

~~TRADITIONALIZATION~~
**RURALISATION OF AUTHORITY:
ROLES AND AUTHORITY OF VILLAGE PARTY BRANCH SECRETARIES
IN CHINA, 1978-1995**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of London**

by

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FOR THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER

AND IN TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER

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Abstract

This dissertation is about the roles of party branch secretaries in the villages after the introduction of Reform in late 1978. There are approximately 730,00 such individuals in China. This dissertation argues that the strategy of nominal encapsulation adopted after Reform (1978) leads to the emergence of four roles to be played by village party secretaries: two roles assigned by the state (state agent and entrepreneurial agent) and two roles demanded by their fellow villagers (moral middleman and lineage patron).

It further argues that the adoption of the roles of moral middleman and lineage patron is essential to the maintenance of their authority in their villages on which the roles of state agent and entrepreneurial agent are based. I term this phenomenon the "ruralisation of authority." If village party secretaries wish to play the roles assigned by the state by relying on the authority which comes from the state, it will be impossible to do so unless their authority is endorsed by their fellow villagers who demand that they play the roles of moral middleman and lineage patron. This dissertation, thus, rejects the totalitarian paradigm which sees party secretaries as the arm of the state who blindly obey their masters at the expense of their fellow villagers; it also contradicts the corruption paradigm which views party secretaries as parasites who amorally corrode the state for the sake of their private interests. The thesis of ruralisation of authority takes a middle ground: while recognising the authority of the state, it also suggests that the demand and structure of villages are important in legitimating the authority of the party secretary. Thus, it is possible to conceive a village party secretary who simultaneously plays four roles despite the apparent conflicts.

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"To write about village party secretaries in 100,000 words?" thus, asked a friend in Hong Kong in late 1992 when I started my adventure. I was quite surprised by this sceptic question as it never came to my mind when I proposed this topic for a dissertation. Since then, it increasingly became clear that it was not going to be an easy enterprise in almost every respect: the theoretical framework, the materials, the fieldwork, the language, the expenses, etc. Without the assistance of many people and institutions who have lent a helping hand this dissertation would not have been completed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title.....	i
Dedication	ii
Copyright Declaration	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	6
CHAPTER TWO THE MAKING OF A VILLAGE PARTY SECRETARY ..	43
I. The standard procedure of election	43
II. Variants and deviance	52
III. Patterns in the making of party secretaries	60
Conclusion.....	65
CHAPTER THREE THE PARTY SECRETARY AND HIS SUPERIOR (1): THE ROLE OF STATE AGENT	67
I. The role of state agent	67
II. The central leadership and party branches in the countryside	81
Conclusion	88
CHAPTER FOUR THE PARTY SECRETARY AND HIS SUPERIOR (2): THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL AGENT	90
I. The role of the entrepreneurial agent	90
II. The central leadership and party branches in the countryside	102
Conclusion	112

CHAPTER FIVE THE PARTY SECRETARY AND HIS FELLOW VILLAGERS	
(1): THE ROLE OF MORAL MIDDLEMAN	114
I. Party secretary as moral middleman	115
II. Pressure from village community	126
Conclusion	135
CHAPTER SIX THE PARTY SECRETARY AND HIS FELLOW VILLAGERS	
(2): THE ROLE OF LINEAGE PATRON	137
I. Party secretary as lineage patron	137
II. Lineage bond	150
Conclusion.....	157
CHAPTER SEVEN THE RURALISATION OF AUTHORITY	159
I. Authority according to Max Weber.....	160
II. The thesis of ruralisation of authority	163
III. Ruralisation of authority and peasants	166
IV. Towards an explanation of ruralisation of of authority	170
Conclusion	174
CONCLUSION	176
APPENDIX A	188
APPENDIX B	193
APPENDIX C	196
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	202
BIBLIOGRAPHY	203

INTRODUCTION

I. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

This dissertation is focused on the "village party branch secretaries" (nongcun dangzhibu shuji) of which, according to the latest available figures (1991), there were about 732,000 throughout China.¹ What do we know about them? Writing in the 1960s, when a village was part of a commune and was called a "production brigade," A. Doak Barnett detailed the work of party secretaries, and concluded: "The Party secretary outranked everyone in the brigade and was universally recognized as the top local leader."² Indeed, he was nicknamed "village emperor" (tu huangdi).

After the introduction of Reform in 1978, the work of party secretaries changed. Scholars offer conflicting pictures with regard to their new roles. Observations by Gordon White and Ch'i Hsi-sheng are two good examples. In his recent article, on the one hand, White points out that "the authority and integrity of the hegemonic political institution, the Communist Party, [...] have continued to decay;" but on the other hand, he maintains that "the networks of Party-state control in the countryside appear to have remained more solidly intact and effective (though this varies widely from area to area)."³ Ch'i Hsi-sheng, however, comes to a different conclusion, saying that the rural Party secretaries have only limited roles to play. He writes: "[...] the rural leaders' capacity to serve as the party's transmission belts had deteriorated to an alarming degree. Even the rural rectification campaign

¹"Jiaqiang nongcun jiceng zuzhi jianshe" (Strengthen the construction of village-level organization), Zhongguo nongye nianjian, 1991 (China Agricultural Yearbook, 1991), Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1991, p. 141

²Barnett, A. Doak Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 367

³White, Gordon. "Democratization and Economic Reform in China," The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs, No 31, January, 1994, pp. 74-75.

failed to arrest this trend, and it is highly unlikely that it will be reversed in the foreseeable future.⁴

This dissertation will address one core question: how has the work of the village Party branch secretaries changed after Reform (1978)? What roles are they playing in their villages? Do they only play one role or several roles? The term "role" is defined as "clearly articulated bundles of rights, duties, obligations, and expectations that guide the characteristic conduct of persons assuming such positions in a social system."⁵

This study will examine the two possible sources of the roles which a village party secretary may play: the central leadership and the village community where he lives.⁶ This approach is legitimate given the fact that village party secretaries are located at the interface between the state and society. As a party official, he will certainly do his best to complete the work as assigned to him by the central leadership. As a member of his village community, he also has to meet the demands from his fellow villagers. Here, I acknowledge the strength of the pressures exerted by the village community on a party secretary.

The enquiry about the roles of a village party secretary will also show how the roles fit within the framework of the exercise of authority in a village. This is a basic question in the study of politics in general. In our case, it is even more pertinent given the fact that the Chinese Communist Party (thereafter: CCP) is trying to establish its authority in China, not the least in the countryside, as its authority is waning due to the introduction of market economy since 1978.⁷

The scope of this study is to map out the roles that all village party secretaries in China may play. This study, accordingly, does not detail the differences of the role

⁴Ch'i Hsi-sheng, Politics of Disillusionment, the Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1991, p. 234.

⁵Knoke, David Political Networks, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 7.

