to active support. Active support comes from a kind of pragmatism. The attitudes of township leaders such as those in Shaoxing, Fenghua, Yuyao, and other municipalities of Zhejiang province has changed dramatically, and they now hold the view that village elections can be the most effective way to solve tough problems in the village. Without a village election, these problems would just pile up.[12] Such views were supported by Qiu Zhengjung in his 1999 summer study of village elections in Chengzhou municipality. An election provides a good chance for township authorities to solve certain problems (Qiu Zhengjung 1999). The previous highly manipulated election had been unpopular among villagers, with the result that there was a lack of support on the part of villagers for village work. Owing to its unpopularity, the village committee tended to be so incompetent that the township leaders frowned upon it. Now with *haixuan* in the election, villagers are happy with their chosen committee as are the leaders who ultimately want a committee that is capable of fulfilling the various tasks set by the township government. Having compared the *haixuan*-elected committee with the previous handpicked one, township leaders find that *haixuan* is good for producing a more competent village committee.

Here I would like to suggest that "democratic Machiavellianism" takes place in rural China. The concept of democratic Machiavellianism denotes a special behavior and attitude on the part of township leaders: they try to learn the new rules of the game under the authority of electoral procedure although they personally may not like electoral laws. It is "democratic" because the township leaders have to follow electoral laws and their working style must be accommodated to the new democratic rule. It is "Machiavellian" because they have to ensure stability through clever and resourceful political skills; and they are forced to strengthen authority through certain liberties, and to achieve unity within diversity.

The practice of village elections has produced the man of democratic Machiavellianism who is fundamentally concerned with stability, authority, and unity through skilful employment of democratic procedure or means. This is because some elections indeed promote stability, but others may lead to chaos, increase the tension between the party secretary and elected village heads and between different lineages, and create mass tyranny. In other

words, a badly organized village election may lead to chaos. Thus a balance between liberty and authority, diversity and unity is needed and the man of democratic Machiavellianism is called for to strike such a balance in the practice of village elections.

The concept of democratic Machiavellianism is against democratic idealism that sees democratization as a process of achieving democratic ideas without being polluted by the consideration of material interests. It shows that Chinese pragmatism is at work in the sense that local elites are "seduced" into the democratic camp for the utilitarian rewards that elections bring. They are now trying to learn how to exercise new political control, and how to technically deal with local democracy issues, while they do their best, at least on the surface, not to violate electoral laws and regulations. Democratic Machiavellianism has improved political techniques of control. Behind this new development was the triumph of electoral democracy, and the supremacy of electoral laws that township leaders do not dare to challenge, and from which villagers can take advantage.

9.5 Conclusion

The chapter has examined the various roles played by local governments in the election process. Township leaders not only organize elections but also make the rules and implement the election laws. More important, they act as coordinator, arbiter, and general troubleshooter when a dispute occurs. They have played complex and diverse roles, which cannot be classified simply as "negative." They not only make village elections possible but also contribute to their development. In other cases they seek to control and manipulate elections. Without an understanding of the complex roles played by local elites, we cannot understand the development of village elections. Of particular significance is the genesis of a new figure—the democratic Machiavellian—who discovers democratic procedure such as *haixuan* to be an effective way to reduce costs and exercise political control. When democracy meets the Chinese Machiavellian, rural village democracy has a rosy future. When the Chinese Machiavellian manipulates village elections, village democracy is seriously challenged.

CHAPTER 10

Political Economy of Village Democracy

There are different, sometime conflicting, conclusions in the Western scholarship concerning the relations between economic development and democracy.[1] In the 1950s, Lipset (1959) hypothesized connections between economic development (a high level of wealth or capitalist development and a market economy) and democratization. However, the breakdown of new democratic institutions in the 1960s challenged Lipset's hypothesis. This was reflected in the writings of the 1970s, for example, in the works of Rustow (1970). In recent years, however, Lipset has defended his thesis by using the democratization data of the 1980s. He stresses that economic development encourages pluralism and raises standards of living and educational levels, and that new democracies are likely to fail if they are poor. In a note of caution he suggests that the correlation may be much lower when using 1990s data, because of the end of the cold war (as third world dictators could no longer play off the Soviet Union against the West), international support for human rights and democracy, and IMF policy (Lipset 1994).

The above theories are generated from national level democratization; the validity of the application of them to China's village democracy must be questioned because the microconditions of village democracy are different from the macroconditions of national democracy. To understand the impact of the village economy on rural democracy, we must look at the specific economic conditions at village level, for example, village wealth and village enterprises; we cannot adopt GDP as a useful indicator for village democracy here. Nevertheless it would be interesting to find out whether some regularities and patterns concerning the relationship between economic development and

national democracy might be confirmed or rejected by Chinese practice of village democracy.

Western Sinologists and Chinese scholars offer different views with regard to the question of how economy affects village elections. O'Brien (1994:47) finds that the implementation of the Organic Law is more likely to be successful in relatively rich villages than in poor ones. In contrast, Susan Lawrence notices, "it was precisely because the villages were so unmanageable, and performing so poorly economically, that local authorities felt the need to experiment with new forms of village governance" (Lawrence 1994:67). Still, Wang Zhenyao,[2] Xu Yong (1997a), and Gadsden (1996:419) contend that both rich and poor provinces (e.g., Guangdong and Tibet) have poor records of village election, while provinces that are at the middle level of economic development such as Fujian have developed their elections more successfully. For Anne Thurston (1998:20–27 and 33–39) there are four patterns of different combinations of economic and political factors: development with dictatorship in Daqiu village, democracy and patronage in Wugang village, no development—no democracy in the River village, and democratization with development in Fujian villages.

J. Oi (1996:140; also see Oi and Rozelle 2000:513–39) suggests, "there may be an inverse relationship between level of economic development and progress in the implementation of democratic village rule." Tianjian Shi's (1999c:425) finding shows that the relationship between economic development and village elections appears to be a concave curve: economic wealth increases the likelihood of a village holding semicompetitive elections, but its impact diminishes as economic wealth increases. Zheng Yongnian (1997), nevertheless, argues that the level of economic development is irrelevant to the development of village elections simply because the elections are imposed from above. It is the willingness, action, and strategies of leadership that largely decide the implementation of village election policy. Following the same line of thinking, Shi (1999c:425) contends that rapid economic development may even delay the process of political development because incumbent leaders can use newly acquired economic resources to bribe their superiors to ignore decisions of the central government to introduce competitive election into the villages. They can also use those resources to co-opt villagers and to make villagers more dependent on the village authority.

One of the deficiencies in current studies of village election is the lack of clear definition in some of the terms used. Among others, the terms "economic development" and "village elections" refer to different things when used by different people. Hence there is confusion arising from different variables and criteria. One, for instance, argues that economic development creates more difficulties for village elections, because a rich village is able to offer high salaries to the chief in addition to other benefits. As a result, village elections

become so competitive that none of the candidates gets enough votes to be elected.[3] The failure to elect village chiefs is seen as a serious problem. Here the criterion for a *good* election is the *successful* election of a village chief, rather than fairness or competitiveness of the election. In other words, the judgment here is based on whether the election can produce a village chief and a leading body. It should be noted that many official Chinese documents contain or imply such a criterion for the assessment of village elections. On the other hand, there are scholars who emphasize competition as a yardstick for a good election even with a failure of electing a village chief.

To find a remedy to the above deficiency, the chapter will first make a number of conceptual distinctions. "Economic conditions," a general term with various meanings, will be divided into the demand for economic development, the level of economic development, the type of village economy, village wealth, and the level of family income. And the general question of village election can be specified in the following ways: What is the level of political participation? How does the introduction of village election relate to economic conditions? Is it much easier to implement village election laws in richer villages than in poor ones? Does the demand for economic development necessarily exclude the demand for village democracy? How does political economy influence the politics of village citizenship? Is there a correlation between the level of economic development and of political participation and competition? Does the type of village economy have any impact on the level of political participation and competition? Does the level of family income contribute to the level of political participation and competition? Do elected village committees and village representative assemblies rely on the economic conditions in the village?

Chapters 4 and 5 have touched upon the topic concerning the impact of economic conditions on the competitiveness of village elections and on participation. This chapter will continue to examine the impact of economic conditions on participation, the working of village committee, and the working of village representative assembly. Its methods include survey work, statistical description and testing, case study, and a political economic approach (Baogang He 2001). The chapter not only studies how the economy influences elections, but also pays special attention to the influence of politics on the relationship between the economy and elections. It is insufficient to study the relationship between election and the economy without taking politics into account.

10.1 Economic Development and the Implementation of Village Election Laws

Despite the claims to the contrary, the implementation of village election does have various linkages with economic factors such as financing capacity

of the center, economic development, the mode of distribution, and the rise of the new rich. At the national level, there is a close association between economic development and the introduction of village election. The institutionalization of self-governing village committee was owing to the collapse of the People Commune System and to the state's inability to provide a huge financial payment of between 6.3 billion and 17.5 billion yuan for village cadres (Sheng Yansheng 1998). The dismantling of the commune system and subsequent organizational vacuum, the corruption of local cadres and the serious tension between cadres and villagers, the heavy burden and associated peasants' resistance and protest (Lu Xiaobo 1997:113–38) all contributed to an unstable rural China and make necessary a new method of control on the part of the center.

Village election was adopted by the central leaders as one of several options to regain the legitimacy for the CCP's rule in the countryside (Wang Xu 1997). The central leadership sees village democracy as having some advantages: helping to achieve stability and maintaining social order, reducing the expense of state's revenue on local governments, controlling corrupt local cadres, developing a new model of political mobilization, and strengthening the authority of the party/state.

At the local level, it is often said that local economic development demands an able, upright, and authoritarian local leadership, and villagers' desire to become rich overrides their demand for democracy. Thus there seems to be a trade-off between democracy and development: villagers' demand for money overrides the demand for democracy. The poor villagers would like to get rich even at the expense of village elections. The economic rationalization empowers the local party boss to control economic organizations and enterprises, thus decreasing the power of village committee (Chen Weixing 1999:129). When local economic development requires the centralization of power, election may become an obstacle to the development of village economy (Zheng Yongnian 1994:235–59). Once a higher level of economic development is achieved, it provides a source of legitimacy for the village cadres and undermines the efforts in search for electoral source of legitimacy.

The above view contains some truth. For example, the Organic Law has not been well implemented in poor and underdeveloped villages (O'Brien 1994; Chen Weixing 1999:128–30). In poor villages where villagers always delay or resist paying taxes and various fees, township leaders do not dare to allow or encourage open competitive elections because candidates tend to promise not to collect taxes and fees in order to win elections. In one village, one candidate won election through his promise that taxes and fees would be waived if he were elected.[4]

The argument that economic development does not favor village democracy, however, does not hold in a long term. In a situation where a village economy

faces difficulty or even crisis, to appeal to economic performance as a way to gain legitimacy does not work. As a result, in some cases, election is called for to provide a political legitimacy. In another situation where a village reaches certain level of development and its wealth accumulates, villagers demand public accountability.

The political economy of democratic transition literature reveals that economic crisis and corruption are a triggering factor leading to democratization (Haggard and Kaufman 1995). The causal mechanism is that economic crisis and corruption eventually lead to massive protests, and the institution of democratic processes is used as a way to ease protests and find a way out of crisis. In villages where the development relies on a few able men who are successful in building the village economy, these able persons usually run village affairs in an authoritarian way; and these authoritarian village leaders are easily prone to corruption and misuse of village funds and wealth, leading to the ruin of these villages.[5]

Take, for example, Guangdong. Since the 1980s, Guangdong government appointed village heads to perform administrative duties. The appointment system delayed village elections and democracy. It added to the tension between villagers and villager leaders, and created a serious problem of corrupt and unequal redistribution of village wealth. When a village has accumulated enormous wealth, say from compensation payments for land, it is necessary to put village leaders under the supervision of the people and institute a degree of accountability (*South China Morning Post*, November 19, 1999). To remedy these problems, a democratic system is called for, and village affairs should, it is argued, be managed in accordance with the rule of law. As a result, Guangdong abandoned the appointment practice and started to implement direct village election laws in 1998.

S. Huntington (1991) emphasizes the level of wealth in understanding the democratization; Oi and Rozelle (2000) stress the importance of the source of income; here I would like to highlight that *the mode of distribution of wealth* is as important as the level and source of income. It is observed that if village leaders distribute village wealth equally in a paternalistic manner, villagers' demand for election will decrease. In contrast, when inequality in distribution of village wealth is significant, in particular, when corruption as a mode of distribution of village wealth in favor of village cadres is serious and rampant, disadvantaged villagers see election offered by the central government as an opportunity to demand a relatively equal distribution of village wealth. Retired soldiers, the young, or those with high school education, and experienced political and business activists demand village election because they want relatively equal distribution of collective wealth and a certain control over village affairs that are fundamental to their interests. Poor villagers see elections as a way of gaining a little benefit (up to 60 yuan for a

vote), and as a mechanism to advance their interests. Although some villagers may *say* that they do not care about village election, they do welcome and support fair and genuine election whereby they have a voice and input in the village decision making.

One example is Chendong village of Fuyang, where villagers had questioned the way the village money was spent in building, for example, a 350,000-yuan market square and 200,000-yuan gymnasium. A village representative assembly was subsequently established to allow villagers to have dialogues with village leaders and to promote a relationship of mutual trust between villagers and cadres.[6]

10.2 Political Economy of Village Citizenship

Economic interests and incentives have played a significant role in defining village citizenship. Fighting for village membership or status occurs as villagers become increasingly concerned with their material interests and benefits in the context of rapid economic development. Economic development, marketization, and urbanization constitute the backdrop of village citizenship. The market economy and rapid economic growth have led some villages to become extremely wealthy. This has created incentives for villagers to fight for a share of the collective wealth. In a market economy, some villages have also developed village enterprises that need extra labor. As village leaders open up jobs for outsiders and contract some projects out, the emergence of migrant laborers in the countryside has raised the question of whether migrant workers should enjoy rights to vote and entitlements to village wealth and welfare. This has raised fears that they might even be able to gain control of the village through election processes and new-found wealth. All these political and economic phenomena have challenged the physical and conceptual boundaries of the village and rendered their fixed nature problematic.

10.2.1 Landownership as the Basis for Village Citizenship

In a comparative context, Popkin (1979:55) found that "a lack of land may mean not only denial of credit, but second-class citizenship as well" in Vietnam. In Thailand, Potter (1976) found that landless individuals were "really not full citizens of the community" and were "not considered of much account at village meetings." In villages of Northern Italy between the thirteenth and the ninteenth century, village citizenship rules were established to protect property rights against outsider. The legal title to the common land and a form of village citizenship transformed the legal status of

forests and pastures from open to closed access (Casari 2000). In India, all village residents enjoyed the legal right to communal resources. Nevertheless, in recent years, legal rights have been based either on membership (as in the state-initiated groups) or on rules specified by specific communities (Agarwal 2001:4).

Chinese village citizenship is based on collective ownership of land (Potter and Potter 1990:252–62). The ownership of land is so important that it is the most essential characteristic of a villager. In early PRC history and in the current reform era, villagers' identity and membership have been closely linked to the land. After the 1949 Land Reform, peasants became owners of the land and other means of production. The establishment of cooperatives and people's communes also entailed establishment of a collective ownership system, in which the peasants were entitled both to the land and the collective wealth yielded from the land. Under the collective system all villagers, men and women, old and young, enjoyed rights over the collective wealth. Differences among villagers regarding these rights were matters of degree rather than quality. While some people might have more and others less, there was no serious difference between the haves and have-nots. Collective land-based interests and benefits formed dividing lines both between rural and urban societies, and within the rural, differentiating one village from another. These interests and benefits were distributed only among members of a certain village community. Without a collective consensus, an outsider, individual, and organization alike could by no means share or take any part in collective village wealth.

Collective land ownership has remained unchanged despite the emergence of the household-based production model in China's reform era. Changes in modes of production did not eliminate common interest on the basis of the village's collective land. Even in villages where land uses have changed with economic development to accommodate industrial zones or residential areas, this sense of common interest has not disappeared. Furthermore, ownership of land distinguishes a villager from a nonvillager, bringing with it acceptance as a member of the collective, with full rights to land and land-related benefits as well as to management of village affairs.

Viewed in this light, village citizenship is significant. In the more developed coastal areas and in inland areas where urbanization has started to show its effects, the land has become even more valuable, living standards higher, and transportation easier. In these areas, village membership has in turn become more desirable, appealing to migrant workers, nonresident investors, those who in earlier times had left the village to become government employees, as well as laid-off urban workers and unemployed, who all have an eye on the benefits associated with village membership. Village members and officials, by contrast, have sought to carefully balance the costs and benefits from their

standpoint, welcoming investors, paying migrant workers, and generously rewarding those who have made significant contributions to the local economy. They nevertheless tend to be cautious in according such outsiders full rights and benefits of village citizenship.

10.2.2 The Separation Approach

One increasingly adopted approach in settling disputes over village citizenship is to separate villager's economic right from voter status and to distinguish a villager (*cunmin*) from a voter (*xuanmin*). A villager is generally referred to as a natural person who resides and has household registration in the village. He/She could be a young person under 18 or an adult 18 years or over, who therefore may or may not have full rights in elections. A villager who is deprived of political rights is still a villager. A voter, on the other hand, is defined more narrowly. To become an eligible voter in the village, one must meet a number of conditions. Following this distinction, some villages make a differential policy. While married-out women who managed to retain their household registration in their home village are denied the right to vote, their children are entitled to village benefits, but do not have the right to vote.

There is also a distinction between a villager and a citizen. "Citizen" is a legal concept, referring to someone having the nationality of a country, enjoying the rights granted by the national constitution and laws while undertaking corresponding responsibilities. Within the village, a villager and a citizen mean practically the same—a villager is a citizen and vice versa. Outside the village, however, the concept of citizen goes beyond that of villager. This is because "citizen" covers not only villagers in a particular village, but also anyone who holds Chinese nationality. For this reason, migrant workers, as Chinese citizens, are entitled to vote everywhere within China, but are not entitled to village welfare. In my field trips to several villages, I found that those who lived and grew rice in the village for more than 3–5 years are in fact granted the right to vote, but denied the economic right to village welfare.[7] A person who has political rights is not necessarily entitled to economic benefits because the right to vote is granted for political reasons. Village self-governing rights are inherently linked to village collective economy and have certain boundaries.

Solutions to disputes over village citizenship tend to exhibit a pattern, although there are regional and local variations. Married-out women usually lose the right to vote and economic rights although they deliberately retain their household registration in their home village. By contrast, migrant workers who have made substantial contributions to the village economy have increasingly gained their right to vote. For example, on December 8, 2001, in Dacheng township, Yiwu city, Zhejiang province, 5,000 migrant workers were,

for the first time, allowed to cast their vote in the local election for deputies, and 7 migrant workers were elected as people's deputies (*Zhejiang Daily*, December 8, 2001). Nevertheless, new regulations now separate the right to vote from rights to previously accumulated collective wealth, so that immigrants' voting rights can be guaranteed without violating villagers' economic rights.

The separation approach is likely to face challenges in the near future. Voting rights sooner or later lead to demands for economic rights. For example, migrants who contest and win elections to become village head, deputy head, or members of village committees are likely to demand that village policy about who is entitled to village welfare be changed.

10.3 Collective versus Private Economy and Village Democracy

Village democracy was conceptualized as a "collective democracy" (Shih 1999). It is believed that village democracy is based on collective economy. There are two models of collective economy according to Professor Xiang Jiquan's (2002) study of three cases—Nanjie village in Henan province, Xianggao village in Shandong, and Fangjiaquan village in Ganshu. Xianggao and Fangjiaquan villages represent a neocollectivism, a cooperative model in which the collective to a great degree is based on individual needs and interests. By contrast, the collective model of Nanjie is Maoist neotraditionalism that stresses on the collective and public interests at the expense of personal and individual interests and concerns. Under this model of neotraditionalism individual rights and interests could be significantly violated. The model places little value upon democracy. In addition, since the village functions like a welfare state, the individual depends heavily upon the collective for any economic goods, and has developed a dependent personality. Political participation by a modern autonomous citizen is unlikely to occur in this case. The economic success of Nanjie goes hand in hand with a tight political control as shown in its semimilitary camp. The lack of democratic governance mirrors South Korea or Taiwan in the 1960s–1980s, which under authoritarian rules had witnessed great economic success.

The "neocollectivism" model of Xianggao and Fangjiaquan means the recognition of the individual interests. Political participation there is based on individual interests. In other words, it seeks a reconciliation of the collective and the individual, recognizing there is justification in the latter's concern with individual interests. Indeed in Fangjiaquan individual and private economy coexists with the collective economy despite the latter's dominance in the village property structure.

In all the three villages it is the party secretary who makes decisions, though he/she usually does so after discussions and consultations. In terms of village

election, the election for the village committee has been actually abandoned in Nanjie. In Xianggao and Fangjiaquan, the village committee still comes out of an election, but the candidates are chosen and nominated by the party organizations, and elections lack competition.

In Nanjie the village committee has practically ceased to work, as has the village representative meeting. In Xianggao and Fangjiaquan, the village committee sometimes joins the same meeting as the party branch, but plays a limited role. In these villages the institutions of the villagers' meeting and the village representative meeting have disappeared.

Nanjie favors the Maoist practice of mass meetings. Thousands were gathered at each of the several meetings convened during a rectification campaign in 1994–1995. Participation of this kind is public interest–oriented, rejecting any particular concerns with individual interests. The case in Xianggao and Fangjiaquan is different, however, in that concerns for self-interest are allowed as motivations for political participation while public-interest–oriented participation is encouraged.

In short, none of the three villages has much to show in terms of democratic governance at the village level, with Nanjie the least. Findings of Xiang's study have shown how problematic the "collective democracy" advocated by some Chinese intellectuals and officials can be, as evidenced by the three villages, none of which has done well in terms of democratic governance. By contrast, in the economically better-developed areas with revitalizing private economy, such as Wenzhou, village elections are often highly competitive. In these areas the entrepreneurs and the new rich are important driving forces, and village representative assemblies or meetings are playing an increasingly more important role.

The impact of a dominant private economy on village election is very complex. In Wenzhou, where the private economy prevails, villagers press for the adoption of free-market principles and no intervention from the village leadership. In Baitan, a village dominated by the private economy and possessing wealth of over 100 million yuan, and where most villagers are engaged in private business, village cadres are regarded as "loafers" (Lu Fuying 1998:17). A free economy and individual pursuit of their interests favor limited village governance at village level.[8]

Market economy and private ownership empower individual entrepreneurs who usually demand and defend their autonomy and who tend to challenge the monopoly of the village party secretary. Villagers who have their own business have learnt a lot about the market economy, together with advanced know-how and the latest information. Village elections provide them with a good opportunity to voice their opinions, defend their interests, and influence the village decision-making process. Private entrepreneurs also demand more public goods and facilities to be provided by the villages. In

fact whether the dominant economy is private or collective, villagers today increasingly demand better public facilities such as roads leading to the highway, access to running water and electricity, educational and health care facilities, and welfare for the old. Villagers are also concerned about whether village-owned houses receive fair rent. Village election thus provides villagers an institutional channel whereby they can have a voice and where they can express their concern.

Rueschemeyer et al. (1992) examine the relationship between capitalism and democracy and argue that capitalist development is important for democratization because it transforms the balance of class power. In the case of China, village private enterprise, a sort of primitive "capitalism," has created the structural impetus for political inclusion. Rural industrialization creates a pluralist society with a diversity of lifestyles and various means of making a living and gaining income. Economic development has helped raise the level of education and cultural activities. More importantly, economic development has created a new pluralist economic structure with the coexistence of private and collective ownership and new social groups and classes. In particular, the new rich class demands political inclusion and welcomes and supports democratic reform as one way of rotating village power. Village election provides them an opportunity to gain access to the existing power structure, and a new channel through which to get involved in, and even control, village affairs. In some cases, when party secretaries manipulate the election process, the new rich use their economic wealth to break down the political monopoly and contribute to the competition in the elections. This makes me formulate the phrase "No new rich, no true competition, therefore no village democracy," similar to Barrington Moore's maxim of "no bourgeoisie, no democracy." It should be noted that the new rich demands election not for the sake of democratic value, but because they see the possibility of taking advantage of it.

10.4 Family Income, the Type of Village Economy and Participation

The relationship between the level of economic development and political participation is an intriguing question. Does this relationship appear linear, concave curve, or inverse? It seems that all three relationships exist in different situations and contexts.

Economic factors such as village wealth influence the level of political participation. The high rate of turnout in Chinese village elections, usually above 90%, is well known. But money, among others, is a significant factor contributing to the high turnout rate. Villagers generally get from 5 to 60 yuan as a reward, or compensation for lost labor (*wugongfei*); and an average family

can take home more than a 100 yuan.[9] This practice is widespread in Zhejiang, but has stopped in some villages recently. Moreover, if a poor village cannot offer allowance for those who go to the ballot, villagers sometimes send just a family member to vote on behalf of all eligible voters in the family.[10] For example, Shunxi is an underdeveloped township, mountainous and difficult to access. Neither the township nor its villages have much in terms of village business, collective economy, and assets. With little interest in the election, many households simply send a family member to cast all the votes. In addition, in one village where the village debt has become a serious problem (the total debt is 1 million yuan and each villager owes 1,000 yuan), election is seen as an extra burden and villagers' participation is extremely low.[11] Most villagers' personal visits and letters to the Department of Civic Affairs to complain about the irregularities of elections are observed to have come from relatively rich areas, and none from poor areas.

The family income influences the attitudes of villagers toward "selling" their votes. In my interview with various villagers, I found that poor villagers tend to be more willing to sell their "vote," at the price of about 20 yuan. But those who are rich seem to be more likely to refuse to sell their votes.

There is a complex relationship between the family income[12] and villagers' understanding of electoral law. On the one hand, there is no linear relation between family income and the choices, "known well," "known generally," and "some knowledge," under the category "understanding of electoral law." In other words, it is not true that the higher one's family income is, the more knowledge one has about law. On the other hand, there is indeed a direct relation between family income and the choice of "don't know." In other words, the lower one's family income is, the more likelihood one will choose "don't know."

The level of family income seems to have a concave curve relationship with the level of political participation.[13] I look at family incomes and compare these with participation index (see section 5.1). What I see quite clearly is a trend: The higher the income, the higher the participation scores. If family income increases by 10,000, then participation scores increase by 5. Here is a positive relationship. But when the family income reaches 35,000, the participation index drops. This confirms the finding of Gadsden (1996) and Shi (1999c) that the relationship between economic development and village elections appears to be a concave curve although Shi's indicator of election is competition while mine is participation score.

In the analysis below I will investigate the possible influence of the type of village economic structure or environment on participation index. All records are divided into three groups in terms of the main economic type of the village where a record was first made. Taking the actual economic situation in the survey areas—private economy prevailed in Wenzhou, collective enterprise

dominated in Shaoxin, and some villages of Lishui and Shanmen are still mainly engaged in agricultural activities—the respondents were asked to identify the dominant pattern of their village economy, including the number of enterprises in the village. Three types of economy are identified: collective, private, and agricultural. The distinction between collective and private is not simply according to ownership, for in reality some private enterprises may be disguised as "collective" ownership enterprise.[14] Agricultural economy is the largest group in the three economies, taking up two-thirds of records collected from the survey. About 250 records come from private type of economy. Collective type is the smallest group with slightly over 100 entries. There are 34 missing records, whose economic type cannot be identified, and whose mean of participation score is the highest (12.2). The mean of participation index for each group are summarized in table 10.1.

The group with a collective economy has the highest mean, but the mean gap between collective and private is less than 1.0. The mean of the agricultural group is further down. We notice that all the standard deviation of the three groups is quite large compared with the difference between means. The agricultural group has the narrowest distribution, which greatly influences the overall distribution of the participation index.

To find out whether the impact of the type of village economy on the participation index is significant statistically, it is necessary to compare these means and test the significance of the difference between them. I conduct a one-way analysis of variance first, which allows me to statistically test whether the mean of participation index for the three groups is significantly different from each other. In other words, I am testing the null hypothesis that all of the three means are equal. I then compare each individual mean separately, using the independent sample t-test.

Both one- and two-tailed tests indicate consistently that there exists no difference between the collective and private groups in this regard. But, the null hypothesis about the collective and agricultural economies (as well as between private and agricultural economy) is *rejected* at 0.5% level. The statistical

Table 10.1 Participation Index in Different Types of Economy

Type of Economy	*Mean*	*Number*
Collective	11.66	110
Private	10.91	261
Agriculture	9.97	840
Missing	12.2	34
Total	11.19	1245

testing suggests that the economic environment of the village influences the participating activities of an elector where he/she belongs. An elector from a village where agricultural economic activity prevails tends to have a low participation index, compared with an elector from the other two groups.

One explanation of the above statistical difference is that villagers have much more material interest in collective-dominated villages than agriculture-dominated villages. This is simply because the collective dominated villages are relatively rich and have accumulated a certain level of wealth, and village wealth constitutes a more important source of villagers' family income. In contrast, villages where an agricultural economy dominates are relatively poor and offer little incentives for people to run for the post and for villagers to involve in village election. In other words, when a village is largely engaged in agricultural activities and is so poor that it cannot provide basic public goods and distribute benefits to the villagers, villagers have little incentive to participate in village election. In an agriculture-dominated economy, most villagers are more interested in making money, and have more incentives in earning money than in engaging in the politics of the village. It is the type of economy that influences the level of economic development and condition in the village, which in turn impact the interest relation between villagers and villages, and their participation in village election.

The above finding differs from Oi and Rozelle's (2000:528 and 534) finding that an agricultural village without village enterprise tends to have a higher level of participation and competition in election. They argue, "in an agricultural village, the welfare of the household is closely tied to its access to land. Since land issues—by law and in practice—are under the control of an office open to competitive election, villagers will have an incentive to participate in local assemblies and to contest elections" (Oi and Rozelle 2000:534). The argument can be held true and be improved if we distinguish two different situations—rice-only-growing-land and cash-and-job-generating-land.[15] In agricultural villages where villagers grow only rice in lands as their main source of food and income, and if they are far from town or cities and have difficulty accessing markets, they are often poor and characterized by a low level of income. In these places, the villagers' participation in the election is accordingly low. In particular, when the lands are unproductive, and subsequently less attractive for villagers, many of them are likely to leave their lands to go to the cities. As a result, these villagers seem to be less interested in participatory politics. But in situations where lands fetch a price either through leasing or sales, or even through compensation payment for the public or commercial use of village land, the price of these lands will skyrocket, for example, land in Wenzhou brought villagers huge sums of money and job opportunities. Village committees in these places will thus try to increase their power to redistribute village incomes and opportunities. The result is,

the struggle for power to control and use land intensifies, and villagers become more and more interested in village election and affairs. In such a situation, villagers tend to have a higher level of political participation.

10.5 Economic Conditions and the Village Committee

This microstudy of village democracy confirms the macroconclusion made by Haggard and Kaufman (1995) that democracy is more likely to survive when economic development grows (Przeworski et al. 1997:296–97). Here I would like to pursue this issue by looking for three aspects of the working of village committee. First, can villages elect their village committees? Second, will elected village committees stay in their posts? Third, will elected village committee do their due works? All these three are relative to economic conditions.

While it is well known that politically the village committee is a self-governing body, it should be emphasized that economically it is self-funding and self-managing. The government budget does not include any funding for village committees. In this context, we can easily understand the local official's emphasis that the village economy is key factor that affects the attitude and activities of candidates for the village committee.[16]

Rich villages often have a "smooth" election in the sense that they have no problem in electing village chiefs, and many people in these villages have the desire to run for seats on the village committee. When we turn to the poorer villages, we can find a remarkable contrast. Although poor villages can introduce election under pressure from both above and below, the working of elected village committee relies on economic development and a certain level of wealth. There is little incentive for holding village committee positions because they mean nothing but payless work and extra responsibility. For example, in Shunxi township, Pingyang county, situated in a mountain area and without a collective economy, village chiefs are only paid a so-called compensation fee of 100–150 yuan/month. Our statistics from Wuyun county shows that of 37 villages, 6 failed to elect village committee members. In all the six villages the annual family income is under 2,000 yuan. A typical problem in the Dongyang elections in 1999 was that not enough candidates passed the mark. The election of village chiefs, in particular, was often unsuccessful. Among the 1,240 villages that have completed their elections, the required numbers of candidates were elected in only 614 (49.5%). In 48 villages (3.87%), not enough candidates were elected to fill all the positions on the committees; and in 442 villages (36%), the election failed to produce a chief; 709 villages elected enough committee members other than the chiefs; while 531 failed to do so.

Economic factors, among other things, also contributed to the attitude of village chiefs toward their post. In one of our surveys, village chiefs were asked

Table 10.2 The Desire to Continue to be Village Chief

Answers	*No. of Respondents*	*Percentage*
Strong Wish	15	13.5
No Wish	17	15.3
Wish if Elected	67	60.4
Indifferent	11	9.9
No Response	1	0.9
Total	111	100.0

whether they would like to remain in their positions as village chiefs. Of the 111 village chiefs, 60 % said they would if reelected; 15% did not want to continue; and 10% said it made no difference one way or the other (see table 10.2). There exists a correlation between those indifferent toward the post of village chief and their family income. Among those who are indifferent, 72.2% have a low family annual income of less than 3,000 yuan.

A healthy economy is essential for the proper functioning of village committee and village elections. If the village economy is so poor that it cannot provide village leaders with basic income, the elected village committee cannot function normally. For example, in 1993, when village cadres of 10 villages in Haining did not receive their entitled salaries because of deficits in the village budget, they performed poorly in their work. Moreover, these villages were poor and the cadres did not establish profitable village enterprises; their popularity among villagers fell. This added to the malfunction of village committees. The malfunction of village committee also takes place in other situations where villagers in poor villages tend to refuse or delay paying their taxes and fees. This leads to the resignation of village chiefs or committee members who are expected to collect taxes and fees.

In Xiangshan county, most village cadres in poor villages prefer to start their own business rather than stay in villages duty-bound. One study shows 171 cadres failing to perform their duty when they left their villages to do business elsewhere. Among them, 92 are party secretaries and 79 village chiefs, with the latter constituting 10.7% of total village chiefs in the county. Also there are 26 villages with both the party secretary and village chief doing business outside the villages (Pan, Wang, and Huang 1994).

In other words, how the village committee functions depends on money. With a poor economy, a village committee is unable to provide public services such as drinking water and schooling. When they fail to do so, they lose the support of villagers. In contrast, the well-developed economy of Dongcheng, Haining, had enabled the village committee to construct a 720 square meter village school, install a water supply system, and provide

welfare for the elders (60 yuan for a male above 60 of age or a female above 55).[17] In short, the above findings do not support Allen Choate's (1997:15) general conclusion that "village committees have taken greater hold and are treated with more seriousness in the poor regions rather than in the wealthier areas of China."

10.6 Political Economy of the VRAs: Mobilization versus Distribution Models

Through my fieldwork in Zhejiang and Hubei, I have identified two models of how VRAs function—mobilization versus distribution, and together, these two models suggest that VRAs under different economic and political conditions work in different ways. While the distribution model is derived from some rich villages in Zhejiang, the mobilization model is from poor villages in both Zhejiang and Hubei.[18]

10.6.1 Mobilization Model

In the mobilization model, the village has limited collective resources, and when there is a public welfare project, money, materials, or manpower has to be collected or levied from individual villagers. Since village democracy means that village cadres cannot get resources by force, they turn to more democratic means such as meeting with the village representatives as well as soliciting support from influential kinships, factions, and friends in the village. In some villages, there might be individuals who are not cadres but have influence in the village; when necessary, village leaders would hold formal or informal meetings with these people to discuss village affairs. In many cases, it is at such meetings that a decision is made or an understanding is reached that would prove supportive of, say, a village welfare project proposed by the cadres or of the village leaders' position on certain issues. The support from these people of influence would reduce the degree of opposition village cadres may encounter in their work. As O'Brien (1994:45) observes, VRAs have made "headway in addressing difficulties in collecting fees, imposing grain levies, and carrying out the one-child-policy."

Such practices, however, have serious implications for village democracy. There can be cases in which a proposal passed with a majority has no effect because some individuals, small in number but large in influence, are against it. They may refuse to pay their share for a public project, thus rendering decisions made at formal village representative meetings ineffective and presenting a challenge to the village's mechanism of democracy.

The effectiveness of decisions by the village representative meeting, of course, depends on how influential the representatives themselves are among

the villagers. They each should be capable of representing a significant number of people and should have influence among those individuals. But often, decisions made at the representative meeting may not be implemented when they are met with opposition even from a minority of people.

In turn, the mobilization model emphasizes moving beyond a simple majority vote to building the broadest possible consensus on village affairs. As a matter of fact, in most cases, the decisions come out as a result of compromise after broad consultations. In this sense, the mobilization model represents a village democracy under which an influential minority counts. Thus, when decisions are to be made regarding major village issues, the method of voting is not frequently used. Instead, the meeting is characterized by extensive discussions. Present at the meeting are not only the officially elected representatives, but also nonrepresentatives, who are invited to join the decision making because they have influence in the village.

Once a decision is passed and carried out successfully, villagers may feel they have gained from the decision and its implementation, and as such, villagers may be more interested in participating in future decision making. Democracy then will be able to function in these villages despite their limited economic resources.

If important decisions regarding the welfare of the villagers cannot be made or are made too late because of opposition from a small but strong minority, the villagers' confidence in the collective may be weakened. Worse still, encouraged by their success in blocking a decision, the minority could become more vocal and make further demands at the expense of the village's collective interests. This would be a blow to village autonomy—the village is loosing its mobilizing ability as well as its ability in keeping law and order.

10.6.2 Distribution Model

In rural areas on the outskirts of towns or in better-developed regions, however, the village economy gains significantly much more because its collective land is more valuable. The same is also true of villages that have some successful enterprises and therefore a strong economy. In those cases, a different model of VRA decision making applies: that of the distribution model, in which, village cadres backed with a strong collective economy are in a better position to win over an opposing minority by offering considerable payments and/or by pushing aside an opposing minority with their paternalistic authority. Moreover, a strong village economy means that the primary task that needs to be undertaken is the allocation of communal resources rather than collecting levies from individual villagers through the VRAs.

The distribution model focuses on the reasonable use of the collective resources rather than on levies from the villagers. Under this model, decision

making follows a set of detailed procedures that are deemed to be fair and justifiable, and is carefully recorded. Under this model, a majority voting is essential. Representative meeting in which a major decision on village affairs is involved has typical following features. First, emphasis is put on the eligibility of attendants for the meeting. Second, there are relatively formal meeting proceedings, and participants of the meeting are asked to sign their names at the meeting registration so as to show their commitment to the decisions to be made at the meeting. Third, representatives often vote to decide an issue.

In this model, the minority tends to be overwhelmed by the majority, and often decisions are made and carried out despite opposition from a minority group. In this sense, the distribution model is a village democracy in which it is the majority that counts. However, in some more extreme cases where the majority overlooks too much the opinions of the minority, there is the possibility of the majority becoming undemocratic, as it may work against some fundamental interests of the minority.

To summarize, different economic conditions underlie the two models. While the mobilization model takes place in poor villages, the distribution model happens in wealthy villages. Second, kinship as a social force has played a much greater role in the mobilization model than in the distribution model. Third, village leaders are crucial in ensuring the success of both models. Success is heavily influenced by whether village leaders are committed to democratic values, procedures, and methods. Finally, the mobilization model needs to achieve consensus, while the distribution model needs to ensure the fairness of distributing village wealth and income.

A review of empirical studies of VRAs shows that much of the scholarship on village autonomy has neglected the difference between the two models and their implications. Taking into account such a distinction would help researchers to define and identify the type of village they study. With that help, much of the existing debate (see sections 6.3 and 6.4) can be avoided. Often arguments from both sides may sound equally reasonable and convincing, and can find support from empirical studies. This is caused by a lack of the recognition of the different working modes of VRAs.

10.7 Conclusion

In the context of China's village democracy, this chapter confirms Lipset's hypothesis that democratization is intrinsically linked to economic development; Dietrich Rueschemeyer et al.'s thesis about capitalist development and the emergence of democracy; and Adam Przeworski et al.'s view about economic development and the survival of democracy. It also contributes to the debate over the relationship between economy and democracy in several ways in the Sinologist literature making clear conceptual distinctions between

different aspects of economy and election; presenting a systematic and comprehensive understanding of such a relationship; describing a general picture of the relationship by using a survey result; and spelling out the mechanism in relative to how economy affects village election and democracy.

The main finding of this chapter is that villagers are rational actors who maximize their interests. In the case of wealthy villages, villagers' interests lie in the fair distribution of collective wealth and fruits; therefore they demand the rights to vote and to participate in village representative assemblies. When the village committee has a greater influence on the daily life of villagers, villagers' participation in village election and affairs has increased. It is economic interests that impact on the politics of village citizenship, the turnout, competitiveness, and political participation at village election. Candidates compete for posts primarily for economic interests and social status. To protect and defend their interests, villagers demand their right to participate in village affairs. The reason why economic type makes a difference in villagers' participation is that material interests have come into play. In short, economic interests are the major causes of all the phenomena, and have a great influence on village elections and democracy.

The implication of the above conclusion is that for village elections and democracy to work and develop the rural economy needs to be improved. A healthy village economy will contribute to the improvement of village election. When the village economy is poor, there is less competition in election and less participation of villagers. Village election can take root and develop precisely because electoral laws and institutions turn interests into rights, and subsequently and hopefully transform villagers into modern citizens. The idea of village election has to work through the existing interest structure, ensuring a fair distribution of village wealth and healthy development of collective interests. Only then will it take root and develop into a tree of democracy.

The above finding has policy implications for international donors' democracy-promotion programs. To promote genuine village democracy projects need to focus on villages with a certain level of economic maturity. Project designers or managers must realize that the success of democratic institutions must be generated from within and be based on certain interest structures. One international project, for example, gave a large amount of money to villagers, and asked villagers to develop village representative assembly to make a decision on how to use this money. It turned out the money caused division among villagers, and different factions in the village were fighting for a portion of the money. It did not work out when the money came from outside and the democratic procedure was imposed by outsiders on villagers. By contrast, in Zhejiang some village representative assemblies took root and became the main institutions for making decisions about village

welfare; the institutions developed within villages with certain levels of economic development. These contrasting stories confirm Francis Fukuyama's (2005) statement that "democracy cannot come about in any society unless there is a strong domestic demand by local actors—elites, the masses, or civil society—that want it."