⁶Without being insensitive to women, throughout this dissertation the personal pronoun used for party secretaries is "he" for practical reason as well as for factual reason. The latter means that the majority of party secretaries in China today are men, although there are a number of women.

⁷Ding, X.L. The Decline of Communism in China. Legitimacy Crisis, 1977-1989. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

performance across regions (North and South) or across economic performance of the regions (rich and poor). In terms of time, this study is about village party secretaries in China during the period of Reform. As a starting point, I select the year when Reform was officially started, that is December 1978, the occasion of the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee. It terminates in 1995 as this dissertation comes to its final writing.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will show that, as a result of the introduction of Reform in 1978, village party secretaries not only play one role (to manage organization affairs) but also four other roles: the role of state agent, the role of entrepreneurial agent, the role of moral middleman, and the role of lineage patron. The first two roles originate "from above" and the last two "from below."

This study is significant for four reasons. Firstly, the disaggregation of the four roles has not been identified in the existing literature. Party secretaries are more than becoming political middlemen,⁸ or simply implementing policies.⁹ Nor have they lost their power entirely.¹⁰

Secondly, this study will also shed light on how the relationship between the Party and society is being renegotiated in contemporary China. How does Leninist party (CCP) adapt itself to the new environment? The finding of the two roles "from above" shows that the central leadership does make a great effort to modify and adapt the roles assigned to the party secretaries in the countryside. The role of state agent and the role of entrepreneurial agent are two roles which cannot be directly associated

⁸Duan Shunchen Village Leadership in Contemporary China, unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Sussex, 1994.

⁹Rozelle, Scott D. The Economic Behavior of Village Leaders in China's Reform Economy. unpubl. PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1991.

¹⁰Nee, Victor, "Social Inequalities in Reforming State Socialism: Between Redistribution and Markets in China," in American Sociological Review, LVI, June 1991, pp. 267-282; arguing in the same line but from different perspective, see Whyte, Tyrene, "Political Reform and Rural Government," Deborah Davis and Ezra F. Vogel (eds.), Chinese Society on the Eve of Tiananmen, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 1990: pp. 37-60.

with a Leninist party which is originally designed to carry out revolution.

Thirdly, this study reveals the changing basis of authority in villages after the introduction of Reform in 1978. To complement some studies on peasant activism after Reform, this study presents additional information about Chinese peasants who manage to put pressure on their party secretaries in the exercise of authority. Peasants do not only start the Reform,¹¹ and transform China,¹² but also condition the exercise of authority by village party secretaries.

Fourthly, from the theoretical perspective, the finding of this study should inform the way we conceptualise the relations between the state and society in a country where a large population resides in villages.¹³ The debates so far concentrate on whether or not the state can reach society,¹⁴ and tend to forget to ask the mode of the relation between the state and society.¹⁵ As this study will show, the penetration of society by the state or the permeation of the state by society are actually mediated through human agencies who serve a unique function of "shock absorber" to absorb pressures from both the state and society.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

After this introduction, the following chapter will present the theoretical framework as well as the methodology. In Chapter Two, titled "The making of a party secretary," I briefly describe the process of the election of a village party branch

¹¹Kelliher, Daniel Peasant Power in China: The Era of Rural Reform 1979-1988 New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

¹²Zhou, Kate Xiao How the Farmers Changed China. Power of the People. Boulder, CO; Westview Press, 1996.

¹³Two important theoretical contributions in this field are: Gellner, Ernest Nations and Nationalism, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, pp. 13-14; Giddens, Anthony The Nation-State and Violence. Volume Two of A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, London: Polity Press, 1985, especially pp. 61-82.

¹⁴Shue, Vivienne The Reach of the State. Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988.

¹⁵This is not to deny that Shue has made great effort in identifying the pattern of villages in Mao's era (which she calls "honeycomb pattern"), but she fails to do so in her analysis of villages in Post-Mao era.

secretary. This should provide a good background for the following four chapters which will successively discuss the four roles of a Party secretary: state agent, entrepreneurial agent, moral middleman, and lineage patron. Chapter Seven is to bind together the previous four chapters by discussing the thesis of "the ruralisation of authority." In the final chapter, I will draw some conclusions and discuss the theoretical implications of this study on the relations of the state and society in post-Mao China.

CHAPTER ONE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter will be divided into three major sections. The first reviews the pertinent secondary literature relevant to the village Party secretaries. In the second section I will explicate a theoretical framework to understand the new roles of the village Party secretary. The final section will describe the methodology.

I. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A long time ago, Rousseau remarked:

"I conceive that there are two kinds of inequality among the human species; one, which I call natural or physical, because it is established by nature, and consists in a difference of age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind or of the soul: and another, which may be called moral or political inequality, because it depends upon a kind of convention, and is established, or at least authorised, by the consent of men. This latter consists of the different privileges, which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others; such as that of being more rich, more honoured, more powerful or even in a position to exact obedience."¹

This simple distinction might have contributed to the launching of French Revolution which demands were "egalite, liberte, fraternite." But, obviously, it has become the main driving inspiration to the socialist thinkers from Saint-Simon down to Marx. It was Marx who eventually formulated a programme, in his Communist Manifesto, for the communists to set up a classless society.

However, as exposed by Djilas, the victory of the communist parties around the world, ironically, create a "new class." This class is not based on their ownership of the means of production, but simply on their being the members of the Communist Party. As Rousseau boldly said, they are "more rich, more honoured, more powerful

¹J.J. Rousseau, A Dissertation on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind, Everyman edition, p. 160.

or even in a position to exact obedience."

The existence of this group of people have attracted the attention of students of communist affairs in the 1950s through 1970s. They immediately realised that cadres were indeed those people who enjoyed wealth, power, and status. Furthermore, cadres played important role in almost every aspect of people life. Both major and minor decisions are made by them. Finally, cadres were knitted into a very complex and vast system; it cuts across vertically and expanded horizontally. It is not easy to decipher the system and its effect on society.

A. First generation

The most important representative of the first generation of China scholars paying attention to cadres is A. Doak Barnett. His greatest contribution was that, for the first time, he described in great detail the activities of cadres in his book, Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China.² To be sure, when he wrote the book, China was a country behind the "bamboo curtain," no information flowed out of China, not to mention information about the Party and cadres. As he admitted himself, "the bulk of what we know has been derived from painstaking analysis of material published on the China mainland." This information, then, is complemented with that collected through interviewing emigres in Hong Kong.

In his book, Barnett apparently did not attempt "to present general theories;"³ he simply provides a detailed description of cadres at the ministerial, county, and commune levels. Here, we obtain Barnett's definition of cadres: "In its broadest sense, it includes all those, both Party members and non Party cadres, who hold any post as functionary in the bureaucratic hierarchies in China, from top to bottom."⁴ Barnett observed that the opposite of cadres (ganbu) is the masses (qunzhong), and the difference lies that in the fact that cadres belong to the ruling elite and this

²A. Doak Barnett, Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, Preface," p. x.