Finally, the ownership system of village enterprises has been privitized in recent years. This has undermined the collective basis of village democracy, and changed the whole incentive structure. More significantly, the 2004 elimination of the agricultural tax has already impacted village elections and rural democracy. It removed the responsibility of collecting taxes from local township leaders; this may reduce the incentive of local township leaders to interfere in village elections. At the same time, it prohibited local governments from collecting taxes from villagers and as a result some towns and townships suffered financial crises. In Hubei province, the average village's debt was 698,000 yuan, which contributed to the malfunctioning of rural governance. In order to lessen the cost, the number of village leaders was reduced, several villages were merged, and the boundaries of villages had been redrawn. The increased size of villages has posed challenges to the function of village democracy. All these need to be studies further.

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CHAPTER 11

Kinship and Village Elections

Kinship or lineage has drawn extensive research interests from anthropology (Pasternak 1972),[1] history (Ebrey and Watson 1986), to sociology (Weber 1978:315–30)[2] and political sciences. In the field of Chinese studies, a huge body of literature has been devoted to lineage organization in both pre- and postliberation China (Lang 1946; Hu Hsien-chin 1948; Levy 1949; C. K. Yang 1959; Freedman 1958a, 1958b, and 1970; Baker 1968; Watson 1985). The current literature considers the questions of whether kinship plays some role in economic development, social services, and village elections. Lily Tsai (2002:12–13) finds that funds are raised through all-lineage meeting to provide public service. Xiao Tangbiao (2002) and Baogang He (2003b) have discussed the impact of lineages on electoral process in their case study of Jiangxi and Zhejiang. Zhu Qiuxia (1998:161–77) shows that kinships have impacted on village power distribution and operation. In 1994, the researchers of the International Republican Institute in the United States did not find any lineage-related campaign activities in Fujian province (International Republican Institute 1994:27), but they concluded in 2001 that "in some cases, village elections have led to the re-mergence of age-old factionalism and clan-based politics" in five provinces in China (Epstein and Thurston 2001).

Some township leaders worried about the detrimental effect of lineage loyalties argued that village elections should be delayed in villages characterized by the presence of lineages conflict.[3] They warned that lineage may break up the party's monopoly of power in village and consequently may give rise to the replacement of the public power by a "private" kinship force. They also believe that just as tribal loyalty or ethnicity is observed to have impacted democratization process at the national level, kinship may hinder village

elections at the local level. It is found in some cases that kinship would inevitably lead to the erosion of the institutional power (Xu Yong 1997a:363), and the village head would "become a puppet controlled by someone from behind the scene, namely the lineage head" (Qian and Xie 1995:49–52).

The above findings and assessments are preliminary and premature. The process of the impact is far more intricate and multifaceted, and also more subtle and variable than the available descriptions seem to comfortably accommodate. This chapter will take a systematic study of the impact of kinship on village elections and address the following questions: How exactly do kinships impact village elections? What are the patterns of kinship's influence? Does a strong lineage force exist in all villages? If yes, does it really constitute a serious problem for village elections? Will village elections become an instrument of political control of small lineages by big lineages? Do candidates from the big lineage take all the seats on the committee, much to the disadvantage of the smaller lineage?

The information about the survey is provided in the introduction. In this chapter I would like to provide additional information on lineages in the surveys. The makeup of the respondents of villager survey is as follows: 629 from major lineages (50.5%), 555 from minor lineages (44.6%), and 61 from unspecified lineage background (4.9%). The respondents were asked to fill the question of whether their family is the largest surname or small surname in village. As a result, all respondents are divided into the two groups—major versus minor lineage. The data about major lineage reflects the dominant surname in a village and is useful information. The data about small lineage include all other nonmajor lineages and represent the attitudes of all nonmajor lineages. It, however, cannot tell the difference within small lineages, and nor does it provide useful information about the mix of lineages and the ratio of major lineage to all nonmajor lineages in the villages. The data also cannot tell the different lineages of the parent or husband of a woman respondent. Such information is available in a few case studies. The case studies in this chapter will make up for this inadequacy.

The survey contains the objective fact such as 47% of village heads come from minor lineages. The survey also contains attitudinal questions. One may doubt the validity of the answers to attitudinal questions on the grounds that because of the influence of the Chinese official ideology, which views lineage as bad and feudal, the respondents will naturally not choose the item "vote for my own lineage." In particular, when the Zhejiang Election Law threatens prosecution of those who use kinship ties in the elections, the respondents know that they are not supposed to tick off the item "voting for kinship interest." In the process of conducting the surveys, many respondents, nevertheless, did not conform to the official ideology at all and were willing to tell us their independent opinions. Many used the opportunity of

being interviewed and exposed to outsiders to challenge the official view and criticize cadres. The fact that 73% of the respondents in one village, in a student survey, openly said they would choose candidate from their own lineage clearly demonstrates that the respondents did not fear for choosing the item "voting for their own linage" (Zhu Genghua 1997).

The idea of the universality of kinship must be questioned.[4] It would be inappropriate to essentialize a notion of Chinese kinship when there are marked differences between and within provinces and regions. The basic concepts used in the chapter include the "lineage," the "clan," and the "branch" (usually called "*fang*"). The lineage basically consists of kinship groups defined by genealogy and shared by the same surname. Traditional lineages consist of males all descended from one common ancestor, all living together in one settlement, owning some property in common, and having strong corporate bases in shared assets, usually, but not exclusively, land (Ebrey and Watson 1986:5–6; Baker 1979:49). The clan is an artificial kin group, extremely remote, and most likely fictionalized, and consisting of a deliberate amalgamation into one loose federation of a number of lineages all of which bear the same surname. Typically the clan's membership is drawn from a given wide area of the countryside, often taking administrative boundaries as the limits of its spread (Ebrey and Watson 1986:5–6; Baker 1979:68). In other words, "a clan refers to the group of descendants in its entirety, that is, it embraces whole patrilineal groups of families, while lineage means an unspecified division of a clan" (Chao 1983:17). Finally, "branch" is used here to describe segments along descent lines. When a man has many lines of descendants, all those descended from him can be called a branch of the large descent group or set of agnates (Ebrey and Watson 1986:5–6). The competition among "*fangs*" for posts often undermines the power of the same kinship and offers an opportunity for a minority kinship to win village elections.

11.1 Revival of Kinship and Its Limits

It is common knowledge that traditional Chinese society was one with a prevalent lineage culture. Lineage power used to permeate through the governance of the rural community. Kinship was an essential unit of Chinese society, a basic social organization through which rural China was organized and controlled. To maintain political control and stability, most powerful imperial Chinese governments allowed kinship or lineage organizations a considerable degree of autonomy and authority.

Since 1949, however, the Chinese communist state completely changed the rural social structure through the destruction of lineage by land reforms and Chinese Communist ideology (Baker 1979). After 1949, particularly after the agrarian collectivization, the lineage force was rendered insignificant. With

the setting-up of the brigade, a social as well as administrative institution, the villagers were well under control. The brigade, with the Communist Party branch in leadership, became the most effective ruling body over the villagers. It held both the means of production and livelihood of the villagers. Villagers, such as urban workers of the "unit" (*danwei*), became members of the people's commune, which was like a large rural unit. In contrast, the traditional lineage and rural community elite had lost their social resources and the related power and privileges. The brigade was the only legitimate institution in the countryside, not to be challenged by the lineage or any other institutions. The villagers, meanwhile, became "commune members" instead of lineage members. Zhao Litao (1999:45–52), however, finds the persistent influence of kinship through a case study of one village in Hebei where family lineage had dominated village power throughout the 1970s. The continuity and persistence of kinship structure is also stressed by Sulamith Heins Potter and Jack M. Potter (1990:256–67). Generally speaking, the weakening of Chinese kinship distinguished from Indian traditional caste system that remains today and consequently the influence of kinship is significant in village elections (Karve 1953).

During the reform era of Deng Xiaoping, there has been a reemergence of the lineage force as discussed by Potter and Potter (1990:chapter 12) and others (Tang Jun 1996). Now, the lineage has its influence not only on communal life but also local politics. Factors that have led to the revitalization of the lineage culture include the rural economic reform, the establishment of the responsibility system in production and the loosening-up of ideological control. With the return of the household production model, farmers once again have the right to manage the land. The household production model has generated the need for mutual aid and cooperation. The first person a villager would turn to for help is always someone of the same lineage or clan. Moreover, if he/she wants to get a job in the city, he/she needs help from his/her lineage, clan, or other relations. As a result, kinship consciousness arises.

The revitalization of a lineage culture manifests itself in many ways. The first is the writing of the lineage genealogical record, which has become popular as kinship relations prove to be important for daily affairs. Overseas Chinese provide another driving force for the activity, when they return to their mainland homes for a visit, for resettlement, or in search of family roots. Some township governments encourage the activity, believing that the record writing will help attract overseas investment and boost the local economy. During the 1980s, the practice of record writing was widespread in the rural areas of Zhejiang and other rich provinces.

The second manifestation is the renovation of the ancestral house where lineage activities are conducted and the authority of the lineage elders exercised.

The house is the symbol of kinship solidarity as well as a physical space for lineage gathering. In the 1980s, travelers marveled at the large number of ancestral houses and temples being renovated across the rural south of Zhejiang.

The third indication is the revival of lineage rituals aimed at promoting lineage identity and lineage consciousness. Zhejiang has a strong kinship culture. Cao Jingqing (1995) pointed out that until mid 1990s, with few exceptions, each of the 3,654 villages in Haining, Zhejiang, had a common surname. Similar cases can be found in a fairly large number of regions in Zhejiang. In Nanshan, a mountain village, most villagers share the surname *Lin*. Kinship sentiments are so strong there that even today the male offsprings are still named in a genealogical order. The 315 *Lin* families constitute an absolute majority in the village. The *Lins* have an ancestral house, where in early spring some elders will be elected to chair ritual activities of the year. Major festivals are occasions for ancestor worship (Lin Zhaohuang 1999).

Finally the fourth indication is lineage rivalry and the resultant lineage fighting. The lineage conflicts in the early 1990s among several villages in Tiantai county, Zhejiang, were so serious that they drew concern from top leaders of the CCP Central Committee. In 1993, a land dispute between two villages in Cangnan county, Zhejiang, also resulted in lineage fight, in which even explosives were used (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Wenzhou municipality 1994).

The revival of the lineage culture, nevertheless, has its structural limits; an understanding of these limits is crucial for us to not exaggerate the impact of kinship on village elections. Politically, there is no permanent structure of kinship at village level, and the members of a lineage often gather temporarily when needed. In other words, there exists no formally legitimized organization except such as lineage-based dragon boat team. Although someone is designed as the head of the lineage or branch ("*zuzhang*"), the traditional lineage organizations have not been revived (Qiang Hang 1994:76–88). The designated head, in most cases, does not have political and economic powers except in keeping lineage record. He has little influence in village affairs, which as commonly believed are dealt with by the party secretary and village committee. Moreover, the writing of the family or lineage genealogical record can be simply a moneymaking business. Such an activity is utilitarian in nature and does not have much to do with the real sentiments of lineage. Indeed, some villagers do not want to donate money for the writing because later will just put the record away.

11.2 Manifestations of Kinship Impact on Village Elections

The rise of lineage forces has impacted many aspects of rural life, including the election of village committee. Kinship impact on elections varies from

village to village. The field reports all indicate diversity in terms of kinship impact. Kinship can work in either or both ways, promoting/inhibiting the competition and participation in village elections. The diversity of impact should not be viewed in simplistic terms.

The introduction of the rural election system means that the legitimacy of village committee must come from vote, and it is understandable that kinship has now become a political instrument and resource for competing power. Kinship is a traditional resource rooted in villagers' psychology and social structure. Candidates try to win votes by appealing to kinship ideas and emotion such as blood relationship, by forming local elite alliances, such as intermarriage between lineage groups (Xu Ming 1999). It is a glory for those who have a strong sense of kinship identity to see their own lineage members elected as village heads or village committee members, and different branches of kinship compete for village power intensely. The 2005 National Survey found a complex picture: 274 respondents constituting 9.1% of the sample reported that kinship has the greatest impact on village elections, 283 (9.4%) lesser impact, 899 (29.9%) some impact, but 1,354 (45%) reported no impact at all.

11.2.1 How Does Kinship Cause Elections to Be Delayed or Postponed?

Lineage conflicts sometimes lead to postponement or delay of elections, though such cases are rare. During the 1993 village election in the northern part of Jiaojiang, Zhejiang, campaigns by rival lineages led to scuffles or even the use of knives. Elections in some villages had to stop (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Jiaojiang municipality 1994a). During the 1994 village election, two remote mountain villages in Jiangbei region of Ningbo became notorious for lineage rivalry. In one village, rivalry campaigns made it impossible to elect the leading body of the village. In the other village, the election did bring out a village committee, but its members were so divided in opinion that it could not really accomplish anything (Pan et al. 1994). In some villages of Chengzhou, the 1999 election had to be put off because of lineage interference. Similar things happened in Anzai village of Luxi township, Lousan of Shihuang township, and Juezi of Ganling township (Qiu Zhengjun 1999).

Kinship impact in Tiantai county was more pronounced than elsewhere. In some mountain villages, kinship sentiments were very strong and contenders vied by every means for votes, with the results that those who did get elected were so divided that no agreement could be reached on division of committee work and responsibility. In other cases, campaigns ended in violence, and elections suffered serious setbacks and even became fruitless. Statistics show that by May 1994, 10% or 91 village committees of the county

had only 1 or 2 members elected, while another 12 villages did not have an election at all (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Tiantai county 1994). There were also cases where owing to kinship influence fake ballots were found, and election results had to be revoked.

11.2.2 How Does Kinship Influence Voting Behavior?

The survey findings and case studies show the complexity and variances of kinship influence. It is found that villagers sometimes voted for their lineage candidates, seeing themselves as belonging to the lineage. But it is also found that villagers had voted out of the concern for their individual and personal interests instead of kinship consideration. Voting for linage candidates can be found in a village where commercial economy has not fully developed, while voting behavior out of individual preferences takes place in a village where plural interests, commercial economy, and private enterprises are strong.

Lineage culture has some influence on the villagers' value system and voting behavior. Where kinship sentiments are high, villagers attach great importance to kinship relations and will vote accordingly. Niujiao village in Fangcun township, Changshan county, presents such a case. The majority of the villagers there share the surname *Xu*. With a strong sense of lineage identity, they think they are all descendants of one great grandfather and they still follow the custom of naming a child according to genealogical lineage. A survey by Zhu Genghua finds that 73% of the people polled would vote only for those candidates who were from their own lineage. The kinship impact had caused concern among some leaders, who thought in such cases "the important political qualifications as well as competence for work have been ignored," and "owing to the questionable standard the voters adopted, those elected are not necessarily the best of candidates."

A different case, however, was found in Qianxi, a multisurnamed village with many immigrant villagers. There was not much sense of kinship in that village. When polled, only 3% of the people said they would take into account whether the candidate came from their own lineage, and no one put kinship as the most important factor in choosing a candidate. Zheng Rubin's (1998) study of Sanyuan village indicates that most villagers there simply did not care for the candidate's surname and lineage, saying, "Why should his surname matter if he can do a good job?" A study of Xitang village of Longyou county indicates, in a multisurname village, voters would regard competence and capability for work as more essential than lineage background when choosing a candidate. Xitang is a multisurnamed village with six natural villages as well as six major surnames. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents said they would choose those who were able to do good things for the village, regardless of the candidate's surname and lineage background (Sun Xiao 1998).

The above voting behavior is confirmed by the results from my extensive surveys. In answering a multiple-choice question, only 1.5%, a very small percentage of the respondents, said they would "vote only for those from (their) own lineage." Voters of both major and minor lineages put "impartiality" as one of the most important criteria. Voters of major lineages put "I know about the candidate and I will decide for myself" (42.1%) and "I will vote for candidates of righteousness and impartiality" (33.1%) as most important. Those from the smaller lineages put "righteousness and impartiality" (38.2%) before "I know about the candidate and I will decide for myself" (34.1%). It is understandable that the minor lineages should put "righteousness and impartiality" above anything else. In choosing the village head, the first three criteria are "can lead villagers in developing local economy and welfare" (57.1%), "willing to speak for the common people" (54.5%), and "can do a good job for the party" (37.1%). Only 3.8% of the respondents ticked the criterion "will represent interest of my lineage."

It may seem inappropriate to make a comparison between China and India by looking at the results of the surveys about village elections, because my survey and the one conducted in India in 1996 are different in terms of scale, scope, and time. A comparison, however, may throw some light on the issue here. The survey in India finds that kinship considerations constitute the highest factor influencing villagers' choice of candidates (60% of the respondents), the next are caste considerations (55%), advice by elders (52%), social services done by the candidate (37%), candidate's influence on officials (37%), personal virtues of the candidate (27%), seniority in age (21%), wealth (18%), and education (13%) (Chopra 1966:23). In Taiwan kinship networks are also found to be strong and influential in local elections (Jacobs 1980).

11.3 Kinship and Elected Villager Leadership

11.3.1 How Do Village Leaders Rely on and Make Use of Kinship?

Some village heads had used lineage to win the election. They could use mobilized factions as another important source of votes in cases where lineage influence had declined. In the former case bloodline and in-laws were important social resources in the election. Jing Zhongmin's (1999) case study of a village in Zhejiang shows how a candidate with a wide network of lineage relations had advantages over those who were without such relations. Candidate A, for example, had three brothers and one sister. The sister married a man in the same village, who in turn had four brothers. In addition, Candidate A also had an uncle, who had three sons. Therefore the number of votes

Candidate A got from his network of bloodline and in-laws could be very substantial.

Some villages nominated their own lineage members as candidates and a few of these candidates even got elected as head of village. Once in office, these village heads put up opposition to the township government, and would not cooperate with the village party branch (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Ningbo municipality 1994). In other cases, strong lineage forces made it possible for the lineage elders to manipulate the election and hold veto power in the village committee, thus there was the "clanization of power" (Jing Yan 1998).

When the election was over, kinship influence could still be felt in the work of the elected body. For instance, it was considered of vital importance to have male offspring to carry on the family name and bloodline in rural areas. Hence the work of family planning and birth control could be very unpopular in some cases. Wary of a confrontation with their kinsmen, "village leaders would rather leave the work for the township" (Xu Yong 1997a: 361). In addition, some village leaders took sides in disputes between kin and nonkin. The former head of Yangban village, Tiantai county, was an example. He had been elected largely because he had money as well as the backing of his powerful lineage. Once in office, he was negligent in his work and partial toward his kin. "He worked only for his kin and was unbearably partial" (Dept. of Civic Affairs of Tiantai county 1994). The leaders, with the next election in mind, became hesitant when their work might involve a confrontation with kinsfolk.

The survey of the village heads finds that 11.7% of village heads choose to "do something for my own lineage" after they are elected. This is a clear indication of the existence of kinship influence albeit not predominant. Kinship consideration is not predominant because 73.9% of the respondents chose "solve (urgent) problems in the village," 69.4% "speak for the villagers," 44.1% "often make investigation among the masses," and 19.8% "exercise supervision over the party secretary." Most village heads put lineage factor as the last consideration in their future work.

11.3.2 Do Elections Favor Those from the Major Lineage?

Lineage influence had generated a disparity in the chance of winning between candidates from a major lineage and those from a minor lineage. During elections for the village committee or village head, the presence of lineage influence may favor candidates from a major lineage in some cases (Ogden 2002:209). According to a study, in the village of Wangzhai, Dongyang, where 90% of the villagers shared the surname Wang, all the members of the village committee had a Wang surname. Some members of minor lineage

complained that voters of other surnames, even though they were permanent villagers, were denied the full rights and were treated as a minority because their voting was negligible (Cao Liwei 1998). Similarly, a case study of Shaoyou village, Paitou township, Zhuji municipal, indicated that it would make a big difference whether a surname was in the majority or minority of villagers, and whether it was an indigenous name or one of later settlers. In Shaoyou, a candidate with a majority surname could turn it into an advantage. As Wang was the majority surname in this village, a Wang candidate had a much better chance than his non-Wang contenders to win support from other Wangs. As a matter of fact, the Wangs had five seats out of nine in the village committee, including the village head. These five members were all in-laws or cousins to each other. Consequently the lineage had veto power in the committee (Bian 1998).

The villagers survey finds that 52.9% of the voters agreed that the latest election in their villages had produced an impartial leadership, while 19.9% said the outcome of the election was more favorable to major lineages, 17.3% thought the outcome favorable to the more wealthy people in the village, and 6.7% said they felt that the interest of the minority lineages was well guaranteed. Among those from the major lineages, 15% said the election favored the major lineage, while 26.1% of the minor lineage group said it favored the major lineage. There is a gap of 10.7% between the two groups of respondents regarding the question of whether the election "favors those of the major lineage." I use the Pearson chi-square method of statistical independence to test the null hypothesis that there is no difference between major and minor lineage with regard to the result of elections. The chi-square (χ^2) value is 25.26, and the significance or p-value with one degree of freedom is 0.00. The testing therefore rejects the null hypothesis and confirms that such a gap is statistically meaningful. The gap leads to two interpretations: that the election is to some extent really favorable to those of the major lineage; or that voters of the minority lineage feel or worry about the unfavorable implications of the election results.

Some candidates from small lineage, nevertheless, did get elected, whereas some from the major lineage did not. This was because of other factors, such as candidate's competence, the internal fighting, and competition among the dominant lineages, and the solidarity of small lineage, which contributed to the outcome of the election. Sometimes the small lineage candidates had a higher chance to win an election in a multisurname village than in a one-surname dominated village. The variable of one-surname domination versus multisurname village is one of the factors that accounts for the difference of kinship's influence. Take, for example, a multisurname Lizhang village of Xunqiao township, in which Zhang was a major surname. The party secretary of the village was a Zhang while the village head was a Xu, a nonmajority surname.

During the 1997 election for people's representatives, Secretary Zhang supported someone from his own lineage as candidate, who had returned home wealthy after years of doing business away. The candidate Zhang, however, with all the support from Secretary Zhang, the cigarettes he offered to voters and the kinship sentiments he exploited, lost the election (Xu Wei 1998). Another interesting case was Tao-Xu-Feng village of Hemudu township, Yuyao. The village consisted of three natural villages where Tao, Xu, and Feng were major surnames. Yet Tao was the largest of the three as indicated by its foremost position in the village name. Of an electorate of 752, 70% were surnamed Tao. The election for village committee was held in March 1999. Feng Jirong, the former village head, won candidature with 102 votes while his contender Tao Guofu did so with 87 votes. In the final voting for the village head, Feng, with a surname ranking only third in the village, won with 387 votes and was reelected village head. The candidate Tao lost with 367 votes (Song 1999).

Now among others things, household and individual interests are highly valued and constitute a crucial element of motivation structure. The implication for elections is that when there are different interest groups within a big lineage, each group will have its own candidate in mind, with the result that votes are so scattered that a candidate from a major lineage does not necessarily get elected. An inner struggle is likely to occur when there emerge two rival contenders in the same lineage, which will bring gains to neither of them but a third party (Jing Zhongmin 1999).

The survey of village heads shows that among the village heads, except those whose lineage background was unspecified, 42.3% were from minor lineage and 51.4% from major ones. Other things being equal, the number of village heads coming from minor lineage is expected to be smaller when we take into account the smaller proportion of minor lineage to the village population. Then the fact that 42.3% of the village heads come from minor lineage is a reliable indicator to show that lineage background is not a decisive factor to decide who will win election. This significantly disproves the assumption that big family lineage always wins in village elections at the expense of smaller lineage. This finding can be supported by other studies. Hu Biliang (1996:168–69), in his study of a village in Shanxi province, demonstrates that the posts of village power are not always distributed in favor of big lineage. Shi Xuefeng (2000) finds that one village election in Huadong has ended the domination of one lineage power. In my field trips, I observed in numerous cases that while party secretaries come from big family lineage, elected village heads come from small family lineage.

The fact that those from minor lineage are elected as village head does not suggest the absence of kinship but a subtle form of kinship influence. Contributing to the fact are the support from the party secretary or township

leaders who have kinship consideration, the successful coalition of minor lineage, the weakening of dominant lineage because of the rivalry among branches, and the influence of the kinship network from the intermarriage between major and minor lineages (Zhu Qiuxia 1998:161–77). In all these situations, the influence of lineage still exists no matter who comes to be village head, from major or minor lineage. It should be stressed that party secretaries and township leaders tend to support candidates from minor lineage to be elected as village head so as to maintain power balance between major and minor lineages, and between different natural villages. The idea is that the posts of village power are to be distributed proportionally according to the relative strength of a number of lineages to achieve fair representation and a power balance between them, and to facilitate work. Here the balance of village powers is still attained by lineage politics.

11.4 Explaining Kinship Influence

The above empirical findings demonstrate variants. Lineage influence is weak in some villages, but strong in other villages. Village elections result in those from major lineage being elected as heads in some cases, but candidates from minor lineages can also win election in other cases. A challenging question is both to explain local differences and to grasp a general pattern without making an overgeneralization. To explain local variations of kinship influence, it is necessary to examine local context and conditions and their interactions. To grasp a general pattern of the decline of kinship influence, it is necessary to examine the general background conditions that underlie these local circumstances and restrict the influence of lineages. Table 11.1 explains local variations through an examination of local factors.

One elector has a higher probability in voting his lineage in one-surname dominant village than in multisurname villages. As shown in section 11.2,

Table 11.1 Local Determinants of Variations in Kinship Influences

	The Influence of Kinship	
Factors	*Strong*	*Weak*
Structure of Village Kinship	One-surname dominance	Multisurname
Economy	Poor and underdeveloped	Rich, well-developed, commercialized
Political Culture	Kinship culture prevails	Official ideology prevails
Village Party Organization	Weak or malfunction	Strong and dominant

73% of the respondents in a one-surname dominant village said that they will vote for their kinship candidates; but only 3% will do so in a multisurname village. In the condition of multisurname village, voters are likely to put quality and competence before their lineage background when choosing a candidate. It can be hypothesized that one-surname dominant villages have strong identity as opposed to multisurname villages.

Another key factor is economic conditions. If economy is poor, the best way to pursue the interest of family is to vote for their own lineage and maintain its domination and power. It is found in my survey that those who ticked the item "will vote for my family lineage" were mostly from relatively poor agricultural villages (73.7%). None of them come from relatively rich collective economy-dominated villages; and the item "will vote for my family lineage" is not chosen by any of those who have a higher family income of above 30,000 Chinese yuan. Both cross tabulations and chi-square tests show that the difference is statistically significant.

It can be hypothesized that the influence of lineage is likely to be stronger in poor villages than in rich ones. We learned in an interview in Yuyao that kinship had a strong influence in villages with an underdeveloped economy, but had little influence on voters from well-to-do areas.[5] My numerous field research trips found that all instances of kinship influence on elections took place in the poor mountainous or remote areas. By contrast, there was no serious kinship problem in economically developed villages, such as those close to Wenzhou city. In the commercialized and individualized areas, voters tend to vote for their own interests regardless of the kinship background of candidate. These voters are "economic man" rather than "kinship man," that is, the rational calculation of interests is above kinship-interests. Hence it can be concluded that kinship influence is in counterproportion to economic development, because the development of economy leads to the plurality of interest, which undermines a dominant lineage interest.

Kinship influence varies with changes in the village economic structure. In an agricultural village, where the market economy plays no significant part and villagers still share common interests, lineage is able to maintain its influence. Kinship influence declines, however, in villages with substantial collective and private enterprises that are far more accountable for the ups and downs of the villagers' income than the noninstitutional lineage. My survey shows that those who ticked the item "will vote for my family lineage" were mostly from agricultural villages. In contrast, none of those from villages with a dominant collective economy chose that item.

In conclusion, when the economic condition of a village is extremely poor and there is no alternative business structure, villagers tend to look for kinship for protection. When the economy of a village is commercialized and there are diverse business structures and opportunities, the overall interest of

one lineage is merely elusive, and the tension between families within one lineage increases. Indeed, rivalry within a major lineage can prove advantageous to the candidates from a minority lineage, increasing their chances to win in an election.

Local kinship identity is yet another determinant of kinship influence. In my research trips I found that in the culture where village leaders and even township officials hold the view that kinship ties contribute to local order and make up for the vacuum of public power, the influence of kinship is likely to be stronger. However, if kinship power is seen as feudal and an obstacle to modernity, and that it is more likely to result in unfairness at the expense of those with minor lineage, as well as resulting in fights between lineages, the influence of kinship is likely to be declining. Under such a local cultural condition, some lineage leaders, when trying to manipulate elections, denied lineage motivation.

Finally village party organization contributes to local variations. If the village party organization is stronger, it is likely to contain the influence of kinship, and the village party secretary is able to balance several clans and alter kinship forces to produce public goods and maintain order. The seemingly presence of lineage influence takes place when the village party secretary is incapable and incompetent, and as a result one lineage or village chief is likely to challenge the party authority through kinship resource. Nevertheless, there is a subtle influence through a peculiar village power structure. Village power can be divided into public power represented by party organization and village committee, and private power represented by kinship. In some villages, most members of formal organizations such as party and village committee come from the same lineage; as a result, formal organization and informal kinship structure overlap. In such a case, though the party secretary and village committee members deny the influence of kinship, its latent influence is always there (Guo Zhenglin 2002:94–104). In the condition under which village leaders come from different kinships in a multiple surname village, formal organization and informal kinship structure do not overlap, and the influence of kinship is likely to be weak.

Despite local variations, kinship forces have been largely contained, which is demonstrated by the simple fact that while most local official documents between 1993 and 1996 reported serious problems of kinship fighting in village elections, most local official documents from 1998 to 2005 mentioned little about kinship fighting. From this fact, it might be hypothesized that the influence of kinship will decrease under certain political, economic, and social conditions. This hypothesis can be understood by an examination of the general conditions, political, economic, and social, under which lineage forces are restricted.

First, let us look at the political conditions. Family and kinship had enjoyed moral privileges in Confucian doctrine because the family was regarded as the

foundation of a Confucian state. Traditional Confucian states had relied on kinship to exercise local rule. However, many intellectuals criticized kinship as an inadequate social organization in the face of modern conditions during the May Fourth Movement. The Civil Code of the Republic of China promulgated in 1931 swept away most of the supports the state had formerly given to the patrilineal family (Baker 1979:178–81). Under Mao's regime the kinship structure was systematically attacked and lineages were defined as feudal relics (Potter and Potter 1990:255–56). Today, despite the revival of kinship, it lacks support from the official ideology. Few people would accept kinship's involvement in elections as legitimate. Backed by the official ideology, as shown in various cases, local governments would punish any lineage forces that attempted to manipulate elections because politically the lineage had no legitimacy (Nugent 1996:203–25).[6] The lineage, without recognition by the state and without social legitimacy, simply could not *openly* get involved in elections. The Chinese authoritarian state has in its hand practically all the important resources and is powerful enough to curb kinship influence. The Chinese State is now far more powerful and effective in exercising control than it was earlier, when lineage forces were dominant in many parts of the country.

The second general condition is economic. A lineage culture thrives on a traditional agrarian economy or natural economy. The replacement of traditional economic structure by modern ones has effectively destroyed that economic base. After 1949, the materials as well as spiritual resources available to the lineage were seriously limited. Gone was the land that the lineage could use for worship, school, and charity (Baker 1979:204–5). Gone were also the lineage's charity grain stores. Politically, too, the lineage elders lost almost everything, as power now lay in the village institutional bodies. Also they were no longer the moral authority. In the reform and open-door era, more power and social, economic resources have shifted to the young and the middle-aged. A society dominated by the old is only an image of the past. The younger generation is not as kinship-minded as their forefathers were. Kinship influence, when it does make itself felt on the election, is declining and fragile.

The production responsibility system is a double-edged sword for kinship. A sizeable number of researchers have regarded the rural economic reform and the production responsibility system as a major prompt for the reemergence of kinship. While there is truth in their view, we must point out another possibility, that is, the system may also serve as a check to kinship, because it promotes a sense of individuality by calling the villagers' attention to their individual interest. As Huang Xiyi (1998:191) remarks, "although kinship re-emerges it is no longer a dominant element in the rural economy and politics; although kin networks extends this extension is accompanied by kinship division." Noticeably, this kinship division is accompanied by different

and plural interests of families and individuals within one traditional kinship group.

Third, social conditions have changed greatly. There has been increasing social mobility in China, which further weakens kinship identity and relationships. The mobility changes the village composition and diminishes the lineage power. Kinship consciousness grows only in a relatively closed society, where one meets the same circle of people every day. As social mobility increases, business and job relations become more important than relations established on lineage and locality. In Datang, Zhuji municipality, for instance, a large portion of rural population has moved into townships and taken up jobs there. Some villagers now have little to do with their kinsfolk, because they are always on the go, doing business away in other places. Some villagers have gone as far as to Guangzhou and Shenzhen in search of jobs. In Datang, many people feel it is a rare occasion when there is a reunion of kinsfolk (Jing Yan 1998).

The rural dwelling conditions have changed. The traditional rural housing model was conductive to a lineage culture. Kinship households used to live so close by that they shared doorsteps and gates. In the reform era, the rural economy has developed and people feel they need more and better houses. There are so many applications for housing grounds that one major function of the village committee is to check and approve these applications. Houses no longer share gates and doorsteps. Some houses even look solitary. Tan Ke (1998)'s study of a village in Keqiao township, Shaoxing, is an example. The local authorities had launched a project for building "new villages." Many villagers followed the project and left their old houses. Over the past 10 years, there were more than 150 households that had built new houses. As a result, the makeup of the neighborhood changed dramatically and kinship relations were deeply affected. Another example is Hefu village, Huzhou, where the scattered houses of the past are now replaced by even more widely separated ones. Such a dwelling mode does not promote a sense of community among the villagers (Wang Ying 1998).

The functions of marriage and the family have also changed. The registering of marriage with state representatives instead of kin and lineage elders struck at the roots of family domination (Baker 1979:217). Giving birth to a child no longer carries much significance for the lineage. The old idea that "fortune favors the man that has many off-springs" now sounds out of date, particularly among young couples. In one study in the same year of a rural area of Jin county, which was noted for its rural industry, we found that a considerable number of young couples prefer daughters to sons. The reasons they gave were interesting: "the son is not really dependable when you get old, because he would forget his mother once he marries his wife. In contrast, the daughter is good, because when she marries her husband, you are richer with a son-in-law,

who is like your own son nowadays." Villagers with such changed values about family and marriage would not care much about kinship.

11.5 Conclusion

With findings of the surveys and case studies, this chapter has demonstrated the various forms of kinship impact on village elections. Kinship conflicts led to the postponement of village elections in some cases. Kinship influenced voter behavior and the results of village elections. It did so mostly through informal channels, and some through institutionalized organization. Kinship had a subtle influence in the balance of village power. The findings seem to support the validity of the view concerning the persisting significance of kinship in rural China (Potter and Potter 1990:256–67) although an awareness of local variations, subtle forms of kinship influence and their decline is needed.

While acknowledging the influence of kinship on village elections, the chapter balances the view of an overwhelming kinship influence by demonstrating the decline of the influence of kinship on village elections in the following three senses. Kinship does not constitute an open political force; nor is it the most important factor in voting behavior; and kinship influence is largely through informal channels and its influence is only latent in some cases.

I also make a balanced assessment of the impact of kinship on village elections. While kinship fighting continues to stop or delay elections in some cases, in other cases lineage was used to challenge the party bosses and to force them to resign. In villages where kinship sentiments are strong, farmers are easy to be highly mobilized, and the election for village committee tends to be more competitive. This is because in such villages it is difficult for the township government to manipulate the election (Wang Zhenyao 1998:239–55; Li and Xiong 1998:153; Thurston 1998:2). Kinship is a valuable mechanism by which villagers are able to mobilize themselves and enhance their organizational capacity in the struggle against the domination of the Communist Party structures and for democratic self-government (He Xuefeng 2000:66).

The chapter examines the conditions that offer an opportunity for kinship to revive on the one hand, and constrain the development of lineages as an openly political force in rural governance and village democracy on the other hand. The seemingly contradictory findings (the influences of kinship and its decline) can be explained by the diversity of local conditions and a number of general conditions. The decline of the influence of kinship can be explained by factors such as the power and domination of the state over rural society, the hostility of official ideology toward kinship, the decline of the economic basis of kinship, the divided interests of big lineage, the emergence of plural interest structure, and the change in marriage relationship and living conditions in rural areas.

The decline of kinship influence in some areas contrasts the increasing role of factionalism in village elections in other areas. Factions are based on kinship as well as relationships of classmates, comrades, and personal connections or interests. Further researches are needed to study the roles of factions in relation to that of kinship. As the chapter has only addressed the impact of kinship on village elections, further studies should investigate whether village elections strengthen kinship identity through political campaigns and mobilization of lineage identity and force, or whether they weaken the lineage force by raising the villagers' consciousness of law and order, by guaranteeing an equal opportunity for all candidates, and by promoting rational calculation among voters.

PART IV

Prospects of Chinese Democratization

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CHAPTER 12

From Village to Township Elections

Village elections have given rise to a push for other types of local elections in China. As we have seen in chapter 7, village party secretaries have been elected through competition—this can be termed a "deepening down" process. Elections have also been held for urban residential committees (Ogden 2002:220–28; Pan Tianshu 2002). One direct urban election took place in Qingdao in 1998, then 10 elections in 1999, and additional ones in 10 cities in 2000. Luwan district in Shanghai targeted a 12% increase in holding direct elections for the members of residents committees in 2003. This can be called a "going-to-city" process. This process also includes an increasing number of direct elections of trade union officials within factories. Finally, the "moving-up" process is township elections, which is the subject of this chapter.

Direct township elections received flattering praise from domestic and foreign media.[1] Scholars have studied the process, assessed the weaknesses and strengths of township elections, and compared different methods of conducting direct township elections (Li Fan 2000; He and Lang Youxing 2001a:1125–36; He and Lang Youxing 2001b:1–22; Cheng Joseph 2001:104–37; Li Lianjiang 2002b:704–23). This chapter will examine the origins and processes of direct township elections and the dynamic extension of village elections into townships.

The chapter begins with a general discussion of the impact of village elections on the political behavior of township leaders (section 12.1), and the logical development from village to township elections (section 12.2). Section 12.3 will look into a case of Buyun and trace its development from holding open recommendation and selections to a direct election. The spread and

variety of township elections as well as the problems associated with them will be discussed in section 12.4. Section 12.5 examines the utilitarian rationale for direct township election, followed by an investigation of the opposition forces and driving forces behind direct township elections (section 12.6).

China had 36,952 townships/towns in 2004, each of which had an average population of up to 20,000 including an average of 17 villages. Zeguo, the recent merged town, in Zjejiang, however, has jurisdiction over 96 villages with a population of 120,000. Normally, the urbanized town (*zhen*) is distinguished from the rural townships (*xiang*). Such a distinction is extremely important because the former enjoys favorable state policies, for example, land quota for development, while the latter does not enjoy such policies. This distinction, however, is not relevant to the purpose of this book and the theme of the chapter. I shall refer to both as "townships," and use the term "township authorities" referring to both party and government leaders at the township level in a general way.

Township governments consist of three organizations, township Party Committee, township People's Government, and township People's Congress. All major decisions are made through the township leadership group (*lingdao banzi*) that consists of the township party secretary, the head of the township government, deputy township party secretaries, deputy heads of the township government, and the chairperson of township People's Congress. Although formally the party organization is separated from government organization, in reality the two are mingled with the township party secretary being the most powerful person in the town (Zhong Yang 2003:71–93).

Townships are the lowest level of state organization, and township heads have great power with regard to taxation, a crucial issue for the villagers. Township heads are usually selected and appointed by the Party Committee, approved and ratified by the deputies of the township People's Congress. Such a practice is now challenged by the Buyun election and other subsequent forms of township election.

Township elections influence the basic unit of the state, the source of state power, and the way in which local cadres are selected. If village elections are seen as a process of the democratization of rural society, direct township elections can be regarded as the beginning in the democratization of state organization (Manion 2000:782). They are the building blocks for the emerging local democracy in China.

12.1 Impact of Village Elections on Township Authorities

Village elections have direct or indirect impact on the political behavior of township leaders. First, village elections have to some extent changed the

source of rural power in the rural community. In the past, all the village party secretaries as well as the production brigade leaders were appointed by township authorities. Now township authorities simply cannot appoint a village leader. The legitimacy of the governing power in the village comes from voters rather than from appointment by the leadership above. In this way village elections serve as a check to township authority.

Second, village elections bring a change on the part of township leaders from crude control to more artful governance. In July 1998, a news report on the official China Central Television (CCTV) exposed and criticized the illegal appointment of village heads by the authorities in Qianshuo township, Taizhou municipality. The report was taken as a serious warning. The party committee in the neighboring Linhai municipality decided to put all village elections there under its direct leadership and instructed township authorities to act according to the electoral law. The results in Xunqiao township, among others, were positive. The village heads there in September 1998 were elected and the previous appointments of village chiefs were abandoned.

This does not mean that township leaders now do not care to control, but now they have to be more cautious and tactful (Xu Wei 1998). They take a different approach in governance. In September 1998, when we interviewed one of the targets criticized by CCTV, he said he had learned a great deal from the incident. Still feeling wronged, he cursed his folly, saying he might have had the same person as village head without having appointed him. Then he said he would take up the study of the art of leadership and management and would be more tactful in future work.[2] In short, township leaders have learned to show more respect to public opinion, make use of public opinion, and consult more before making decisions. They now pay more attention to rules and regulations and democratic procedures.

As a result of village elections, some township leaders try to be more skilful in governance. They would rather use the VRA to execute policies that may otherwise appear less acceptable to the masses. Some township leaders have started to use the village assembly or the VRA to remove an unwanted village head rather than doing it themselves. Sometimes an elected village head falls out of favor because he/she is too disobedient, corrupt, or extremely unpopular in the village, and removal seems inevitable. By law the township authorities cannot directly remove that person from the post of village head. However, it is perfectly legal to remove him/her through the village assembly or the VRA. Using the VRA, villagers think it is they who have dismissed the unpopular village head. This is just one example of how township leaders work with democratic procedure. My survey shows that a majority of township leaders (72.2%) would use village assembly or representative assembly as the first option to remove an unwanted village head. The 2001 National Survey on 104 townships in 7 provinces found that 90.8% of township leaders

respected the result of village elections, 88.7% did not appoint village cadres, 76% did not remove village leaders through administrative means, and 66.3% did not get involved in the nomination process (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2002:*594).

Third, village elections make the work of personnel departments at the level of township simpler. They used to spend a lot of time and money selecting and checking up on candidates. Now the personnel departments of CCP Yuyao committee and the Laofangqiao township authority have found that village elections save both time and money. Village heads can be put in place quite smoothly without the risk of township authorities having to take any blame if the voters-chosen village head turns out to be unqualified.