³Ibid., p. xi.

⁴Ibid., p. 39.

difference forms a gap which "steadily widens." Barnett adds that this difference is also felt "even at the lowest levels." Furthermore, "the cadres tend to regard themselves, and are clearly regarded by the Chinese masses, as a group apart because of their power and authority."⁵

This theme flows throughout Barnett's book. At the commune level, he described the structure and operation of the Party and administration. Clearly, the cadres dominated in the rural areas; from commune down to team, the Party members concurrently held key position in village administration. Both at the commune level and production brigade level, the Party secretaries became the top men. The Commune Party Committee secretary was the "undisputed top leader," and the Brigade Party Branch secretary "outranked everyone else in the brigade and was universally recognised as the top local leader."⁶ No Party organization existed at the team level.

The brigade Party secretary's power was affirmed by his position in the Party Branch Committee which, according to Barnett, was "the top decision-making body in the brigade."⁷ This committee directed the teams. Barnett writes:

"The brigade, for example, laid down specifications concerning the crops they grow, and outlined general production targets, although it did consult with the teams before doing so. Many of the teams's basic obligations were defined, in fact, in contracts which they signed with the brigade. The brigade also informed all teams of their obligations regarding both the land tax and the compulsory sale of grain and sizable range of other commodities."⁸

Barnett, in fact, also informs us that the Party and the brigade management committee is merged. The majority of the members of the brigade management committee were functionaries at the Party branch committee. "When the Party leaders met as members of the Brigade Management Committee they simply wore different hats and dealt

⁵All those in the brackets, see Ibidem.

⁶Ibid., p. 346 and 367.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 420.

with more routine, day-to-day operational problems."⁹ Here, Barnett seems to suggest that this arrangement is the source of Party's total dominance in the brigade.¹⁰ The Party secretary had, therefore, unchallenged power.

John Lewis' book, Leadership in Communist China,¹¹ complements Barnett's description of Party secretaries since it is devoted to the question of the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. More specifically, it focuses on the Party during the period of Great Leap Forward, 1958-1962. Like Barnett, he also tries to scrutinise the internal operation of the Party, from its techniques of leadership, its philosophy, its concept of "mass line," its structure, etc. The cadres receive one full chapter of discussion.

Writing with the same concern about institutions, Lewis also finds difficulty in defining the cadres. However, he makes a breakthrough in discussing the working principle of cadres, that is the democratic centralism. This principle is applied within the context of two types of cadres.

Lewis observes that the two types of cadres are leading cadres (lingdao ganbu) and working cadres (gongzuo ganbu). Leading cadres made the broad decision through consultation with working cadres; they cannot make arbitrary decision. However, consultation does not mean that decision is made through voting. "All party meetings are convened by leading cadres and led by those cadres. Leading cadres absolutely determine the formulation of general policy directives. Without this determination, the party leaders assert, centralization would fall victim to 'extreme democratization.'"¹² The working cadres, after the decision, "have the continuous responsibility to conduct investigations, to supervise implementation, and to submit reports on the results of their investigations and the implementation of assigned

⁹Ibid. p. 369.

¹⁰"If Party primacy was striking at higher levels, it was even more so in the brigade. In fact, the Party's dominance in Brigade B was total." Ibid., p. 367.

¹¹John W. Lewis, Leadership in Communist China, Ithaca: New York: Cornell University Press, 1963.

¹²Ibid., p. 191.

tasks."¹³

Lewis also suggests that the distinction between leading cadres and working cadres is to be seen from one's level and point of view. To the county (xian) Party committee, the Party branch secretary is a working cadre; to the Party branch committee, s/he is a leading cadre.¹⁴ In this sense, a Party branch secretary has double function: "a two-way communicator between the upper echelons and the broad masses".¹⁵

Within the context of the Party branch, Lewis says that his position is "probably the most critical in the entire party organization." Not only that he must guarantee the leading role of the Party in China, but also that on him depends "the success of balanced external and internal operation of the party and the supervision of the elite standards of the vanguard." This is why the Party secretary "assumes over-all responsibility at the lower level and is the key administrative link to the rank and file through them to the Chinese people."¹⁶

Lewis does not describe the specific tasks of a Party secretary in a brigade. However, he notes two things. First, he mentions the interpenetration of party and government. If this surprises Barnett, Lewis says that it is not something illegal. "The merging of party and government organs is prohibited at all levels except for the departments at the commune level and below."¹⁷ The purpose is "to strengthen the party's leading role."

Secondly, he also mentions the dissatisfaction among brigade cadres who lost their power since winter 1961 when production teams became the basic level of rural accounting and production. "The consequent shift of power to team cadres met serious resentment among brigade and commune cadres who were left with vague powers to coordinate plans, to urge cooperation among teams, and to organise

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 137-138.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 217.

ideological indoctrination."¹⁸ Contrary to Barnett's observation, Lewis argues that, in the early 1960s, a brigade Party secretary, although held a powerful position, did not play important roles in society; the team leaders had more influence.

Franz Schurmann addresses the subject from a sociological perspective, and goes one step further. He does not only describe the position of cadres in the whole system, but also their pattern of behaviour. He agrees with Barnett and Lewis that the term "cadre" is hard to define because it includes the double meaning of both personal leadership and institutional leadership which, theoretically, are mutual exclusive.¹⁹ A cadre is a person with two functions: "combat leader" and "official," or in Chinese communists' terminology, they are both "red" and "expert". If "red" is stressed, a cadre is to act according to values, ethos or ideology and see things in terms human solidarity. A cadre is to build networks of mutual involvement through personal relations. If 'expert' is emphasised, a cadre is to act according to rules and regulations and see things in technical rather than human terms. A cadre, then, likes to enforce compliance from his/her subordinates.²⁰

Schurmann does not speak directly about the Party secretaries. He argues that there is a continuity of China before 1949 and China after 1949. According to Schurmann, every social system is guided by "a trinity of ethos, status group, and modal personality." Whereas in traditional China it was represented by Confucianism, the gentry and the pater familias (jiazhang), in post-1949 China by communism, the Party and the cadre respectively.²¹ It can be inferred that, according to Schurmann, a village Party secretary as a cadre also functioned as what a jiazhang did in the traditional China. He sees the whole village as his family and he himself as the head of the family. Compliance was sought through the authority as family head. The figure of a father is important here; he gives directives and commands to the villagers as if he gives them to his children and grandchildren. The difference

¹⁸Ibid., p. 233.

¹⁹Schurmann, Franz, Ideology and Organization, second edition. Berkeley, CA: University of California; 1968, p. 165.

²⁰Ibid., p. 166.