Among the township leaders, opinion about elections varies. We conducted a survey among township leaders and found that only 17.4% of the respondents feel that now they encounter more difficulty in village work, 46% think that work has actually become easier, and 32% think elections have made no difference in this aspect. My survey also shows that 42% of the respondents feel there is particular pressure brought on them by elections, 57.4% do not think so.

12.2 From Village to Township Elections

The introduction of village elections had other unintended consequences. Village elections can be seen as a catalyst that changes the existing distribution of power and system of authority. It promises a new political structure at the local level and constitutes a new source of legitimacy—the power of village leaders from villagers through periodic elections.

Following the holding of village elections, the question of the legitimacy of township leaders inevitably arises. Village elections challenge the authority of nominated township leaders. The questions arise about how township leaders, who are not elected, can have legitimacy to effectively run the daily business of the town and the political and moral authority to issue orders to village chiefs? Village election demands that legitimacy for township leaders should come from elections. All cases of township election in Shanxi, Guangdong, and Henan are in fact a sort of confidence vote for township leaders, aiming to gain their political legitimacy through popular election. The vote is called confidence vote or an extensive opinion poll. What this indicates is that township leaders seek a popular mandate as an alternative basis for political authority.

The current distribution of power and the system of authority at the village level have changed drastically. Often, elected village heads find themselves in conflict not only with village party secretaries but also with township leaders. In other words, there are internal tensions between the electoral logic

and the authoritarian logic. In the authoritarian logic, power comes from above, and higher officials are able to appoint and remove subordinate cadres. In the electoral logic, however, legitimate authority comes from below, and electorates can elect or displace their leaders by their votes.

How do local political actors deal with this institutional tension? The common practice is to subordinate village party secretaries to township party leadership, or to subordinate village chiefs to village party secretaries through special institutional rules such as the one that puts the village party secretary in charge of village economy and enterprise. Another solution may well be in having democratically elected township heads via direct elections. Such a deepening democratic process is likely to reduce the current institutional tension (see section 2.7).

Since village elections were introduced in the 1980s, villagers have been increasingly accustomed to having competitive elections every three years. Progressively they have become indifferent to the current indirect election of township heads. What they demand are competitive and direct elections, a reflection of their dissatisfaction with the existing election system, and their enhanced democratic awareness and desire for expanded democracy. One survey reveals that 42% of the 10,041 respondents from 7 provinces held that township heads should be directly elected; 24.1% thought that the conditions for such elections were not ripe; and 9.1% said that such elections should not be held (Li Lianjiang 2002a).

Another reason making possible the extension of village election to the township is the recognition of the benefits accruing from village elections.[3] If the practice of electing village chiefs proves to be relatively beneficial to the village people, why not have elections for township leaders as well to benefit more people? My survey shows that 46% of township leaders think that village elections have improved the working relationship between township leaders and village chiefs, though 17% hold that village elections have created difficulties for them.

Village elections have also contributed greatly to the establishment and improvement of a system of electoral rules and procedures, particularly with regard to the open nomination of candidates by villagers, secret votes, the villagers' right to dismiss corrupt village heads, and competitive elections. These new electoral procedures and rules provide a blueprint for direct township elections. Shanxi's Linyi county borrowed the two-ticket method in electing township heads. The election in Buyun drew on the village election laws, adopting the campaign method and secret votes. The preface of the commemorative book of the Buyun election states clearly that in commemoration of the "tenth anniversary of the practice of village self-governing, we carried out an experiment of direct election of township heads." This statement reveals a close link between village elections and township elections.

12.3 From Open Recommendation and Selection to Direct Election

Direct township elections (*zhixuan*) were preceded by "open recommendation and selection" (*gongtui gongxuan*), a limited primary system whereby deputies of township People's Congress, township officials, village heads, and village representatives recommend and select the candidates for township leadership (Saich and Yang 2003). What triggered this open recommendation and selection in the Shizhong district was a crisis resulting from corruption and illegal conduct by more than 20 members of the standing committee of a township People's Congress as well as its party secretary and township head. One pressing problem faced by the district leadership was how to set up a structure of management in the township. The crisis stimulated much discussion among township leaders, and there was a growing demand for the open selection of township administrators. In response to the demand, the district government decided, in a pioneer project, to openly select the deputy directors in eight of its bureaus.

In the open recommendation and selections system, two of the nominated candidates were selected through a majority vote by village and township administrators and villager representatives. The two candidates were then put to a vote at the township People's Congress to decide the head of the township. In Hengshan of Shizhong district there were 76 candidates; and 800 people showed up at the ballot box although it was estimated that around 600 people were going to vote.

With the open recommendation and selections at township level, a potential tension exists between the party secretary and the head of the township, and thereby adversely affecting the role of the party in the rural areas. This became a major concern for the district leadership. Thus a further question was then raised as to whether the party secretary could also be openly elected. After some deliberation, the district leadership decided to go ahead with open recommendation and selections of the party secretaries. Trial elections were held in Lianhua and Dongchan of Shizhong district. The procedure was similar to that of the open recommendation and selections of township heads in that all the party members in the two townships directly elected the party general secretaries through a ballot. Of the party members in Dongchan 60% voted in the election.

The open recommendation and selection of party general secretaries and township heads went through three stages. First, open nominations were called for, qualifications of candidates were assessed, and the eligible ones sat for a literacy test. In the second stage, the top six candidates from the literacy test met with deputies of the township People's Congress, village leaders, village representatives, local government and party officials, and township

leaders and answered their questions; then an opinion poll was conducted on the spot. In the third stage, the two most popular candidates were nominated by the Party Committee of the township and put to a vote at the township People's Congress. The head of the Hengshan township was elected in this way in a pioneer project in November 1998. The general secretaries of Party Committees in Lianhua and Dongchan townships were similarly elected (Zhang Jinming 1999). The idea was to ensure that the elections would not deviate too much from the current laws and would "appropriately combine the party's effective management of the cadres, full democracy and the order of law."

Although villagers regarded open recommendation and selection as a good thing, they still thought township heads were decided by leaders and elected by a minority instead of the villagers themselves (*Nanfang zhoumo*, January 15, 1999:2). General dissatisfaction and demands for deepening democracy posed a question of whether direct township elections should be taken in the forthcoming elections of township heads in November 1998 across the district. The district leaders were worried about a lack of interest among the villagers in the elections as well as clan influence on the elections. Among the concerns were what to do if the elections failed as a result of inexperience and how to make the elections compatible with existing laws. The divergence of opinions raised doubts as to whether direct township election was a good thing.

Eventually a consensus emerged among the main leaders of the district that in wanting to expand local democracy, direct elections would have to take place sooner or later. If the elections succeeded, they would provide others with a useful model for reference. Even if they failed, others could learn from mistakes. On December 31, 1998, 6,236 out of a total of 11,349 eligible electors voted in the China's first direct township election in Buyun. Tan Xiaoqiu won 50.19% (3,130) of the votes and became China's first directly elected township head (for detailed discussion, see Baogang He and Lang Youxing 2001a and 2001b).

12.4 Spread and Varieties of Township Elections

The Buyun election has inspired many other town and/or townships to introduce further experiments for township elections, for example, in Zhouli township, Linyi county, Shanxi province on April 18, 1999 (*Xiangzhen Luntan*, May 1999:4–6), in Dapeng township, Shenzhen, Guangdong province on April 29, 1999 (Huang Weiping 1999:27–30, *China Youth Newspaper*, April 11, 1999; *Nanfang Daily*, April 28, 1999), and in the townships of Sunzhao and

Fogesi, Xinchai county, Henan province in March 2000 (Josephine Ma: 2000; *Xinkuaibao*, March 21, 2000). A series of local election experiments at the level of township or above is listed in table 12.1.

To avoid the accusation that the Buyun direct election violates China's constitution that stipulates that the heads of townships should be elected by

Table 12.1 Summary of Local Elections Experiments

Date	*Location*	*Types of Elections*
December 31, 1998	Bunyu town, Sichuan province	Direct election for township
April 29, 1999	Dapeng township, Shenzhen city	Township government leaders
April–May 1999	Linyi county, Shanxi province	Township government leaders
December 1999	Xincai county, Henan province	Township government leaders
March 2000	Sunzhao and Fogesi, Xinchai county, Henan province	Township government leaders
December 17, 2001	Chongqing city	Deputies of township people congress
March–April 2001	Gongcheng county, Guangxi province	Township government leaders
October 2002–January 2003	Yichang city, Hubei province	Party secretaries and government leaders
October 2002	Ya'an city, Sichuan	Party members elect deputies to county party congress
2003	Nanjing city, Jiangsu province	District mayor
December 4–7, 2003	Mulan town, Xindu, Chendu city	Township party secretary
December 18, 2003	Peixian, Xuzhou, Jiangsu province	County magistrate
2003–February 2004	Shuyang, Suyu counties, Jiangsu	Party secretaries and government leaders
August 31, 2004	Jintan county, Jiangsu	Party members elect township party committee
2005	Sichuan	2,772 towns and townships hold *gongtui gongxuan*
April 21–23, 2006	Ya'an city	Four townships hold *gongtui gongxuan*

Source: This expands the table originally developed by Dong Lisheng (2006:507) with the author's updated data.

the local People's Congress, a two-vote system was introduced, that is, people first cast a vote of confidence on the candidates, then, in the second stage the deputies of the local congress elected the heads of the township in Zuoli town, Linyi county, Shanxi province. The three-ballot system was also developed in Dapeng town, Shenzhen city: eligible voters nominated 76 candidates; the local elites elected the final candidate; and the local People's Congress elected the head of the township government.

Despite the fact that the central leader banned direct township elections (Vivien Pik-kwan Chan 2000), there is no sign of such elections abating and many local experiments have continued. The spread of *gongtui gongxuan* is very impressive in Sichuan (Saich and Yang 2003:185–208; Fewsmith 2006; Lai Hairong 2003:57–70). In 2002 47% of townships in Sichuan carried out this kind of election (Li Yongzhong 2003). It jumped to 63% of the towns and townships in Sichuan, that is, 2,772 towns and townships elected the leaders of towns and townships in 2005 (http://www.sina.com.cn, October 2, 2005). Given the unfavorable political environment in 2006, elections were still held in four townships between April 21 and 23, 2006 in Yan'An city. Similar experiments were also conducted in the townships in Zhejiang, Hubei, Jiangsu, and Yunan (Shi Weimin 2006:75). *Gongtui gongxuan* will be used in an upcoming evaluation and selection of county level leaders in Ya'an (*Ya'an ribao*, August 25, 2006).

More important, the election of the township party secretary was held in Mulan town, Xindu district, near Chendu. On December 4, 2003, an electoral college constituting 243 delegations from town cadres, village party representatives, village heads, representatives from enterprises, and deputies of the local People's Congress, and members of democratic parties, listened to public speeches made by 11 preliminary candidates and cast their vote for 2 final candidates. On December 7, 2003, a general party member meeting attended by 639 party members was convened; and they elected the town party secretary (*Huaxi dushibao*, December 9, 2003). This experiment was repeated in all other 11 townships where all party secretaries were elected by direct party assembly in March 2005 in Xindu district.

In the past, party members have elected only party committee members. A high level party organization decided who would be town party secretary and deputy secretary. The Xindu experiment and its new method set up a procedure to decide the township party committee profile; that is, the position of who will be township party secretary is directly decided by party members' votes. This experiment is far more important than direct township heads election in the existing political system. Direct township elections can elect township government heads, but do not impinge upon the township party secretary who is ultimately the number one person in the town. The township party election addresses this fundamental question by introducing a further election.

There are a number of deficiencies in the experiments discussed above.[4] Township elections achieved limited success in the nomination process in which voters directly cast their votes over a slate of preliminary candidates in order to select better and more popular cadres. The popular will constitutes a basis for the final candidates; in this way, in the words of local officers, "turning the will of people into the will of the party" or "the will of the party is based on the will of voters."[5] In other words, township elections are designed to measure the popularity of township leaders rather than to increase competitiveness.

Procedures have several flaws. First, only an electoral college decided the final candidate in Xindu's experiment, and only local People's Congresses have the final say. Second, despite voters being able to nominate and decide upon candidates through elections, only three candidates were chosen by people in the stage of deciding a list of the final candidates, while the party organization was able to nominate one candidate without going through an election process.

Third, in some experiments, the voters were not able to decide the eventual appointment, while city and county leaders had power to allocate town leadership positions regardless of the actual number of votes the candidates received. The voters only "*tuixuan*" (elect candidates), but the party organization "*deingren*" (decides who will get what position). For example, the head township position was given to the person who came in sixth in the election; and the candidate who came second was offered only the fourth position in the township government in the 2006 township election in Ya'An (Baogang He and Stig Thøgersen 2006). This repeated the early practice of village elections, for example, in Wuyun town, Zhejiang, in which villagers elected the committee members, but township leaders decided the profile of the village committee. It is to be expected that such a practice might stop in the future as happened in the case of village elections (chapter 2).

Fourth, township elections were a controlled participatory process. A small "leading group" of the party organization controlled each step, and took all necessary measures to minimize uncertainty. They were able to use the party disciplinary mechanism to ask candidates to withdraw or turn out for elections.

A slightly improved procedure is the political examination of a candidate's qualification. Originally it was proposed that a political examination should be in place after the popular election for candidates; this provision gave the party organization the power to terminate the candidature on the basis of political examination. After the debate, Zhang Jinming the deputy party secretary of Ya'an city, decided that the political examination should be carried out before the election because the party should respect the choice of

voters and the party should avoid a risk of denying such a choice once it had been made.

12.5 Utilitarian Approach toward Township Elections

The motivation for township elections should be understood in the context of pressures that township leaders face. They have been confronting villagers' protests and discontent, the tension between local cadres and villagers, the problem of corrupt leaders and the difficulties of collecting tax and fees. It is political pragmatism that leads some local leaders to employ election and democracy as a new way of political ruling and a new mechanism of control. A utilitarian view of township elections is at work.[6] Local leaders' motivations for township elections can be summarized as follows:

Improving the party's management system. Local leaders believe that the party's management of cadres should shift from the direct appointment of specific persons to the establishment of a mechanism or system whereby the Party Committees could manage the cadres by fair and just means. In this way, party leaders can be freed from large numbers of trivial personnel disputes, reduce grievances and friction to some extent, and successfully avoid all sorts of suspicion and misunderstanding that people have about the management of cadres (Zhang Jinming, 1999:16). Public and direct elections are thus seen as the cost-saving method to produce trustworthy leadership backed by an involved electorate. Township elections can produce a form of government that the villagers can be satisfied with.[7] They would make the position of township chief more secure.

Reducing the tension between cadres and villagers. As is always the case, those who are selected by the party's personnel organization are not welcome by the villagers. To reduce the tension, local leaders sought a democratic method, that is, to let villagers nominate candidates who are supposed to be responsible for the people. Moreover, the whole election process was also used for publicizing the rural policies of the party and government.

Looking for a way to discipline lower level cadres. Township election was designed to resolve the problem of unpopular and unresponsive local officials. It was seen as a very handy device to remove entrenched, corrupt, and recalcitrant local officials without spending all the political capital necessary to carry out a full-scale purge.

Mobilizing villagers. Over the years villagers have become less and less interested in the election for deputies of local congress and their political enthusiasm has

decreased. To reactivate villagers politically, local leaders decide to let the villagers elect township leaders. They believe such a move can stimulate villagers' political enthusiasm for political reform and enhance their political participation. Township election by the people is substantial, giving them the power to make a choice.

Seeking the honor to carry the first township election in China. In the case of Buyun election, district leaders had the clear idea that they wanted to create something new that would be remembered by history. Buyun township published a commemorative book of the Buyun election, keeping all official documents with signatures of all 11 organizers and 15 working staff members. They saw themselves as history-makers. The search for honor is a strong motivation for experimental township election, and to be the first in the country in directly electing the township head, or township party secretary, was one of the concerns. The media presented Buyun as "the first one," as an experience that would eventually help to break down the old system, and to create a new China. An editorial in the *Legal Daily*, for example, said history would remember Buyun for its role in promoting direct township elections and wondered if Buyun would be a sign of China's political system reform (*Fazhi Ribao*, January 23, 1999).

It is interesting to observe that there was a political competition for the first to conduct such an experiment and present a model for emulation. Guangdong province, which is generally believed to have lagged behind in the development of village elections, submitted to the National People's Congress an application for experimenting with direct township election, but the application was turned down. Buyun held the election without central approval and even without the approval from provincial leaders. Later Shenzhen municipality in Guangdong submitted a proposal for a two-vote (ticket) system that does not conflict with the existing law, and the proposal was approved in 1999.[8] The head of Dapeng township, Shenzhen, was successfully elected on April 29, 1999, but this election was behind the township election in Zhouli township, Linyi county, Shanxi province, which was held on April 18, 1999. It is amazing that the planners and media in all the other three cases of township elections in the wake of the Buyun election claimed that theirs was the "first" in China without acknowledging Buyun.

It should be noted that the question of which township held the first direct election of township heads is not as significant as the question of what consequences for the prospect of democracy and for pluralism and of what kind of an electoral process they are developing. One of the consequences is the formation of the consensus on democracy for a future China. Behind the competition for honor among the local elites are significant and important changes in the political culture at the local elite level. By participating in the

game of winning honor, these local leaders have confirmed and reinforced the assumption that China should be democratized.

12.6 Forces for and against Township Elections

There are four forces supporting and promoting township elections identified by Lianjiang Li. First, interbureaucratic rivalry may induce some officials to support direct township elections. The second force is the ideational power of local officials who seem to believe that only direct election can convince villagers that the party is sincere about democracy. Third, enterprising local party leaders may introduce direct township elections for the sake of their own career and honor as discussed earlier. Last, the international community including American, Danish, and Finnish governments and international nongovernmental organizations may play a role in assisting direct township elections (Li lianjiang 2002b; Shelley 2000:225–38; Tianjian Shi 1999b: 385–412; O'Brien and Li 2000:465–66; Grove 2000:111–26). Indeed, despite the official ban on the direct township election, more experiments with township elections are being organized secretly with various international supports.

Some township leaders support direct township elections. Officials in Jiangxi and Hunan provinces, for instance, sent delegations to Buyun to find out about its election process and procedures. Guangdong and seven other provinces submitted proposals for experimental township elections to the National People's Congress in 1998 and 1999 (*Asiaweek*, February 8–14, 1999). Lishu in Jinlin province even submitted a proposal for direct county election. All were turned down.

Undeniably, democracy-promoting local leaders have been a driving force and skilled organizers of direct township elections. They initiated political reforms in rural China and introduced direct township elections. While one cannot deny these leaders may be motivated by their desire for democracy, yet many of them do have very pragmatic reasons in mind when championing direct elections as discussed earlier.

Opposition to direct township elections does exist among local township leaders. A 1998 survey the author conducted among 115 township leaders in Zhejiang revealed that the majority of respondents (77.4 percent) thought that direct township election was premature; only 21% supported such an election. Similarly, a survey of 536 township leaders found that only 19.4% of respondents endorsed direct township election, whereas 55% did not think the conditions for township election were ripe; and 19.8% held that direct township election was not suitable for China (Xiao Tangbiao 2001).

National leaders' attitudes toward direct township elections have been mixed. Jiang Zemin himself tentatively endorsed the idea of extending village elections in 1997 (White 1998:263–67). Between 1997 and 1998, a Jiang adviser proposed upgrading and expanding the elections to the level of township by 2003. Jiang, however, dropped the proposal (Lam 2000). At the Fifteenth Party Congress in 1998, Jiang fully supported village elections, but made no mention of township elections. On September 6, 2001, when former U.S. President Jimmy Carter raised the question of extending village elections to the township, Jiang seemed to take for granted that China was already carrying out direct township elections. This indicates a lack of attention to the issue.[9] Jiang rejected Peng Zhen's vision that "after villagers have learnt how to govern a village, they can govern a township; and after they have learnt how to govern a township, they can govern a county" (Lianjiang Li 2002b:721).

Zhu Rongji openly and clearly supported the extension of village elections to a higher level. On March 15, 2000, when a Danish journalist asked Zhu about the extension, Zhu replied: "As for the question of which level direct elections can be extended to, I hope the quicker the better" (Li Fan 2000:1). Chief of party personnel Zeng Qinghong was reported to have issued an internal document in 2000 encouraging more experiments on township elections. Likewise, Wei Jianxing, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, was reported to have called upon villages and townships officials to "increase the transparency of government work and promote democracy, so as to boost rural reform and stability" (Lam 2000).

In 2002, an article published in *China Reform* argued that the Chinese government should allow township to directly choose their leaders. The journal, sponsored by the Office of Structural Reform of China's State Council, has as its honorary editor Wu Jinglian, economic advisor of Premier Zhu Rongji, and an editorial board stocked with liberal scholars and reform-minded economists allied with Zhu Rongji (*Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 2002). An experimental direct township election in Zhongqing was, however, halted in August 2003 and the party secretary Wei Shengduo who organized the election was dismissed from his official position and expelled from the party for his "violation" of the party discipline.[10]

The Ministry of Civic Affairs, with its institutional interest to further democracy, proposed township elections in 1998, well before the pilot direct township election in Buyun in December 1998. In March 1998, Zhan Chengfu, the Ministry of Civic Affairs official in charge of implementing village elections, drafted a document stating that "if approved by local authorities direct township elections can be tried in some places where suitable conditions exist." Though the proposal was rejected finally at the subsequent Politburo meeting, it gained wide acceptance at Beidaihe and even received the approval of Wen Jiabao.[11]

Institutions that are opposed to direct township elections include the National People's Congress. In February 1999, the NPC sent a research team to Buyun, where direct township election was held in December 1998. After that, all files and materials about the Buyun election were suddenly closed off, and all discussion of the incident came to an abrupt halt. The Chinese Central Television abruptly cancelled plans to rebroadcast the Buyun election program. In 1999, Li Peng, the NPC chairman, rejected Shenzhen's direct township election proposal submitted to the NPC. The NPC issued a document in July 2001 to halt experimental direct township elections. This forced democracy activist Li Fan to abort an election experiment he had carefully planned in Hainan province in 2001.[12]

Two main reasons are behind the NPC's reaction. First, the NPC views the direct township elections as unconstitutional because the constitution stipulates that only the People's Congress at the township level has the power to elect and remove the head of a township. Second, direct township elections will reduce the power of the local People's Congress, and will subsequently undermine the NPC's control of local elections.

Another opposing body is the Central Party Organization, which is against township elections. It fears that any direct election will reduce its power to appoint its candidates. It also fears that direct elections will undermine the power of the party and create an uncontrollable situation, especially when nonparty members win. Their fears are not unfounded, as shown in a study where up to 8% of the winners in township elections conducted by people's deputies in 10 counties were "dark horses" not nominated by the party organization (Yawei Liu 2001a).

Another structural obstacle is found in the central-local relationship in China. The truly contested, open elections above the level of rural counties in the PRC could threaten a rapid unraveling of CCP authority. Chas W. Freeman argues,

> On the mainland China, the provinces dispose of a great deal more fiscal authority than any level of government below the central authorities in Taipei do in Taiwan. The decentralized structure of Chinese government (by contrast with the centralized structure of the party) means that the incentives for nonparty victors in elections at the upper levels of local government in the PRC to join the monopoly ruling party will almost certainly be a great deal weaker than they were in Taiwan.[13]

There are administrative issues arising from township elections. Given the current *bianzhi* system (Brodsgaard 2002) it would be a problem if a non-public service person were elected. In addition, to prevent localism from occurring, natives have been prohibited from taking the leading position in

their locality in both traditional and contemporary customary practice. Township elections, however, are likely to challenge this practice and more natives are likely to be elected as local leaders. Moreover, for the sake of administrative management and the reduction of cost, it is now proposed that the township government as a layer of governmental organization should be abolished and turned into the dispatched office of the county government, or that townships should be merged and streamlined (Dong Lisheng 2006:513–15). While the abolishment proposal is unlikely to take place, the merger has been implemented in recent years and its impact on township elections needs to be investigated further.

12.7 Conclusion

On the whole, the opposition from national leaders and the existing structural institutions are now far greater than the driving forces for direct township elections. With the passage of time, however, the balance may tilt in favor of further direct township elections. It is likely that the pressure for direct township elections from below and from the international community will grow stronger and stronger.

Noticeably, township elections can be seen as a design to strengthen authority rather than weaken it. All forms of township election attempt to combine election and selection, and to maintain a balance between the party's authority and the people's free choice. The mechanism in township elections should not be understood in terms of liberal democracy. The purpose of the township elections has not been to realize the rights and liberties of the people but rather has been "designed to align voter preferences with the preferences of Communist Party committee" (Manion 2000:764). Such an attempt can be seen as an integral of a mixed regime where a form of democracy is combined with authoritarian elements, which will be discussed in section 13.4.

CHAPTER 13

Conclusion

13.1 Variations of Village Democracy

The processes of rural democratization are full of contradictions, conflicts, and confusions with a great number of variations. Four models can be used to describe the current state of affairs in Chinese village politics. They are the absence of democracy, formalistic democracy, semidemocracy, and established village democracy.

The absence of village democracy has the following features: the denial of rights to women, the absence of formal democratic procedures, the nonexistence of elections, and the absence of a village representative assembly (VRA). In this category, authoritarian village leaders control village affairs without being subject to elections or the VRA; a few township leaders refused to hold village elections, and they appointed village committee members. These townships even defied the order of the Ministry of Civic Affairs and continued their illegal practices like appointing village heads as revealed by an analysis of the 850 letters and visitors received by the office of the Ministry of Civic Affairs in 2001 (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2002*:63–66).

Formalistic democracy makes a little progress in terms of the recognition of, and partial compliance with, formal democratic procedures, but there is an absence of any meaningful democracy. Village elections might be held and most electoral procedures are probably followed but there is an absence of competition and therefore choice for the voters. VRAs exist, but are held only once a year merely as a ritual or formality. Village representatives are appointed by village party secretaries rather than being elected by villagers. In some cases, village party secretaries control the whole process of elections,

mobilization of mass participation, and the buy-off of voters through the resources they control.

Three types of noncompetitive elections exist where formalistic democracy prevails. The first genre is muddled elections in which voters lack information about electoral procedures and township and villager leaders conduct elections without providing detailed information about candidates and procedures. These muddled elections are nothing more than formality. The second genre is manipulated elections in which village party secretaries manipulate electoral procedures, select their own favored candidates, and predetermine the result of elections. Prior to these elections, voters know who will be the winner and do not experience any anxiety or excitement.[1] These manipulated elections take place in authoritarian villagers where competitiveness is absent and popular participation is low (O'Brien 1994:54). The third type of noncompetitive election is hoodlum elections in which a village ruffian stands for a village leadership position and wins the election by means of threats and intimidation. For example, an addicted gambler was elected village head of Nanyang village, Reian county, and in 1996 the elected village head of Hongguang village was a former convict.[2]

These muddled, manipulated, and hoodlum elections tend to invite the villagers' criticism, skepticism, and resistance, and contribute little to good village governance. Villagers adopt various measures against these forms of elections, such as nonparticipation, appeal to upper levels, or nomination of their own candidates. Through villagers' constant struggles, semicompetitive elections have been gradually developed.

Semi-village democracy takes a few steps toward partially meaningful democracy in terms of semicompetition and the increasing uncertainty of elections, and active participation by some villagers who fight for their village citizenship. VRAs are held several times each year and they occasionally make village policy. Nevertheless, the competitive nature of village elections is constrained, with political liberty being very limited, political competition severely restricted, and the fairness of elections quite compromised. In addition, the effective power of elected village chiefs is limited and village party secretaries still dominate village life.

Established village democracy involves a great advance in terms of fair and free village elections, elected village chiefs being able to control village affairs, and village party secretaries being elected either by all villagers or party members. Village leaders follow democratic rules and learn to use democratic means to solve social problems more and more often. VRAs are held more than 10 times a year and they make decisions about the important issues such as distribution of village income, land use, and village enterprise. There is an active citizenship and wide participation in the political process. This established

village democracy, however, cannot be regarded as full democracy, because it is still embedded in authoritarian structures.

Among these four types, the categories of the absence of democracy and well-established village democracy are both very rare. In terms of the absence of village elections, very few villages refuse to hold elections. In my rough estimation, under 2% of villages fall into the category of "absence of village democracy." Most villages fall between formalistic democracy and semidemocracy; while the number of formalistic democracy villages remains a majority, the number of semidemocratic villages is increasing.

Despite the vagaries of the process, the trend is a move from the absence of democracy to formalistic democracy, from formalistic democracy to semidemocracy, and from semidemocracy to established village democracy. In the 1993–94 trip, almost all township officials I met and interviewed considered village elections premature because villagers are not capable of participating in direct elections, and village elections would be detrimental to the dominant status of the Communist Party. Even in 1998, local officials suggested to me that the Organic Law should be revised to allow for voting by households and even indirect elections for village chiefs. Local officials and scholars remain concerned that one day the process of village elections would be stopped or reversed.

Village elections have nevertheless been developing and improving despite resistance by local officials. There has also been a transformation from a phony to a partially true village democracy with democratic elements increasing to an impressive level. Take, for example, the changing criteria for a good election. In 1993–96, the criteria for successful elections consisted of a smooth process with no violence and a high turnout rate. Chinese officials from the Ministry of Civic Affairs, according to Howell (1998),

> have devised their own system for evaluating the quality of elections. "Good" provinces are those where villages stand more than two candidates for the village chair and where these candidates campaign. In 1995 the Ministry added a third criterion, namely, the existence of a separate voting booth that would permit secret voting.

The national surveys conducted by the Ministry of Civic Affairs found that 65.8% of the respondents reported that the procedures of village elections were fair and being properly followed in 1998, this increased to 71.7% in 1999, dropped to 69.5% in 2000, and increased to 79.4% in 2001, reaching 95.3% in 2003 (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie* 2002:600). More and more villages are adopting formalistic democracy in terms of following electoral procedures, but, of course, such procedural

democracy does not guarantee substantive democracy. Chinese villages are still a long way from developing substantive democracy in terms of democratic and deliberative decision-making processes.

13.2 Explaining Variations: Power and Interests

This book studies in detail how three key factors—township leaders, village economy, and social kinship—shape village democracy, and account for the variations and different levels of village democracy in different villages. It has identified the conditions under which authoritarian village leaders are able to hold on to their power, and the means by which other actors can develop an increase in democratic potential.

Village democracy can only work if local power-holders find that the benefits of democracy outweigh its costs and that it helps to reduce conflict and promote stability. Township leaders were originally opposed to village elections that removed their power to appoint villager leaders. But through the process of village elections, they found that VRAs can assist them in solving controversial questions about village membership (chapter 3). Furthermore, *haixuan* saves their energy and time by reducing conflict (chapter 2). Of equal importance, they discovered that democratic means can be used to regain their control over village leaders. For example, they even encourage electoral rivalry within a village so that competing factions will seek help from the township (chapter 9).

Local actors adopt a cost-benefit analysis of democratic development. As each village has its trial of village elections and democracy, some find greater benefits, while others find greater costs, thereby creating varying patterns and levels of political development. Some villagers activate democratic electoral norms in practical fashion. By contrast, other actors, such as township leaders, attempt to invalidate these norms by other means, for example, through the appointment of village chiefs.

Village democracy is absent when local leaders make economic development a priority and view democracy as unnecessary or unsuitable for poor rural villages, or as an obstacle to development in terms of slow decision making. In this situation, paternalistic village leaders often think that it is a burden to hold VRAs to make decisions, arguing that it is better to let a few benevolent leaders make the right decisions. They employ Confucian principles of righteousness and virtue as a tool for managing village affairs and gaining popular support, thus eliminating the need to rely on village democracy. The conditions that lead to the absence of democracy also include poor village economies that do not provide sufficient material incentives for villagers to participate in village politics and do not create alternative economic groupings such as the new rich, who might be interested in opposing the domination of village party secretaries.

Village democracy can take root if it translates interests into basic rights that enable villagers to defend their interests. It takes root when the new rich who constitute a new social and political force defend their interests through using the mechanisms of human rights and electoral procedure. They are able to resist the domination of and manipulation by village party secretaries by drawing on their economic wealth and resource. Village democracy provides a mechanism whereby the new rich can compete for village power and influence political decision making.

Local governments cannot impose their will when commercial interests are strong. Local power-holders have to soften their coercion tactics when they face the resistance from the new rich because they have to rely on the rich for their revenue. Villagers in some places in Zhejiang have refused to allow village party secretaries to be the chair person of the village economic association, insisting that the chair person of the village economic association or corporation must be elected. In the wake of village elections, two rich villages in Zeguo town passed a resolution to manage their own accounts through village self-government, replacing the previously imposed township's management system. Zeguo town leaders could not stop this resolution and have had to accept it.[3]

The power of kinship has various roles and its impact depends upon how local actors use it. Smart village party secretaries often use it to consolidate their power basis. The new rich can use the traditional power of kinship to challenge the domination of village party secretaries. Minority kinship groups can establish a coalition force to resist the domination of majority kinship. The strength of kinship force is related to the level of the economy; its power is likely to be weakened if commercial interests take over the interests of kinship.

The opposition between the interest of ordinary villagers and the vested interests of cadres are the driving forces of village democracy. This gives rise to an unstable and conflictive circumstance in which elections and village democracy are employed as a mechanism to ease these tensions. In particular, the institution of VRA has been developed and improved to deal with structural conflicts of interests. In facing conflicts of interests, village democracy will ensure a fair distribution of benefits and costs, articulate and balance diverse interests, and that policy is just, to avoid mistakes, and to reduce social conflicts.

Often serious corruption (see Xiaobo Lu 2000), erroneous decisions by one or two village leaders, tense social conflicts, and local disorder are the triggering factors that lead to democratic connections between power and interests. To curb corruption, village democracy establishes a check system in which villagers can use the VRA to express their views, while village chiefs can use village committees as a counterbalance to the power of the party secretary.

Electoral institutions empower villagers, elected village chiefs, and committee members (Lianjiang Li 2003). Village committees and representative assemblies in turn restrict the behavior of village party secretaries.

The origins of Chinese rural democratization lie in the calculation of interests (For a general discussion see Drake and McCubbins 1998:12). The interests of the Chinese central government include legitimacy, stability, and authority. The national leadership sees village self-governance and election as a new political control mechanism. For elected village heads, their interests include their power to distribute rights and duties in the village and other benefits from their posts. For the rich, village democracy is an institution whereby they can advance their business interests. For most villagers, interests may include their demand for the fair distribution of village wealth, even in some case their revenge against party bosses through elections. These interests drive villagers to defend their village citizenship (chapter 3). Plural interests and interest groups are the basis for village power competition (chapter 4).

There can be no village democracy if the incentives and motivations to activate democratic institutions are absent. In such a situation, villagers do not care about formalistic procedures; they have no desire to turn these formal procedures into something meaningful for them. The home villages of migrant workers have little opportunity to achieve village democracy because most adults, the majority of the village population, are physically not in their home villages; only the elderly, young children, and women remain.

Not all social conflicts over interests lead to the implementation of a democratic solution. In some cases, local leaders still prefer coercive measures as revealed by the instance of crushing a demonstration of villagers in Guangdong province. In other cases, like the famous Daqiuchuang village, local leaders revive traditional Confucian and/or Maoist ethics to manage social conflicts. In these situations, despite economic development and wealth accumulation, village democracy has still not developed.

The driving forces behind the development of rural democracy are "a compatibility of interests between party leaders at the top and rural voters at the bottom" (Howell 1998:103). Villagers have acted as local driving forces for change by using electoral laws to defend their interests. They now have a higher consciousness as well as a better knowledge of the law. Their key aspirations include free and open elections, democratic management of village affairs and effective supervision of officials. Furthermore, improvements to the rural economy and peasants' living conditions, following economic reforms and the opening up of Chinese society to the outside world have generated new demands. In the political sphere, villagers seek more information and opportunities to voice their opinions together with greater participation (chapter 5).

13.3 The Limit of Village Democracy

Although Chinese national leaders refuse to introduce national elections, they have, ironically, ordered local governments to hold village elections to increase the legitimacy of the CCP. Without substantive structural change, formal and democratic procedures are used to justify the continuation of the party's domination, enabling the party to claim that village leaders are elected by the people. In many villages, the authoritarian style of village leaders has remained untouched, as has the clientele system.

Villages are very small in size and population and they are at the lowest organizational level in the state structure. Village democracy, if it can be said to exist, is merely a microinstitution that functions in rural society within the scope of local communities. In other words, village democracy is limited to the village. From the very beginning, village autonomy has meant villagers organizing themselves to manage village affairs, with the village committee being limited to dealing with affairs related to villagers' interests. It does not concern itself with matters of state governance. Villagers only have the right to choose their village leaders and decide village affairs, and, in reality, even this right is often compromised. Beyond the village, they have little or no power at all. Strictly speaking, village democracy is distant from the realm of state democracy in that it is a local and grassroots version of democracy.

An ideal model of village self-government, according to Article 2 of the Organic Law, is that elected village chiefs and village committees are in command and make major decisions through the VRA; and that villagers participate in major decision-making processes. As discussed in chapter 6, some villages have achieved self-governance by contributing to taking decisions on redistribution of village wealth, land contracts, and village economic development plans through regular meetings of VRAs.

In most villages, however, the actual practice of village self-government is quite distant from the ideal model. Village leaders have been developing a dependent mentality. Rather than exercising self-government through which villagers can solve problems by themselves, village leaders in Zeguo township, Wenling city, Zhejiang, for example, asked the town government to solve the unemployment problem for villagers and to pay the cost for clearing up the rubbish in the village. The Zeguo township government organized travel to Shangdong and other cities and paid all costs for about 90 elected village chiefs.[4] This could be understood as a reward in the context that village leaders are expected to bear all the administrative burdens in carrying out orders from the township—for example, more than 100 tasks from township leaders within a month.

Township governments are not bound by the principle of village committee autonomy. Indeed, some township leaders maintain control of the village

committees by making the members virtual public servants (clerks), taking over financial management from the villages, and sending officials to run village affairs. In some areas of Zhejiang, Hubei, and Fujian, the townships manage village finances, leaving village accountants only in charge of the bookkeeping; and village accounts are audited by the townships when village committee members leave office.

Township governments often directly manage or superintend village affairs through sending "work groups" to the villages, or maintaining a permanent presence by posting a minimum of one or two township officials in each village. The villages, therefore, are not just managed by the party branches and the village committees but also by those township officials who reside in the village and hold management positions. This state of affairs has spawned much interference in decision making and the evasion of responsibilities. The 2001 National Survey on 104 townships in seven provinces found that 9.2% of township leaders repudiated the result of village elections, 11.3% appointed village cadres, 24% removed village leaders through administrative means, and 33.7% involved in the nomination process (*Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie 2002*:594).

It is extremely difficult for villagers to realize the ideal of self-government completely. A township leader in Hubei province said to the official Chinese X*inhua news agency*, "At this stage, the villagers do not know how to manage affairs by themselves. They do not even know what it means by autonomy. Then how should we grant them autonomy?" (O'Brien, Lianjiang Li 2002:465–89). Village committees are regarded as quasi-governmental organizations, village leaders are perceived as "officials" (*cunguan*), and the state policies are deemed to be much more important than that of village affairs. With the rise of China and an increasing state budget, the central government has provided more services to villages and spent more money in village school education and on village roads in recent years. These things that were once regarded as village affairs have now become the state's affairs; as a result the scope of village self-government has been narrowed. This reveals the limits of village autonomy and the associated practice of rural democracy.

Will village autonomy lose its significance as its scope and substance become more and more limited? In response to this challenge, some Chinese scholars suggested that the village chiefs should be appointed by township leaders in order to make sure that they are fully complying with the state policies. Such a proposal confuses village self-government and rural democracy. While village self-government (*cunmin zizhi*) involves a village's external relationship with the local state, grassroots democracy (*jiceng minzhu*) engages with the internal relationship between villagers and village leaders. These two are related to each other but should not be seen as the same thing (Ding Yijiang 2001:93). A village committee, whether it is produced by *haixuan* or other means, has to perform

certain administrative functions. It is not against its nature for an autonomous organization to take up administrative responsibilities.

There is no theoretical base for the idea that a certain degree of administrative order is contrary to rural democracy. In Indonesia and Thailand, the village is absorbed into the state administrative system, but the villagers still have the right to elect village heads. In Bangladesh, state power had permeated to the rural grassroots in three ways: through bureaucratic strata, by democratic means, or through party politics (Ahmed 1989:495–516). The fact that the Chinese state has and will continue to influence village politics does not render rural democracy meaningless. It is only through empowering villagers and VRAs that the abuse of the state power can be handled adequately.

Village democracy if it exists in some villages is largely for the benefit of the new rich who enjoy the fruits of village democracy. The combined powers of the village party secretaries and the new rich dominate village political life, marginalize the poor, women, and migrants, and exacerbate political equality. The violation of women's rights and exclusion of women from the political process is justified by majority rule. In the context of an increasingly depoliticized, powerless, and poor majority, the actual meaning of village democracy is largely reserved for the new rich.

Relatively well-developed village democracy relies on the modern "slave"—migrants and their hard work. It would be good to keep the reference to Greek democracy and slave system. Villagers become rich and earn enough income by leasing their land or houses to migrants. In such an economic condition, they have plenty of free time to engage in discussion and debate, and be concerned with village politics.

By contrast, the poor villages where migrant workers come from suffer a great deal in developing village democracy: most young adults are not in the villages, and elected village chiefs also go out to find work. As a result, no one deals with village affairs, and it is difficult to get sufficient numbers of adults to come to meetings. The 2005 National Survey found that 525 respondents (80.4% of the surveyed migrant workers) said that they did not cast their votes in the recent elections. Even if they participated in the voting process, they often asked someone else to vote for them. In such a situation, it is difficult to develop any meaningful level of village democracy.

My empirical study demonstrates that participation is influenced by class strata. Cadres and managers of rural enterprises have the highest participation index, while ordinary farmers have the lowest score. It means that infant village democracy is largely pushed by the old class of villager cadre and new class of the new rich of rural enterprises. My survey shows that while the general index of political participation on the part of rural cadres is 14.75, the index of common villagers is 9.7. This seems to be in accord with Wu's

Table 13.1 The Index of Political Participation by Rural Social Stratification

Rural Social Stratification	*Average Participation Index*
Cadres	14.75
Teachers	10.26
Managers of Rural Enterprises	14.17
Workers in Rural Industries	9.97
Entrepreneurs	11.56
Businessmen	10.80
Workers in Private Sector	11.55
Specialized Households	10.58
Farmers	9.78
Others	9.70

(1998) conclusion about the polarization of political participation. However, we can also see a 10.26 index of rural teachers and an 11.56 index of rural entrepreneurs. The former constitutes intellectual elite and the latter economic elite in villages. The participation of these two groups falls between cadres and commoners. Thus we can say that there is stratification rather than polarization in village political participation (table 13.1).