²¹Ibid., p. 7.

lies in that he is "the revolutionary leader in an organization." In addition to that, "he is young, not old; he is a leader, not a conciliator; he operates in the public realm, not in private."²²

A village Party secretary is, therefore, seen as a "red cadre." This fits Lewis' description of a cadre who should be ready to sacrifice himself for the sake of the people. He should give example to his fellow villagers of being a good communist. Schurmann predicts, however, that, being a red cadre, a village Party secretary will face challenges from "expert cadres," the educated professional. How did they translate their authority in the countryside? This question is left unanswered by Schurmann. He briefly writes: "Party cadres still sit in the committee of the production brigade, but they may no longer impose plans from above."²³ Obviously, he is less interested in the question of cadres' behaviour than in the organization. As the title of his books clearly demonstrates, Schurmann's concern is to show how a new organization was born in China and how ideology helped "to cement" this organization.²⁴ This functionalist approach seemingly does not allow him to pursue further the more concrete questions.

From these three works, we are informed of minute details of the internal operation of the CCP and state administration. This information is useful, especially at the time when China was closed to the outside world. Their works, however, give the static aspect of institution and present a picture of China as a totalitarian, or at least, authoritarian regime. Both Barnett and Lewis present us a picture of cadres as "instruments" of the central leadership. A cadre is basically an agent. S/he does what his/her ask him/her to do. His/her activities simply reflect the policies set by the central leadership. The image of China's cadre system is one of a straight-jacket. Everything flows from top to bottom without any deviation or variation. Schurmann, indeed, adds new dimension to it when he says that a cadre is a replica of the old jiashang. Yet it basically does not alter the image.

²²Ibid., p. 8

²³Schurmann, op.cit., p. 494.

²⁴"Just as the ethos held the social system together, so does ideology hold organizations together;" ibid., p. 9.

B. The second generation

The work of sociologists William Parish and Martin Whyte broke new ground. As the title of their book indicates, Village and Family in Contemporary China,²⁵ they shift their attention from national perspective to the local-level one. This book, by combining documentary research and interviews with emigres in Hong Kong, tries to describe changes that took place in the villages since the communist regime took power in 1949: institutional arrangements, family organization, ritual, conflict. This book, therefore, is rich of detailed information on village life between 1969-1974.

Parish and Whyte indeed do not overlook the roles of rural cadres, especially those at brigades and teams. They discover that cadres at the grass-root level were **not** agents of change in their villages. Although they were Party members, they did not seek to alienate their neighbours and relatives. Unlike cadres at the communes who are outsiders, the primary social ties and loyalties of village cadres laid within the village. "They are tied to the people they are trying to lead by kinship and past histories of cooperation and competition, and if they cannot maintain the respect of local peasants they can easily be pressured to resign."²⁶ This partly explains why the central leadership was unable to use coercion in implementing its policies.

Control from superiors cannot be said to be non existent. There was ideological control; a cadre got his/her position because of demonstrated loyalty to the party. Administrative control is also operative: "A recalcitrant village leader will soon find his village without the supplies of fertiliser, machinery, and other goods that can be allocated only through the state apparatus, and unable to get loans for needed improvements."²⁷ Furthermore, a commune vice-secretary might also come to the village and intervene, even take over village leadership.

Nevertheless, not much could be done to curb the power of a village cadre, especially the brigade Party secretary. Parish and Whyte note: "As at the commune

²⁵Parish, William L. and Martin King Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

²⁶Ibid., p 328.

²⁷Ibid., p. 38.

level, the party secretary stands above all the others in power and prestige."²⁸ His power was such that he could transform himself into an oppressive leader dominating all major decisions in a village. For instance, during the Cultural Revolution, urban sent-down youths initiated a movement to oust a brigade Party secretary of a village; they started by collecting information. Peasants, knowing that while the youths could leave the village and they had to stay, refused to cooperate for fear of retaliation by the brigade secretary in the future. According to Parish and Whyte, this phenomenon is closely related to the fact that "the Chinese do not have the ideal of a rotating leadership but encourage leaders to serve as long as their service is approved by both the party and the people they lead."²⁹ Once someone became a leading cadre, and did not commit any serious offense, he or she could stay in power as long as s/he wants.

What is the incentive to become a Party secretary? Parish and Whyte notice that a Party secretary did not have much chance to enrich themselves or be promoted to higher posts. Some of them might be better off than their fellow villagers, but they were not terribly rich. As a matter fact, it was not easy to carry out the job of a brigade Party secretary because he was under constant watchful criticism from above and below.

Here Parish and Whyte discover two possible motivations. The first was ideological motivation. Although, a cadre was not a Maoist zealot, he might take the job out of a kind of "general sense of duty or obligation." For example: "A party member reluctant to take a post is told that 'a good party member doesn't let the people down.'³⁰ The second motivation was autonomy and opportunity. A brigade Party secretary (and other leading cadres) enjoyed relative autonomy in their daily routine than ordinary peasants. In addition to that, "they have more opportunity than others to learn new things, to apply their skill and know-how, and to associate with

²⁸Ibid., p. 37.

²⁹Ibid., p.108.

³⁰Ibid., p. 106.

more powerful leaders outside of the village."³¹ It seems, then, that power and prestige was the strongest incentive.

The relationship of a brigade secretary (and leading cadres, in general) with their kin was not clear. Parish and Whyte argue that, although they might offer some help and benefit to their relatives, it was quite risky business. They find, for instance, that all the sons of leading cadres could go to higher schools and that those who had elder brothers as leading cadres, became functionaries in the village as well. This, however, seemed to be a very minor operation. "Being born into the family of a village leader clearly has some advantages, but those cadres who show blatant favouritism toward kin are likely to lose their posts and have no privileges to transmit."³² Parish and Whyte tend to hold the view that the clan (which is traditionally strong in Guangdong Province) played very little influence in politics in the villages.

The finding of Parish and Whyte slightly alter the image presented by Barnett, Schurmann, and Lewis. They discover that cadres, especially the brigade Party secretary, were entangled in various different types of activities which lay outside the boundary of Party's job description. On the one hand, they show that village cadres cared a great deal about their relatives and kin, and quite often, did not hesitate to lend a helping hand to them. On the other hand, cadres, including were indeed under strict supervision by the commune cadres. They had to please their superiors as well as their fellow villagers. A brigade Party secretary, therefore, was portrayed as someone who knows how to navigate between a rock and a hard place.

Nevertheless, it must be said that it is not quite clear as to the degree and substance of the deviation by cadres. For instance, in what issue was a brigade Party secretary able to deflect the decision of the central leadership? Using what strategy did they manage to do it?

C. Third generation

The last question is a question which has to be answered by the next generation.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p. 114.

Interestingly, many of the third generation of Chinese scholars in the US engage themselves in the study of village politics.³³ This is, in part, stimulated by the rise of "peasant studies" in the West which took up its momentum in the late 1970s, and in part, by the decline of totalitarian model as a tool for analysing communist countries.