13.4 The Mixed Regime

Let us look at a number of empirical facts about a mixed polity in rural China. A Western liberal and procedural idea of democracy is mixed with the Chinese authoritarian idea of democracy (Baogang He 1996). The practice of village democracy has blended direct democratic ideas and institutions (e.g., all villagers' assembly) with indirect democratic institutions such as VRAs (chapter 6), competition and participation with discipline and control (chapters 4–5), party domination with intraparty elections (chapter 7), the party organization with government organization (chapter 7), village self-government with top-down administration, and voter preferences with the preferences of Communist Party committee in township elections (chapter 12). In this mixed polity, the political aims are mixed ones and include stability, efficiency, legitimacy, democracy, and control. In theory, democracy relies on the most consent and the least coercion and China's authoritarianism depends on the most coercion and the least consent; in practice, both coercion and consent are employed and combined in different ways. Democracy is employed to strengthen the party's domination through elections, deliberation, and the rule of law. In short, Chinese authoritarianism is mixed with

limited democratic elements; and this mix is colored by the Confucian idea of the middle way.

The above facts and the coexistence of nascent village democracy with the Chinese authoritarian system lead us to consider the Chinese practice of mixed regime at the local level.[5] The mixed regime can be seen as a complex social control mechanism, a strategy of balancing democracy and authority, and a special political form of government. The idea of the mixed regime describes a complex system with a greater degree of reality so as to avoid simplistic judgment. This idea can assist appreciation of China's complex political system and provides a theoretical framework enabling us to grasp the changed and changing nature of China's regime at local level.

Mark R. Thompson (2001:63–83) characterized the Chinese regime as "early post-totalitarianism." Andrew Nathan (2003:16) argues that China has made a transition from totalitarianism to classic authoritarianism.[6] While these conceptualizations catch some aspects of the Chinese regime practice, no single model can take account of the complexity of modernity and the Chinese search for a combination of ancient authoritarian tradition and contemporary democratic practice. While the posttotalitarianism model has a point in stressing the continuity and adaptation of totalitarianism, it is inaccurate to illustrate the development of neoauthoritarianism and of nascent democracy in China. Although the authoritarianism model has the intellectual advantage of highlighting the main trend of Chinese political development toward a neoauthoritarian regime, it overlooks the persistence of totalitarian elements and does not catch the development of democratic elements. Moreover, these two conceptualizations only look at central government, overlooking local government and grassroots democracy. They consequently fail to grasp the importance of local democracy in conceptualizing the Chinese regime. Any regime theory must appreciate local politics and take vertical power relations seriously in its theoretical modeling.

Here I would like to recover Aristotle's notion of the mixed regime. The mixed regime was adopted by Rome and Sparta to break the "natural" cycle of degeneration that all simple regimes inevitably undergo. The formally political aspects of the Spartan and particularly the Roman government consisted of the consulate, Senate, and tribunes, which were expressions of the monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements of political organization. The mixed regime contributed to stability and longevity, as Aristotle, Polybius, and Machiavelli believed. Aristotle (1962:176) claimed, "The better mixed a constitution is, the longer it will last" and that "The best and most stable regime blends the rich and the poor, the wealthy and the freeborn" (McCormick 1993:894).

Behind the idea of the mixed regime is the philosophical principle that virtue is a mean between two extremes (Aristotle 1962:170). As Aristotle

(1962:170) argued, "Virtue is the guiding principle of aristocracy, as wealth of oligarchy, freedom of democracy. . . . The aim of a mixture of oligarchy and democracy is merely to have regard to the interests of both rich and poor, both wealth and individual freedom." Polybius (1979:310–11) also discussed the combination of "all the virtues and distinctive features of the best governments," "the power of each element should be counterbalanced by the others, so that no inclines or sinks unduly to either side."

A mixed regime is a wide world experience, ancient and contemporary. Often there is a mixture of political tendencies in the one polity, with a different balance of elements depending on the political context, for example, war or peace, level of economic development, or longevity. In the United Kingdom, for example, a constitutional monarchy with a House of Lords has been mixed with the popular election of the government of the day.

In the past, in the area of economic reform, Chinese leaders have pursued China's mixed economy in which markets and planning are mixed and a dual plan-market system for state industry has developed (Sicular 1988:283–307; Byrd 1989:177–204). Today, Chinese leaders have a desire to strike a balance between authority and liberty, and seek effective ways to cope with the complexity of modernity and maintaining stability. It seems that neither totalitarianism, nor authoritarianism, and nor democracy alone can offer a desirable solution to the complex problems China faces. This must be found by combining the best of each in a mixed regime. The resulting mix is not a static matter of checks and balances, but a dynamic blending of three elements that are needed in different proportions at different times. The mixed regime is an adaptation to contemporary challenges (Dickson 1997). It is the product of interactions between history and reality, between the West and China, and between various political forces.

The Beijing leadership has sought political stability through building a mixed regime that has democratic mechanisms and institutions to release suppressed popular sentiments, to respond to people's demands, and to solve daily problems through participation and deliberation. A chef makes the best dish mixing different ingredients, and finding the right ratio. Similarly, a smart politician creates a stable polity mixing and balancing authority and democracy. Chinese political order needs authority and democracy to regulate political behavior and deal with political conflicts.

Gordon Chang, Harry Wu, and many others believe in the collapse model whereby the CCP will follow the steps of its counterpart in the former Soviet Union. The collapse model fails to pay attention to China's mixed polity. The survival of the CCP in the 1990s can be attributed to its mixed strategies. In making a polity by mixing totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and democracy, Chinese leaders have adopted three main methods: pragmatism, gradualism, and *nalaizhuyi* (taking whatever suits them). This entails adopting relevant

and compatible elements from each stream, supported by partial ideological endorsement. The resulting mixed regime is inevitably characterized by internal tensions and contradictions. In this context, Marxist dialectics helps the CCP to accept contradictions, for they are regarded as a normal aspect of daily life.

The praxis of China's mixed regime appears to follow a pattern whereby authoritarian elements constitute the essence, while democracy provides the formal instruments and procedures with democracy being minimal at best. This regime pattern combines the persistence of China's totalitarian legacy, and the domination of authoritarianism with a small proportion of democratic elements. The mixed regime as a whole system is not democratic. As Karl (1995:72–86) argues that "hybrid regimes are not democratic because of military domination and violation of human rights." Diamond (2002:21–35) also claims that "all hybrid regimes are quietly deliberatively pseudo-democratic." Nevertheless, the mixed regime does contain democratic elements in so far as villagers can enjoy certain rights, say, to dismiss corrupt village leaders and defend their interests through participating VRAs.

The mixed regime is dynamic process and there has been a trend toward increasing democratic elements in the mix. In future, totalitarian elements are likely to decrease, authoritarian elements will continue to dominate, and democratic elements are likely to increase. In some villages, democratic elements have already become a customary way of life and dominate the mixed regime at the local level. The character of Chinese democratization over time is from less accountable to more accountable government, from less competitive (or nonexistent) elections to freer and fairer competitive elections, from severely restricted to better protected civil and political rights, from weak (or nonexistent) autonomous associations in civil society to more autonomous and more numerous associations. We need to trace this process and explore the possibility that democratic elements are becoming dominant, while authoritarian elements are becoming less important.

The conceptualization of rural China as a mixed regime gives a more accurate and sophisticated view of the political regime at local level, and awareness of its dominant and competing tendencies. It demonstrates how various combinations of authoritarian and democratic elements cannot be ignored. It allows a better understanding of what may be politically possible in the Chinese context, and opens up a set of new research questions.

The regime models such as "democracy" or "authoritarianism" dominate contemporary discussions and theoretical categories of political regimes. They are analytically clear with normative dimensions of good versus bad. Politically, they enable citizens and others to be mobilized to fight for democracy and against authoritarianism and categorize political relationships in term of friends and enemies. Nevertheless, the white-black logic of either democracy or

authoritarianism is overly simplistic. It misrepresents characteristics, internal variation, and what can be expected of polity in practice. It neglects the long tradition of political thought concerning the existence, and even the preference of a mixed regime comprising elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy.

The idea of the mixed regime challenges regime transition theory. Rather than being in search for "regime change," China's political regime has already undergone subtle changes. The continuing mixed regime practice may mean that one day Western commentators will be surprised to discover that the Chinese political system has made significant changes without revolution in just the same way that Chinese economic system has been transformed. Of course, this is a hypothesis that will have to be tested in the light of future development.

The idea of the mixed regime is able to overcome the simplistic dichotomy between authoritarianism and democracy.[7] In reality, authoritarian leaders sometime use democracy to strengthen their authority, and local democracy is often pushed in an authoritarian way. While China is indeed, as Andrew Nathan (2003) describes, "resilient authoritarianism," this authoritarian resilience contradictorily relies on partial democratic mechanisms. As Minxin Pei (2006) has pointed out, China's political transition has been stalled, but numerous political innovative experiments have been going on in many parts of China. Chinese democratic transition is silent and evolutionary with characteristics that Westerners will not recognize as "democratic."

The assumption that authoritarianism will evolve into democracy is simplistic and prevents us from looking at the complex changing elements of the mixed regime, especially the changing proportion of democratic as against authoritarian elements. It overlooks Chinese concerns to combine democratic elements with authority in ways that can generate a dynamic blending of different elements needed in different proportions at different times. Liberal transition theories also cannot appreciate a strategy that aims to prevent the alternating cycle of rapid democratization and military rule as has occurred in Pakistan and other countries.

The pattern, speed, and method of Chinese political transition contain some unique elements that help to demonstrate the value and limits of other models when applied to China. There is a tendency to look at China's future by reference to contemporary developments in Eastern Europe and in East Asia. Robert A. Pastor (2000:301–27), for example, discusses potential 10 paths toward democracy in China with comparing a variety of transition experiences in other countries. Despite the potential value of such external reference models, their limits must also be acknowledged.

The "Solidarity model," in which a strong opposition from civil society forced the government to come to the negotiating table, also does not fit

China now. As Bruce J. Dickson (2003a:24; 2003b:140) convincingly argues, "Incorporating them [the economic and professional elites] into the CCP is likely to have the intended effect of stabilizing the political order, at least in the short run. If so, the emergence and strengthening of civil society will not produce an organized opposition, as it did in Eastern Europe, but a cooperative set of groups focused on economic rather than political issues. This would frustrate those who see civil society as an inherently democratizing force." Similarly, the Philippine model, in which a popular revolution overthrows a corrupt regime, does not fit China either. This is because the Chinese state has effectively and ruthlessly suppressed and prevented any dissident group from forming an opposition party.

A more fruitful way of looking at the future of Chinese political development is to focus on China's local and indigenous development in the villages and trace its ramifications in the party and at higher levels—in other words, by seeing local change as a catalyst for national transformation. In Wenzhou, a private economy has thrived and democratic elements have developed. It is not unreasonable to expect that this Wenzhou model might become a national trend of democratic development associated with rapid economic development.

13.5 The Prospects of China's Democracy

Before we discuss the impact of village democracy on the prospect of national democracy in China we need to be cautious about noting several serious challenges to the infancy of rural democracy. First, the trend of the increasing administrative interference undermines the basis of village self-governance, narrows the scope of what village self-government can do, and even often leads to the call for the direct appointment of village chiefs in order to achieve hierarchal accountability and administrative efficiency. Such calls for direct appointment of township magistrates and municipal city mayors are made in Taiwan even today.

Second, the rapid growth rate of urbanization challenges the quality of rural democracy. The percentage of rural population dropped from 82% in 1978 to 58% in 2004. The author has observed in Zhejiang and Hubei that most urbanized villages do not have good electoral performance when village committee members become managers of a company, or when village committees transforms itself into a *juminweiyuanhui* (urban residents' committees) in cities. When able but authoritarian figures control the modern company in the village, there is little development of village democracy. When villagers adopt an urban life style, they become less interested in elections. It might be argued that when villagers and cadres are influenced by their surrounding city environments, the absence of democracy in the city

has a negative impact on village elections. This phenomenon is owing to the unique Chinese situation where the political structure of city life is still authoritarian. The Chinese case shows that urbanization seems to have a negative impact on village democracy and, thus refutes the modernization theory, which finds a close association between urbanization and democratization.

Third, the merger of villages is now taking place in rural China. The number of total villages dropped from 940,617 down to 734,715 in 2000 and 652,718 in 2004. The size of one village has significantly increased; it has 40 production teams and 8,000 villagers, the equivalent to the population of a small town (*xiang)*. The amalgamation reorganizes village resources, raises the level of nonacquaintance among villagers, and increases the rate of "unsuccessful elections" (no village chief can be elected).

Fourth, the globalization of village and township economy provides an opportunity for outsider business communities to influence the election process. Apart from township leaders' manipulation and control, outside business people are an additional influencing factor. In one instance, in one village near Beijing, the author has found that an outsider business man spent a significant amount of money to help one person to be elected. How these above factors complicate and influence rural democracy needs to be studied further.

Now let us turn to the implication of rural democracy for China's national democratization. Larry Diamond and Ramon H. Myers (2000:369) raise a question concerning the dynamics of what they call "pseudo-democracies." Specifically, they ask, "how and when do such limited [village] elections contribute to the emergence of democracy, rather than to the consolidation of one or another form of pseudo-democracy?"

Two metaphors assist us in thinking about the question of whether in the long run village elections are likely to, in Juan J. Linz's (1978:65) words, "lead to the destabilization of authoritarian rule." The metaphor of the gate says that if the "democratic gate" is open, one cannot stop the flowing water. In other words, the democratic flow cannot be stopped once it has been started. Indeed, village elections have led to a number of elections in urban communities, village party organizations, and townships. The metaphor of a bus says that in using the so-called democratic bus to attract villagers the intentions of the "driver of the CCP" are to maintain the authoritarian system. However, once the villagers board the democratic bus, they demand that the driver goes in a truly democratic direction. Thus, as some scholars point out, the process of village elections has been instrumental in forcing village party branches to adopt elections that have in turn led to direct township elections (Li Lianjiang 1999:103–18; He and Lang 2001b:1–22).

Six processes of elections helped to bring about the decomposition of an authoritarian regime. They are (1) members of the oppositions began to use elected official as platforms for criticizing the regime; (2) voters sent a strong

message demanding a regime change even though they know the people they elect have little power; (3) elections made it difficult to halt or roll back electoral reform; (4) opposition victories inspired the opposition to get its own house in order; (5) elections strengthened reform factions; (6) and the momentum of elections eventually carried the opposition into power (Lamounier 1989:52–69). Using this checklist to examine the process of Chinese village elections, we may arrive at the conclusion that the processes and impacts of Chinese village elections have just begun and it is too early to talk about macro consequences of micro changes in terms of the growth of an opposition party and its ultimate victory.

A brief comparative study of Mainland China and Taiwan can illustrate the limited effects of Chinese local elections on the formation and development of an opposition party. (1) Chinese dissidents have been skeptical of village elections; some want to engage in ambitious democratization projects only and regard village elections as minor and insignificant. They are different from their counterparts in Taiwan where members of the political opposition used local elections to voice their dissention from and critique of the KMT in the early years of democratization. The lack of dissident participation in village elections excluded the possibility of developing an opposition through local elections in Mainland China. (2) Voters in village elections cannot send a strong message demanding a regime change as village elections are confined to local issues. (3) Factions within the KMT fought each other, thus weakening the strength of the KMT. Moreover, the limited official positions available for KMT members forced some to defect from the KMT and join the opposition. The CCP does not allow open political competition; it is too early for CCP members to come out from the party to form an opposition.

In comparative terms, it will take time for China to introduce national elections. Given meaningful village elections took place in the mid-1990s, and the first direct township election took place by the end of 1998, it is reasonable to expect that China will not embark on a large-scale democratization program across China by 2015, as suggested by Henry Rowen (2003:127). In a comparative perspective, the Philippines first introduced local democracy at township level in 1890, and only 30 years later were national assembly elections held (Taylor 1996). Indonesia first had village elections in the late 1970, followed by national democratization in 1999.[8] In Taiwan, the first popular election for a Hualien county was held on July 2, 1950; the first direct elections for city mayors and county magistrates were held in December 1951; and the first direct election of the Provincial Assembly was held in April 1954 (Bellows 1994:114–48). Since the 1950 local election in Taiwan, the KMT has won more than 70% of seats in local elections from 1950s to 1980s, and acquired more than 90% of total seats in municipality elections in the early 1970s. Only 38 years later, the opposition

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was formed in 1986, and 50 years later the DPP won the presidential election in 2000. As China is bigger than Taiwan and as China faces more complex issues, its journey to national democracy would probably be much longer than Taiwan's.

Kin-Sheun Louie (2001:154) argues, "if a breakthrough in democratization is to appear in the near future to break the present stalemate, it is not likely to come from village self-governance and election. The latter can, at best, only contribute to this peripherally." Contrary to this argument, I would like to illustrate a number of ways in which rural democracy could serve as a starting point for a slow and gradual process toward China's democratization.

In participating in rural democracy Chinese officials and people have accumulated a rich knowledge about electoral rules and have experienced a democratic way of life. The repeated conduct of village committee elections over almost two decades has made many cadres and voters aware of the importance of electoral procedures and regulations and why they should be adhered to. This lays down groundwork for China's national democratization. In particular, Chinese people know how to introduce elections with regard to registration and procedures. In some areas, election days have been synchronized. It will be a very easy task for China to hold national elections. Knowledge and procedures are available to be adopted or adapted, and people have been familiarized with them.

Village democracy practice helped to form and develop democratic political culture and nourish a consensus on democratic value. In the early 1990s, the Ministry of Civic Affairs officials whom I interviewed were skeptical about village elections. Ten years later, the Ministry of Civic Affairs became one of the most prodemocracy organizations within Chinese government. Ministry of Civic Affairs and provincial officials have enhanced their commitment to democratic values through various overseas studying tours and through the daily handling of village affairs.

Village democracy reinforces the importance of the normative idea of democracy, which is increasingly becoming "a societal consent" that China will inevitably to go toward democracy. The practice of village elections and democracy indeed "put the concept of democracy in everyone's mind," and serves as a "democracy training class for eight hundred million villagers," as Peng Zhen proposed before.[9]

Competitive village elections are redefining and changing Chinese political culture. It is taken for granted in Western societies that competition is good for the function of democracy. In Chinese political culture, however, it is often presupposed that political competition is a bad thing, leading to division, chaos, and disorder. It is assumed that in a small village where everyone knows each other, it is difficult to introduce competition because it may lead to the losing of face, or the damaging of interpersonal relations. These assumptions

have proven to be wrong in practice. The actual competitive elections have shown that open and transparent competition is better than covert infighting behind closed doors. When the result relies on voters, a fair competition in fact lays a good foundation for good working relations between competitors. Village elections are changing the nature of Chinese political culture that has been hostile to political competition; they set up a paradigm for how political competition can contribute to political order, and this will have a great impact on political competition at the national level.

In spreading rural democracy, millions of local officials have been trained. Three sets of training textbooks for officials at the county, township, and village levels have been developed by the Ministry of Civic Affairs. Noticeably these textbooks are full of democratic ideas. The training textbook with official approval for the training programs, for example, *The Rights and Duties of Villagers*, contains a long list of villagers' rights with concrete example stories. It would change the Chinese political culture dramatically and encourage the growth of a democratic culture if books like this were widely used.

Through complex coordinating activities of the Ministry of Civic Affairs and its partnership with other international donors, a number of international projects has contributed to and promoted the interactions of three global networks of democracy-promoting activists. International networks include the UNDP, the EU, the Carter Center, the Ford Foundation, and the Republic Institute, the Canadian, Finish, and Danish Governments, and foreign experts and scholars; the horizontal network includes researchers and scholars from CASS, Beijing University, the Central Party School, Huazhong University, and others; the hierarchical network includes Ministry of Civic Affairs officials, local officials, mass organizations, such as the Women's Federation of Qianxi, autonomous organizations, such as Tianze, village officials, and villagers. This is a process of globalizing the village elections. This is a "tangible" sustainable institutionalized force that is poised to contribute to the deepening of grassroots democracy. Noticeably, there has emerged a large group of scholars (the number varies between 300 and 500), who have studied rural democracy and provided their professional assistance. This is an undeniable political force for political reform in China.

In the process of rural democracy, Chinese people are searching for a variety of strategies and routes toward democracy. The mixed strategies have attempted to balance democracy and authority; and the intraparty election opens a new route for democratization. As Gilley (2004:250) points out, "China's democracy will be brought about by the CCP itself, or more specifically by an elite-led extrication sparked by reformists in its ranks."

Comparatively speaking, electoral autocracies developed in Mexico, South Africa, and Taiwan in 1960–70s. They had limited elite party competition with a limited franchise, and severe limits upon the organized opposition. Local

elections have been seen as a common strategy to consolidate authoritarian regimes through including the previously excluded social forces, recruiting new energetic elites with popular support, improving local governance, and efficiency, and strengthening local authority. Local elections are not designed to bring down the authoritarian regime but ironically, they lead to eventual democratization in the long term.

Today, the authoritarian leaders in Beijing resist national democracy, delay the direct election of a chief executive in Hong Kong, but allow and encourage village elections. A resilient authoritarianism needs partial democratization to gain its legitimacy (Nathan 2003:6–17). It needs village elections as an institutional channel that provides an opportunity for villagers to disclose their different opinions, allowing various problems to be openly discussed and candidates to offer a range of solutions.

It appears that the Chinese authoritarian "parent" state has produced a nascent village democracy. Will this democratic "baby" grow, and mature until it eventually influences the behavior of its authoritarian "parents?" The answer is affirmative and is evidenced by the fact that most authoritarian regimes that have introduced local elections eventually led to national democratization. The comparative lesson offers a hope that eventually China will introduce national competitive elections. Village elections and democracy represent grassroots developments that have taken root, blossomed, and borne democratic fruits in some villages. They are helping to define the future of Chinese democratization.

Notes

Chapter 1 Introduction

1. *Legal Daily* September 30, 1994:6; *People's Daily* (Overseas edition) March 12, 1999:6; June 14, 1999:4; *Democracy and Law*, no. 1, 2000:15–17.
2. See Lawrence 2000:16–17; Grove 1997; Gadsden 1996; Constantine 1997; Melloan 1997; Slavin 1997; Sly 1997; Rubin 1997; Spaeth 1996; Kathy Chen 1995; Mickleburgh 1995; Mufson 1995; and Kaye 1995.
3. Harry Harding (1993:32–33) noticed this problem a long time ago: "as a result of the greater empirical detail and theoretical sophistication . . . it is becoming more difficult to comprehend the broad patterns of change and structure . . . the preparation and publication of research findings lag ever farther behind a rapidly evolving China."
4. There are different definitions and concepts of local democracy with different tasks, functions, and strategies in different contexts: see King and Stoker (1996) and Craig Johnson (2001:521–32). International IDEA's definition of local democracy includes modern citizenship, civic engagement, self-government, periodic and genuine elections, civic and political rights, local community participation, and meaningful dialogue, debate, and discussion on local issues (Sisk 2001:11–14). It should be noted that Chinese village is not equivalent to ward, town, or local council; and that the Chinese definition of village democracy shares some dimensions of local democracy discussed in the literature, but it has some unique elements and features.
5. These include interviews with Wang Zhengyao and other officials in the Ministry of Civic Affairs, Beijing, October 28–29, 1994; Wang Youfei and other officials in the Department of Civic Affairs, of Zhejiang province, November 2, 1994; Jing Baochan and other officials in the Bureau of Civic Affairs of Linhai city, November 6–7, 1994; Chen Yuzheng and other officials in the Bureau of Civic Affairs of Jiangbei District of Ningbo, November 8, 1994; Ren Yiqiou, the Law Office of People Congress in Zhejiang, June 7, 1998; Ya Minfu, the former Minister of Civic Affairs, Wang Zhenyao, and other officials, June 16–18, 1998; Li Qiaobai, the head of the Party Organization Department of Lishui city,

November 1, 1998; a meeting with a dozen elected village heads in Wuyun township, November 2, 1998; officials in Zhejiang province May 27–28, 2000; Shen Jianliang, the head of the Division of Civic Affair in West Lake District, Hangzhou city, May 29, 2001; a dozen village and township cadres in Ruian county, Wenzhou city, June 3–9, 2001; officials in the Ministry of Civic Affairs and a dozen female officials in Qixi county, October 1–11, 2001 and many others. Research fieldwork includes trips to three villages in Fuyang and Shouchang and Zhejiang, June 8–11, 1998; one village in Ma'an village in Beijing, June 14–15, 1998; Daludou village in Yangshang township, Wuxi, Jiangsu province, June 20–21, 1998; two villages in Wuyun township, November 3–7, 1998; one village in Yuchen district of Shaoxing city, November 8–12; two villages (Shuinan and Jianshe) in Wuhan, October 12–15, 2000; two villages (Shuinan and Jianshe) in Wuyun, May 30–June 2, 2001; three villages in Ruian county, Wenzhou city, June 3–9, 2001 interview; a field trip to Wuhan in October 2002; a field trip to Beijing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou December 2002; and six towns in Wuhan and Sichaung in November 2003, and more than ten field trips to Wenling between 2004–6.

Chapter 2 Development of Democratic Procedures

1. Interview by Xiang Hui and Lang Youxing with Mr. Mao at the Party and Government Office of the Laofangqiao township on August 19, 1999.
2. The author's interview on October 29, 1994 in Beijing.
3. The author's interview with Wang Yongfei on November 2, 1994 in Hangzhou.
4. The author's interviews with local officials in November 1999.
5. Lang Youxing's interview with Ren Yiqiu, section head of Provincial People's Congress of Zhejiang, August 1999.
6. He Baogang and Lang Youxing's interview with Ren Yiqiu, manager of the office of legality of Zhejiang Provincial People's Congress, May 27, 2000.
7. The author's interview with the cadres of Chengdong township in November 1998.
8. The author's interview in 1995.
9. The author's interview with Jin Taochang on November 7, 1997.
10. The author's interview with Xin Qiushui in October 2000.
11. The author's interview with local officials in Zhejiang province May 27–28, 2000.
12. On dismissal, see *"Minzhu he Fazhi" (Democracy and the Rule of Laws)*, no. 15, 1999; no. 2, 2000; *Xiangzheng luntan* (*Tribune of Villages and Townships)*, no. 7, 2000; *Zhongguo Minzheng (China Civic Affairs)*, no. 1, 2001.
13. Tianjian Shi (1999b) has applied institutional approach to village elections study.
14. For this idea, I benefited from my talks with Dr. Gu Xin in 2003 in Singapore.

Chapter 3 Village Citizenship

1. See http://www.schwenkidaho.com/index13.htm, accessed in July 2006.
2. http://www.qis.net/chinalaw/prccon3.htm, accessed in July 2006.

3. The author's interview with cadres of Beicun village in November 1998.
4. The author's interview with Ren Yiqiu, the manager of general office of Zhejiang Provincial People's Congress on September 18, 1999.
5. Discussion between Lang Youxing and Xiang Hui with Qian Ging, section head of Party Organization Department of Yuyao municipality on August 18, 1999.

Chapter 4 Competitiveness of Village Elections

1. The author's interview with the cadres of the provincial Department of Civic Affairs in 1995, and a number of field trips in 1995 in Zhejiang.
2. The source comes from village head Xie Zuoyan.
3. The author's interview with local officials in 1998.
4. The author's interview in Wuhan in 2000.
5. The author's interview in Wuyun in 1998.
6. The author's interview in Shuge in 1998.
7. The author's interview with Wang Anliang in the Department of Civic Affairs in Gaoyou city of Jiangsu province in October 2000.
8. "*Cunmin nen zizhi, dangjia shuan zuozhu*" ("Villagers: Now Master of the House"), a feature program by Zhejiang Educational TV Station, August 10, 1999.
9. The author's interviews with officials on June 9, 1998.
10. The author's interview with Ren Yiqiu and others in the Provincial People's Congress, 1999.

Chapter 5 Voting Behavior and Political Participation

1. As far as I know, the Chinese scholar Min Qi (1989) was the early pioneer in carrying out social survey on Chinese political culture. Generally speaking, those who produced excellent writings on village elections such as Xu Yong (1997a) tend to be skeptical of the results of most indigenous Chinese surveys due to the unprofessional survey workers, political control of the work, and cost constraints.
2. Sources from an open item in our questionnaire for voters.
3. Ibid.
4. The author's interview with the cadres in Laofangqiao township, Yuyao municipality, August 1999.
5. The author's interview with the cadres in Yuyao municipality, August 1999.
6. Sources from an open question in our survey in 1998.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. The author's interview with the party secretary in Xingmin, Reian municipality.
12. In West Java, Indonesia, it is found that income and mass media exposure have a stronger influence on voting than economic independence/dependence, age, and

occupation; and the number of administrators or the size of the village bureaucracy has a negative influence on voting (King 1983:85).

Chapter 6 Village Representative Assembly

1. www.usip.org/pubs/pworks/thurst23/chap3_23.html, Chapter 3, accessed in July 2006.
2. The author's interview with Li Qiaobai , deputy head of Party Organization Department of Lishui Region, November1998.
3. The author's interview in 1998.
4. The author's interview in 2000 in Wuhan.
5. The author's interview with the party secretaries and head of the village.
6. The author's interview with Li Qiaobai and other officials in 1998.
7. The author's interview with the village head of Jianshe village, Wuyun township, November 1998.
8. The author's interview in 2000.
9. www.chinarural/tjfx.htm, accessed in July 2006.
10. The author's interview with Ren Yiqiu in Zhejiang Provincial People's Congress, August 2000.
11. The author's interview with Pan Tianfu, the village party secretary of Qiaowu village, Zeguo town, on March 28, 2005.
12. The author's interview with the party secretary of Shuinan village and other village leaders in November 1998.
13. In contrast, according to Alpermann (2001:66), "in none of the villages studied did the assemblies overrule the cadres' proposals."
14. Similar practices took place in European villages. See Blum (1971:541–76). Also in Vietnam, as Popkin (1979:45) describes, "it was common for full shares of resources or eligibility for decision-making roles to be restricted to persons of a certain wealth or with a certain amount of land."

Chapter 7 Village Elections and Village Power Structure

1. Sources are from an open question in my survey: "What are your suggestions for village elections?"
2. Lang Youxing and Xiang Hui's interview with Qian Qing, section head of Party Organization Department of Yuyao municipality in November 1998.
3. Between 1950 and 1955, the percentage of nonparty members joining the KMT after local elections was between 3.6 and 18.1 (Chen and Zheng 1998:177).
4. Sources from the township people's congress and Xu Xiaolin, secretary of CCP Wuyun township committee.
5. A survey with the help from Zheng Xinglin at Zeguo town in July 2005.
6. The author found this in his research trip in May 2000. Also see a report on fighting on village seal in *Democracy and Laws*, no. 4, 2000.

7. There are different attitudes toward Article 3. Some scholars think it is "backward step," while officials from the Ministry of Civic Affairs perceive it as "a progressive move on the part of the Party since it defined the Party's exact role in the countryside and would prevent the Party from abusing its powers" (Liu 2001b:12). In the author's interview, one village party secretary complained that the new Organic Law defines the powers of village committee or assembly in clear and concrete ways; but the power of village party secretary is defined as "the core leadership," which is an "empty" word and lacks specificity.
8. The author's interview with Xu Xiaolin, the party secretary of Wuyun township committee, November 4, 1998.
9. For the Shanxi model, see Lianjiang Li (1999); Bai and Zhao (2001: Chapter 4); for the Guangdong and Hubei model, see Lawrence (2000:17); Li, Guo, and Xiao (2001:626).
10. In reality, local practitioners are highly flexible. For example, one village representative meeting elected a nonparty member as the village party secretary. As soon the person was elected, he was immediately admitted into the party (Xiaotao Wang 2003).
11. The author's interview with the villagers on June 2006 in Zeguo.

Chapter 8 Women and Village Elections

1. A 1986 survey shows that 204 (79.3%) out of the 257 students surveyed thought that the United States is the most advanced democratic country. While 91.7% of female students favored American democracy, only 73.3% male students did so (Wang and Wu 1989:27).
2. The author's interview in Wenzhou on June 4, 2001; also see the official report on the matter by Women Association of Zjejiang province, in *Zhongguo Nongcun Jiceng Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe Nianjie* 2002:270–71.
3. The author's interview in Wenzhou on June 4, 2001.
4. Talks between Lang Youxing, Xiang Hui, and Qian Qing and the section head of Party Organization of Yuyao municipality on August 18, 1999.
5. The author's interview with local officials in Ningbo in 1999.
6. There were two groups of elected village committee members, each comprising a dozen people. Interviews with each group were conducted separately although the same questions were asked. During the interview, it was apparent that the trainee group was much more confident and courageous in speaking out than the nontrainee group (He and Zhang 2001).
7. The author's interview with Wang Shuzhen, the chairperson of Qixi Women Fedearation on August 5–6, 2001. Also see Wang Shuzhen 1999:174–79.
8. The author's interview with the local officials in Zhejiang in 1998. As to organizational support for women's election, see Ma Yang 1999:150 and *Rongjialu baishitong*, no. 11, 1998:35.
9. Similarly, one argument in France is that "politics is, by nature, a field essentially suited to men, to which women should be admitted only in exceptional circumstances" (Duverger 1955:125).

Chapter 9 Village Elections and Township Leaders

1. On the role of the Chinese Communist Party in the process of democratization, see Baogang He 2006b.
2. Guo Xiajuan, Lang Youxing, and He Baogang's interview with cadres of Chengdong township, November 1998.
3. Lang Youxing and Baogang He's interview with the cadres of Tangxia township, November 1998.
4. Lang Youxing, Xiang Hui, and Baogang He's interview with Qian Qing, section head of Party Organization Department of Yuyao municipality.
5. Lang Youxing and Baogang He's interview with Ren Yiqiu, the section head of Provincial People's Congress of Zhejiang, August 1999.
6. In Indonesia, to become a village head, candidates must pass through a selection process. An examination of the records of 40 village elections between 1979 and 1981 shows that on average nearly 40% of prospective candidates were disqualified during the selection process.
7. Lang Youxing's interview with Li Guomin, director of Xinmin Branch of the Xincheng township, Ruian city, Zhejiang province on November 19, 1998.
8. The author's interview with a local official in 2000.
9. Guo Xiajuan, Lang Youxing, and He Baogang's interview with cadres of Chengdong township, November 1998.
10. Lang Youxing's interview with Xie Zhuoyan, the village head, November 1998.
11. The author's interview with Jiang Zhaohua, the party secretary of Zeguo township on March 28, 2005.
12. Lang Youxing and He Baogang's interview with cadres of Chengdong township, November 1998.

Chapter 10 Political Economy of Village Democracy

1. For various empirical claims on the linkage between economy and democracy, see John Helliwell 1994 and Yi Feng, 1997. The view of the close association between economy and democracy is rejected by Chalmers Johnson (1989:1–10). On the contingent relationship between economy and democracy, see Christina Leithner 1993 and Christopher Anderson and Jun Ishii 1997.
2. The author's interview with Wang Zhenyao.
3. The author's interview with Xiang Zhouyan, the village chief of Xiangchun, Tangshang township in Wenzhou, November 7, 1998.
4. The author's interview with Wang Anliang, an office in the Department of Civic Affairs in Gaoyou city of Jiangsu province in October 2000.
5. Mancur Olson (1993:567–76) argues in another context that autocracy will rarely have good economic performance for more than a generation.
6. The author's interview with local officials in August 1998.

7. The author's interview with village officials in Wuhan on October 13, 2000.
8. The author's interview with local officials on June 21, 1998.
9. The elderly probably like elections the most. An elderly woman told me quite excitedly that what she had received in the recent election was sufficient to cover her living expense for one or two months.
10. Lang Youxing's interview with Zhou Qingzhong, the deputy head of Shanmen township on June 15, 1998.
11. The author's interview with Wang Xiaoxu, the head of the Department of Civic Affairs of Henan province in October 2000. As for an analysis of peasant financial burdens, see Bernstein and Lu 2003.
12. The distribution of family income in the survey ranges from below 3,000 to 50,000 yuan. The number of low income families is quite high, while the proportion of high income families is very low. The majority of villagers have medium income.
13. King (1983:62–91) found that the income was highly related to the voting in the 1971 General Election in rural West Java, Indonesia; the coefficient between income and voting is 0.79.
14. This category may lead to a few problems, such as two criteria (collective versus private and agricultural versus industrial) being used, and overlapping economic activities. Nevertheless, for the purpose of the survey and for the specific question to be inquired here, it provides useful and reliable information.
15. In a survey study of political participation in West Java carried out in 1974, Dwight Y. King (1983:68 and 71) found that wealth measured by the amount of land owned makes a negative (−0.67) and tenancy a positive contribution (0.42) to the function of the vote in the 1971 General Election. Another study of rural Columbia and Brazil found that permanent rights over land were highly associated with peasant political efficacy and a prerequisite for autonomous participation. It follows that the type of land and of rights to it are important qualifying factors.
16. The author's interview with Li Qiaobai in 1998.
17. The author's interview with local officials from Haining.
18. I have taken research trips to both Zhejiang and Hubei and compared striking differences. In formatting this idea, I benefited a great deal from my discussion with He Xuefeng who was invited by me to take a research trip to Zhejiang in May 30–June 2, 2001. See Baogang He and He Xuefeng 2002a and 2002b.

Chapter 11 Kinship and Village Elections

1. Anthropologists are interested in the question of whether lineage organization has corporate land, and which variables influence the structure and organization of kinship. Burton Pasternak (1972), for example, stresses three factors as most significant: initial settlement pattern, the distribution of wealth, and the need for cooperation across agnatic lines for economic or defense purpose.
2. A classic study of the question of why China failed to develop industry and why Chinese lineage structure blocked capital development.

3. For example, in view of lineage influence on election, the Organization Department of Zhejiang Committee of the CCP and the Civic Affairs Department of Zhejiang province jointly issued a directive in the name of the Provincial Party Committee in 1992. The directive "On the Work of Village Elections in Rural Area" warned about "not press for elections in villages, and where feudal lineage forces are strong, villagers have little sense of law and order, relations between cadres and the rank and file may be strained besides other problems that may arise. Much work needs to be done before embarking on any election." The source is the internal official document issued in 1992.
4. Johnson (2000:623–39) defines kinship as the extended family, including lineal relationships formed by intergenerational linkages, collateral relationships linked through siblings, in-law relations created through marriage, and fictive kin such as Godchildren or foster children.
5. Talks of Lang Youxing and Xiang Hui with cadres of Party Organization Department of Yuyao municipality in 1999.
6. China's situation contrasts with the development of chieftaincy in Ghana. Under the British colonial rule, a minimal state was introduced and chieftaincy remained powerful. During the 1950s under an expansionist state, the national Native Authorities were replaced by elected local councils, in which chiefs held no position after 1954. By the time of the 1966 coup, under an incredible shrinking state, traditional authority of chieftaincy was reasserted in the face of state paralysis.

Chapter 12 From Village to Township Elections

1. For example, *China Central Television* broadcast an extended news report praising the Buyun election on February 26, 1999; also see *Newsweek International*, February 4, 1999; *Boston Globe*, January 26, 1999; and *Washington Post*, January 27, 1999.
2. Lang Youxing's interview with cadres of Qiansuo township in September 1998.
3. It should be noted that the problems occurring at village elections do not necessarily appear in township elections and that the positive effects of village elections do not automatically take place at the township elections. Each level has its own problems and effects. We cannot assume a simple logical extension.
4. The comments draw on my personal involvement in an international project on the township elections from 2003 to 2006 in Sichuan province. The project aimed to introduce large scale of township elections and to provide professional and democratic trainings for villagers, villager leaders, and township authorities. The project was delayed, the democratic nature of the experiment watered down, and the original plans, such as establishing an independent electoral commission and direct election of township heads, were not able to be achieved.
5. The author's interview with Zhang Jinming in 2004 in Ya'an.
6. Similarly, the arguments for village election are also utilitarian (Kelliher 1997).
7. Interview with Zhang Jinming on August 4, 1999
8. *Xiaocankao Daily News*, April 29, 2000, http://www.ifcss.org/ftp-pub/org/dck/xiaocankao/9904/990429.txt, accessed in July 2006.

9. See http://www.cartercenter.org/CHINA/dox/reports/2001report.html (accessed January 22, 2002). Various international players and communities have pressed China to introduce direct township elections. The Ford Foundation attempted to provide financial support for an experimental direct township, or even county, election in 1996. Both the EU and UNDP have also shown interest in providing financial support for such a move in terms of researching, training, and improving the electoral procedures. The Carter Center has now decided to get involved in improving the quality of the direct election of township People's Congress deputies and in advising on experiments in electing township heads.
10. www.chinaelections.org, accessed in July 2006; *Lianhe Zhaobao*, September 5, 2003.
11. The author's interview with Zhan Chengfu in August 2001 in Beijing.
12. The author's interview with Li Fan in Beijing in October 2002.
13. Chas. W. Freeman's email to Chinapol on January 1, 1999; and his permission was granted in July 2003.

Chapter 13 Conclusion

1. The terms "muddled or manipulated elections" come from Mackenzie (1958: 169–72).
2. Lang Youxign's interview with Li Guoming, party secretary of Xingming office, Xingten township, November 1999.
3. The author's interview with the party secretary of Zeguo, Jiang Zhaohua in March 2006.
4. The author's interview with Jiang Zhaohua on June 30, 2006.
5. My conceptualization of the mixed regime is different from that of Freedom House (2006), according to which China is regarded as a consolidated authoritarian regime due to the fact that the overall score of China's freedom is seven. Only when a country's freedom score reaches four, it is deemed to be a hybrid regime.
6. See Quansheng Zhao 1992:158–75; Petracca and Xiong 1990:1099–1117; Chang Maria-Hsia 1987:149–67; 1988:12–39; Sautman 1992:72–102; and Perry 1993:12–21.
7. Schubert (2003:15–25) suggests that village and township elections can be analyzed as the CPC's institutional adaptability rather its progress on the road to liberal democracy.
8. For a discussion of village elections in 1979 in Jepara, see chapter 6 of Schiller (1996).
9. *Xinhua News Agency*, November 20, 1995 (cited from *FBIS-CHI-95–223*, November 20, 1995:29).

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