The work of Jean Oi, however, follows on to the work of Parish and Whyte.³⁴ Oi not only recognises the power possessed by cadres, but also points out that village cadres use their power to deflect one crucial policy from the central leadership - grain procurement policy. Contrary to common knowledge, Oi demonstrated that peasants, during Mao's period, were able to bend the policy through a patron-client strategy. For example, a team leader was a patron to the team members, but he was a client to a brigade cadre who, likewise, was a client to a commune cadres.

This network of patron and clients made the state policy of grain procurement ineffective. Right from crop estimation to delivery of grain, the state was simply prevented from knowing the real situation. The mechanism of control was debilitated because each patron and each client helped each other to benefit each other.

The crucial link was at the brigade level. As cadres at brigades were local peasants and not on the state payroll, they were most willing to protect the grain from state extraction.³⁵ Furthermore, the life and death of a brigade depended on its teams. They had to persuade team leaders to pledge the amounts they would send up to the brigade which were used to fund meetings, administrative costs, welfare costs, agricultural investment, etc. Therefore, "brigades had an interest in allowing teams

³³Biecher, Marc. "Leader-Mass Relations in Rural Chinese Communities: Local Politics in Revolutionary Society." Ph.D. diss. University of Chicago, 1977; Burns, John P. Political Participation in Rural China. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988; Butler, Steven. "Conflict and Decision Making in China's Rural Administration, 1969-76." Ph.D. diss. Columbia University, 1979; Meisner, Mitch. "In Agriculture Learn from Dazhai: Theory and Practice in Chinese Rural Development." Ph.D. diss. University of Chicago, 1977; Shue, Vivienne. Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development Toward Socialism, 1949-1956. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980; Siu, Helen F. Agents and Victims in South China. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989; Zweig, David. Agrarian Radicalism in China, 1968-1981. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

³⁴Oi, Jean C. State and Peasant in Contemporary China. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989.

³⁵Ibid., p. 89.

some leeway to keep more than the legally allowed share of the harvest."³⁶

The collusion between brigade cadres and team cadres was inevitable. Not only did brigade cadres need the support from the team cadres, the team cadres also needed brigade cadres. "A team leader cultivated a relationship with the brigade leader to receive special consideration in matters such as allocating quotas, granting loans, procuring scarce goods, generally acquiring extra resources, and, equally important, regulating policy."³⁷ On the top of that, brigade cadres were obviously capable of being protectors in the struggle session; they could warn team leaders of impending investigations, particularly those by higher-level officials and outside work teams.

Oi argues that patron-client relationships like this are basically relationships of exchange between two actors of unequal status. The team cadres saw their brigade leader as someone powerful which could provide them with material benefit and protection, whereas the brigade leader might get grain and labour which was important to run the brigade, and more importantly, "face." However, this relationship was not an anonymous and cold relationship; between the patron and the clients there should exist a "special feelings" (ganqing) which might grow before or after the relationship is established. Patron-client relationships, thus, were more than guanxi.³⁸

How did a rural leader establish himself as a patron? According to Oi, this was not because the patron is well-off. "Local patrons derive their power from their position to allocate essential goods and services rather than from private ownership of the bases of patronage."³⁹ Therefore, he was not as independent as the traditional patron, such as a landlord. He must be able to strike a balance, not to upset both the state (from which derives his position) and the team leaders (on whom he relies for

³⁶Ibid., p. 125.

³⁷Ibid., p. 128.

³⁸Ibid., p. 129 & p. 131,

³⁹Ibid., p. 153.

support).⁴⁰

However, one thing is not clear in Oi's work: who is the brigade leader? Is he the brigade head or the brigade party secretary? Our reading of Barnett, Lewis, and Schurmann indicates that the most powerful person in a village is the brigade party secretary. Does Oi mean it as well? Judging from the list of interviewees (Appendix B), none of them is a village Party secretary. This may partly explain why Oi was not alerted to the supremacy of a village Party secretary.

Two books, one by sociologists and another by an anthropologist, provide a more detailed description of the brigade Party secretaries. Chen Village⁴¹ contains a story of a village in South China. Unlike previous literature, it tells a story of a village that had to undergo the ever-changing policies imposed by the Central government. The three authors draw our attention to the campaigns and struggles that the whole village had to go through. It started with the Small Four Clean Up in the early 1960-s, through the Cultural Revolution, and ended up with Anti Lin Biao and Anti Confucius in the early 1970-s.

What makes this book more interesting is that the authors describe the political conflicts which involved two powerful cadres in the village: Qingfa (Party Secretary) and Longyong (brigade headman). Both men were involved in a bitter struggle; each tried to get rid of the other. Qingfa was first that took the advantage of the Small Four Clean Up Campaign; he succeeded to get rid of Longyong whom Qingfa viewed as a potential rival. Qingfa's victory, however, only lasted for a short time, because the following campaign, Four Big Clean Up, was harsher than the former. Qingfa was severely criticised, attacked and deposed from his position as party secretary.

Two years later, at the end of the Cultural Revolution, Longyong's victory was complete. In its attempt to restore public order, the Central government decided a new campaign of "cleansing the class ranks". This time Qingfa was not only criticised and attacked, but also sent to the village prison ("the cowshed"). From 1966 to 1980, Longyong enjoyed his power as "local emperor" (despite the fact that

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 144-145.

⁴¹Anita Chan, Richard Madsen, Jonathan Unger, Chen Village: The Recent History of a Peasant Community in Mao's China, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984.

he was not a Party secretary). In 1980, Qingfa, surprisingly, was restored to his former position as party secretary.

The story of Chen Village reveals three important things. Firstly, it reveals for the first time the conflict between cadres in a village. Previous literature provide us with a picture of a united and cohesive team of cadres who work together to achieve the common goal. Qingfa and Longyong did not see eye to eye in many different issues, and this became the source of their conflict. Apparently, at the bottom line, this conflict is more of a private than ideological rivalry.

Secondly, the Party secretary was indeed engaged in patronage activities with his lineage, but this patronage was not as effective as it is described in Oi's book. Qingfa was apparently the patron of his kin who lived in Team No. 6. At the same time, he was also patronizing Team No 1 who was grateful to him for his help in solving the problem of selecting team head. To both teams Qingfa gave the best lands. "And to strengthen his hand, when recruiting new people for the party or for new brigade-level party posts, Qingfa tended to look toward the teams with which he had established special relationships."⁴²

This patronage, evidently, was not proved to be quite effective. No one could save Qingfa's downfall; his clients were forced to participate in criticizing him in the struggle sessions. This happened again in 1968. Qingfa was not only humiliated but also sent into the "cowshed" for almost one year. His kin and clients, in fact, also had to pay the price for recognizing Qingfa as their patron. After Qingfa was re-installed as Party secretary in 1980, he continued to provide favour to the members of his lineage. Again, it did not help much. This time he had to accept the worst: he was deposed from his power, and also expelled from the Party (1983).

The only occasion when Qingfa's influence was directly felt was the period after his first downfall. At that time Longyong, as the head of the brigade management committee, found himself in an extremely difficult situation as teams - persuaded by the example of Team No 6 - did not lend support to him. Longyong tried to mobilise the teams to do village projects, but Team No 6 whose leader was Qingfa's brother-in-law simply ignored his authority. "When this production resisted,

⁴²Ibid., p. 35.

the other teams also balked. "⁴³

Thirdly, this book also reveals the real role of a Party secretary. Since the downfall of Qingfa in 1963 (?) to 1983, Chen Village had three Party secretaries: Chen Jinyi (1963-1980), Chen Sunwang (1983-1985), Chen Baodai (1985- ~). It is quite obvious that those Party secretaries were overshadowed by Longyong. He was actually "the local emperor" for the rest of the period after the downfall of Qingfa. He was the man behind the prosperity of Chen village in the early 1970s. "Even the interviewees who strongly disliked Longyong grudgingly admitted to us that he was an astute economic manager and a prime mover behind the village's industrialization."⁴⁴

The Party secretaries were all lame ducks in front of powerful Longyong. "Jinyi was too junior in prestige, too inexperienced, inarticulate, and indecisive to wield effective power on his own. He would have to turn to Longyong."⁴⁵ Sunwang was not interested in his job,⁴⁶ while Baodai was "Longyong's man."⁴⁷ It is not quite clear, however, if this phenomenon is quite widespread in China. The power of Longyong seemed to derive more from his personal charisma rather than from his office.

Huang Shum-ming's book, The Spiral Road, was originally written "to illustrate changes in Lin Village"⁴⁸ The technique he uses is to invite a cadre to speak about it. Coincidentally, the cadre is the village Party secretary. This book, thus, also records what a Party secretary thought about reform. Beyond that, as the technique requires detailed background, Huang's book contains a rich data of the activities of a Party secretary in a village. It is, in fact, a book about a village Party

⁴³Ibid., p. 128.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 222.

⁴⁵Ibid., 99.

⁴⁶Ibid., 131.

⁴⁷Ibid., 286.

⁴⁸Ibid. p. 6.

secretary. ⁴⁹

Ye Wende, the Party secretary, was undoubtedly the most powerful figure in the village. He made decisions, he gave commands, and he supervised daily affairs in the village. His day started in the morning with a meeting. The brigade head, the head of the brigade Women's League, the brigade clerk, came to his office and sat around the Party secretary. "Most of these gatherings are quite informal."⁵⁰ Huang noted: "Although the brigade-level officials seem to have daily duties, they generally defer important decisions to Ye."⁵¹ In the face of threat from decollectivization, he did not hesitate to boast: "Today, even after dismantling the brigade and team collectives, I still maintain unchallenged power in this village."⁵²

Party secretary Ye clearly saw that the position of village Party secretary was much more desirable than that of "national cadre" (guojia ganbu) at commune or county. He argued that becoming a national cadre was not a promotion. "A national cadre may sound prestigious, but there are also many dead-end jobs in the national bureaucracy. A rural cadre serving as brigade Party secretary commands a few hundred people. He is the de facto ruler of the brigade. But a national cadre may have only a dozen street sweepers under his command."⁵³

His power indeed originates from the position of Party secretary. However, this formal power alone was not enough. The network of friends and kin helped to bolster his power; they were mostly friends he knew since early 1960s when they were together in a workteam. Huang Shu-ming testifies: "I was often amazed by the seemingly inexhaustible social connections of Ye. He knew many important people in the commune, the district, and the city offices on whom he could call in time of

⁴⁹Huang Shu-min. The Spiral Road. Change in a Chinese Village through the Eyes of a Communist Party Leader. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 106.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 107.

⁵²Ibid., p. 162.

⁵³Ibid., p. 134.

need."⁵⁴ Party secretary Ye himself believed that connection was "my major political capital."⁵⁵

From Huang's account, it is apparent that Party secretary Ye played three important roles in his village. First of all, he functioned - in Huang's word - as a "benevolent county magistrate, the so-called father-mother official, of imperial China." Although a bit exaggerated, he further specifies it: "He literally wrote the laws and ordinances for villagers, presided over the litigations, and dispensed justice in whatever way he saw fit."⁵⁶ This is well illustrated in a case where a woman reported to the Party secretary that she was slapped her face by her cousin. According to the village ordinance, the man should be fined RMB 10. However, Party secretary Ye released the man, saying that the woman deserved the slap because she provoked the anger of the man. "You have to know them well, including their personalities and behaviour pattern."⁵⁷

Secondly, Party secretary Ye functioned as economic middleman. When assumed the post of Party secretary in early 1978, he encouraged Team No. 5 and other teams to set up sand brick factories. To overcome the difficulty of obtaining credit, he said: "For large sums of capital, I would go to the commune's Cooperative Credit Association or the China Agricultural Bank for loans."⁵⁸ He could even raise funds by borrowing money without interest from other government enterprises. Seemingly, his vast connections contributed a lot to this role. "I was merely using my connections to set up trading relationships for two parties who otherwise would not be able to deal directly."⁵⁹

Thirdly, Party secretary Ye functioned as a protector of his village. He knew that he had to please two masters, the government and his fellow villagers. As a cadre

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 69.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 84.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 107.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 108.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 139.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 145.

he had to obey the government directives and policies, but, as a villager, he had to protect the well-being of his village and fellow villagers. Despite this dilemma, Party secretary Ye was convinced that his village should come first. "My principle of administration, based on past experiences, is to be protective of the villagers' interests as much as possible."⁶⁰ This is clearly demonstrated in the case of family planning. He was willing to pay RMB\$ 5,000 to save four babies (despite the fact that one woman had been forced to have an abortion).

There is no doubt that the work of Huang Shu-ming has thrown light on many dark sides of the activities of a village Party secretary. All previous studies indeed have pointed out that the village Party secretary was the most powerful leader, but they provided us with few specific details. This can be understood by the fact that previous studies were conducted indirectly. They never met any Party secretary.

Despite this breakthrough, this book is not entirely dedicated to the study of village Party secretaries. As an anthropologist, Huang was more interested in culture and cultural change. It can be said, therefore, that no real systematic study on the political role of village Party secretaries has been done. The works of the third generation as a whole, however, clearly shattered the myth of totalitarian model; it radically altered the view that China is ruled in lockstep. Cadres are human beings with blood and flesh. They are not the instruments of the central leadership, and they are not a cog of a gigantic machine.

As human beings, they have fear and hatred. These inevitably colour their interaction, even within the strict command structure. As other normal human beings, they have families, relatives, and friends. Typically in China, they are part of a wider kinship network, and they simply cannot ignore them or shun them away. The brigade Party secretaries are actually not merciless bureaucrats.

D. Current debate

The current debate tries to assess the power of rural cadres after the introduction of the household responsibility system. There is a strong suggestion that rural cadres

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 186.

clash with new elites emerging as a consequence of reform. Rural cadres still retain their power and status, but the new economic elites had more courage to challenge their authority. White points out: "Whereas in the commune system political and economic power had tended to 'fuse', the reforms have fostered a process of separation into two power-systems, one based on formal politico-administrative authority and one on control over economic resources (including scarce skills).⁶¹ The newly established "villagers representative assembly" which is to possess a high degree of control power, poses another challenge to the party cadres. They can no longer impose their own agenda; and in some cases, they are even forced to retreat from their decision.⁶²

Nee maintains that the introduction of Reform has rendered rural cadres without power. Basing his argument on market transition theory, he argues that "as the allocation of goods and services shifts to the marketplace, power is mediated more by transactive exchanges and less by administrative fiat."⁶³ Cadres lost their redistributive power which was very substantial during the commune period; their power has been taken over by the market mechanism. In this circumstances, the clientelist politics in the villages was made obsolete.⁶⁴

Oi, on the contrary, claims that rural cadres still retain a high degree of power. This is reflected in their ability to "extract and direct investment and to

⁶¹White, Gordon, "Riding the Tiger: Grass-Roots Rural Politics in the Wake of the Chinese Economic Reforms," Ashwani Saith (ed.), The Re-Emergence of the Chinese Peasantry, London: Croom Helm; 1987: pp. 258.

⁶²Lawrence, Susan V. "Democracy, Chinese Style," The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs, No. 32, 1994, pp. 61-68.

⁶³Nee, Victor, "Social Inequalities in Reforming State Socialism: Between Redistribution and Markets in China," in American Sociological Review, LVI, June 1991, pp. 267-282; arguing in the same line but from different perspective, see Whyte, Tyrene, "Political Reform and Rural Government," Deborah Davis and Ezra F. Vogel (eds.), Chinese Society on the Eve of Tiananmen, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 1990: pp. 37-60.

⁶⁴"Market transition theory contends that the value of personal connections with cadres is a function of the extent to which the allocation of resources - factor, product, capital, and labour - remains bounded by the redistributive economy." Ibid., p. 279.

allocate rural industrial profits, the mainstay of village income."⁶⁵ Rural cadres manipulate the loopholes in existing fiscal policy to benefit themselves. Like their predecessors in Mao period, they are able to protect the interest of their village and promote its interest at the expense of the state. Obviously, here, Oi pushes her previous model on corrupt cadres further.

Despite these debates, no progress has been made with regard to the role of the village Party secretaries. All of the recent literature evidently make no attempt to sort out the village Party secretary from other village cadres. This is either because the roles of village Party secretaries in the villages are so minor that it can be ignored, or because there is no significant difference between village cadres who hold leadership post and those who do not. Both arguments, however, are easily defeated because all major studies from previous period point to the other direction.

D. Assessment

Cadres have become a subject that has drawn the attention of quite a number of scholars. Understandably, this is simply because cadres play such a crucial role in a society under a communist regime. Scholars from the first generation down to the third generation spent much time and energy to decipher the complex system of cadres which stretch from Beijing to the remote rural areas.

There is a clear pattern of the progress of these studies. The first generation present cadres as obedient agents who follow the instruction from the central leadership closely. This can be attributed to the popular paradigm of that time, the totalitarian paradigm. The image is one of a straight jacket. The second generation slightly altered this image by saying that cadres in the countryside had to accommodate their role to the village situation. They did have to obey the instruction from above, but somehow, they managed to bend it a little bit.

The third generation successfully opens the Pandora's box: rural cadres go

⁶⁵Oi, Jean. "The Fate of the Collective after the Commune," Deborah Davis and Ezra F. Vogel (eds.), *Chinese Society on the Eve of Tiananmen*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 1990: pp. 15-36; this argument is further developed in her latest article, "Fiscal Reform and the Economic Foundations of Local State Corporatism in China," *World Politics*, XLV (1), 1992, PP. 99-126.

their own way, pursuing their own interest. The image of a straight jacket becomes a myth. The decline of totalitarian paradigm has provided a new dimension to social research. More attention was paid more to the human aspect than to rigid institution. Scholars were excited to find that even in a society under a communist (totalitarian) regime there were still human beings with flesh and blood.

Thus, one can observe a radical shift in the understanding of cadres in China: from one which is stiff and straight to one which is soft and bent. People no longer view cadres as obedient agents but as officials with strong vested-interest. There is even a suggestion that current rural cadres are merely corrupt satraps!⁶⁶ I would term this pattern of thinking as "the corruption paradigm," a paradigm which centres on the deviant behaviour of Party cadres to the extent of committing corruption.

The totalitarian paradigm and corruption paradigm both have their weaknesses and strengths. The difference between the totalitarian paradigm and corruption paradigm lies in the answer that they give to the question: what shapes the behaviour of cadres? To those who hold to the totalitarian paradigm, the behaviour of cadres is totally shaped by rules and regulations.⁶⁷ Rural officials become obedient agents to the extent that they become mechanised. Their behaviour simply reflect state policy. To those who subscribe to the corruption paradigm, the behaviour of rural officials is shaped by vested interests either originating from the village community as a whole or from their private interests. Rural officials bend or even ignore rules and regulations from the state, and go their own way. Their behaviour simply reflect amorality.⁶⁸

The totalitarian paradigm is obviously unrealistic in its assumption about

⁶⁶Unger, Jonathan. "State and Peasant in Post-Revolution China". Journal of Peasant Studies; October 1989: p. 135

⁶⁷Totalitarian paradigm is best represented by the works of Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski. In their description, party members and cadres are highly selective and elitist, and are put under the rigid hierarchy and centralized power. "The membership is made to feel part of a constructive machine, led by dynamic leaders, achieving unprecedented goals. Their personal identity is submerged in the totality of the party, and the might of the party becomes a source of personal gratification." (p. 53) See, Friedrich, Carl. J. and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, Totalitarian Dictatorship & Autocracy, Second edition, New York: Praeger, 1965.

⁶⁸The best known work based on this paradigm is one by Banfield, E.C. The Moral Basis of a Backward Society, New York: Free Press, 1958. He uses the term "amoral familism" to describe the behaviour of rural officials in southern Italy.

human nature. It is difficult to imagine human beings behaving like a machine. The corruption paradigm corrects this error. The state rules and policies are not fully implemented by rural officials. Nevertheless, corruption paradigm also contains two weak points. The first is more empirical than theoretical: data from the field reveal that village corruption in whatever form is not unlimited. Either their superiors or their villagers put limits on the corrupt behaviour of the cadres. The second has something to do with the epistemological assumption contained in the corruption paradigm. On this I will discuss at length below.

The theoretical assumption of the corruption paradigm is the ideal type of a rational bureaucracy which is systematically proposed by Max Weber. A rational bureaucracy, he said, must be rational and eliminate "love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation."⁶⁹ Weber even said that bureaucracy has to be "dehumanised." Bureaucrats simply act on the basis of rationality: "precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction, and of material and personal costs."⁷⁰

However, it must also be made explicit that rational bureaucracy - in Weber's conceptualization - is not expected to be found everywhere. Rational bureaucracy is closely linked with capitalism. "Today, it is primarily the capitalist market economy which demands that the official business of public administration be discharged precisely, unambiguously, continuously, and with as much speed as possible. Normally, the very large modern capitalist enterprises are themselves unequalled models of strict bureaucratic organization."⁷¹ In other words, the advance of bureaucratic rationality is an inevitable component of the growth of capitalism.⁷²

Weber unambiguously states that rational bureaucracy will only be existent in

⁶⁹Max Weber, Economy and Society, Vol. II, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968, p. 975.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 973.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 974.

⁷²Giddens, Anthony Politics and Sociology in the Thought of Max Weber, London: Macmillan Press, 1972, p. 47.

urban society. This is related to the internal prerequisite of a rational bureaucracy, that is money economy.⁷³ Money is necessary to the success and maintenance of a rigorous mechanization of the bureaucratic apparatus because salary is connected with the opportunity of a career. ⁷⁴ Clearly Weber does not imagine that rural societies can develop a rational bureaucracy: "Hence the degree of administrative bureaucratization has in urban communities with fully developed money economies not infrequently been relatively greater than in the contemporaneous and much larger territorial states."⁷⁵

The corruption paradigm, therefore, cannot be used to analyze rural society because it is not within the scope of Weber's ideal type. It is solely applicable to capitalist urban society, but less so to rural society. China's rural society is a society which possesses all rural characteristics notwithstanding the presence of a rationalised bureaucracy.⁷⁶ Like any developing country, China is characterised by internal "dualism," meaning "the coexistence of modernised centres together with large agrarian regions in which cash-crop economies predominate."⁷⁷ This dualism, in fact, consists of asymmetrical divide where rural society constitutes the majority of the population.

It becomes obvious that while the totalitarian paradigm overemphasises the rules and regulations, the corruption paradigm one-sidedly focuses on the non-rational character of human behaviour. Corruption paradigm, evidently, downplays all non-rational action as corrupt in favour Weberian rational typology. As such, corruption paradigm falls into the trap of value judgement. Indeed, which is "bad"

⁷³Ibid., p. 964.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 968.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Despite the emergence of rational bureaucracy, curiously, communist regimes tries to maintain the continuance of rural society. Although it is never pronounced officially, a communist regime strategically wants peasants to remain peasants. This actually can be attributed to the fact that within Marxist movements there is a strong bias toward peasants. See, Bideleux, Robert Communism and Development, London: Methuen, 1985, p. 1 and p. 134.

⁷⁷Giddens, Anthony The Nation-state and Violence, Volume Two of A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985, p. 274.

for the state is not necessarily so for the village community.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this dissertation, therefore, I contradict the previous arguments contained in both by the totalitarian paradigm and corruption paradigm. I will argue, instead, that the behaviour of village Party secretaries is shaped both by the Party rules and peasant community. My argument is grounded on the theory on "nominal encapsulation" introduced by Bailey. This concept argues that if village society is nominally encapsulated by the state, then the village can retain its unique interests; it enjoys a certain degree of autonomy from the state, and ultimately can generate increasingly assertive peasant villagers. In this situation, rural leaders, who are state agents, are located at a very pivotal juncture: if they want to exercise their authority, then they must be able to accommodate the pressures of both parties. They need both the state and the village as the source of legitimization of their authority. This attempt results in what I term "ruralisation of authority." I will elaborate this framework in three steps.

A. Nominal encapsulation

Reform in communist countries is a highly complex process. Holmes, for one, argues that Party control diminishes as its legitimacy deteriorates among the population. The Party in the beginning of its reign relied heavily on the "man who guided the revolutionary takeover," but this situation cannot be sustained as the revolutionary leaders passed away. The population which now consists of younger generations and "people who are still hostile to it" will withdraw their support unless change in the economy is carried out.

Holmes says that under new leaders the Party has to carry out reform, and to operate "more in bi- than in its former essentially uni-directional manner." The Party must demonstrate "a greater willingness to listen to the people than before."⁷⁸ In

⁷⁸Holmes, Leslie, Politics in the Communist World, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 140.

other words, the Party control is to be loosened; this, in turn, will legitimise the advent of new leaders.

Johnson, in similar vein, argues that as the party embarks on modernization, it has no other choice but to loosen its control.⁷⁹ Economic modernization in communist countries, he says, is like a "built-in boomerang."⁸⁰

"[...] by the time the modernised sector of the mobilization regime is manufacturing jet aircraft, computers, and nuclear reactors, its role structure has become extraordinarily specialised and complex. At this point the regime is forced to relax some of its clearly dysfunctional controls (such as the use of terror), thereby the door to the possibility of rising demands that the basic developmental imbalance be corrected."

Johnson argues that from economic point of view, modernization requires "a certain degree of tranquillity" and, more importantly, a high degree of efficiency. It cannot afford political intervention arising out of ideological consideration. The Party must relax its total control over society.⁸¹

The arguments developed by both Holmes and Johnson are illuminating. Reform, either because of the advent of new leaders or of modernization, compels the regime to relax the control of the Party. To be able to survive, the regime must - paradoxically - share some of its power with society.

In China, this process took place not long after Mao Zedong, the paramount revolutionary leader of China, died in 1976. The reformers headed by Deng Xiaoping, after ousting Hua Guofeng, embarked on the path of Reform in 1978. As predicted by Holmes and Johnson, in order to support the Reform, Deng initiated a number of policies of relaxing political control. Indeed, in the early years of Reform, China saw the rise of democracy wind as demonstrated by the Democracy Wall.⁸²

The relaxation of control as a result of Reform is summarised by Harry

⁷⁹Johnson, Chalmers "Comparing Communist Nations" in Chalmers Johnson (ed.) Change in Communist Systems, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1970, pp. 1-32.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 22.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 23.

⁸²MacFarquhar, Roderick "The Succession to Mao and the end of Maoism, 1969-82," in Roderick MacFarquhar (ed.) The Politics of China, 1949-1989, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 321-325.

Harding in five points:⁸³

- (1) Encouragement of a reconciliation between the party and society by reducing the scope and arbitrariness of political intervention in daily life;
- (2) expansion of opportunities for popular participation in political affairs, albeit with limits on both the form and content of political expression;
- (3) efforts to revitalise all institutions of governance, by restaffing them with younger and better educated officials, and by granting them greater autonomy from party control;
- (4) measures to restore normalcy and unity to elite politics, so as to bring to an end the chronic instability of the late Maoist period and to create a more orderly process of leadership succession; and
- (5) steps to redefine the content and role of China's official ideology, so as to create a new basis for authority in contemporary Chinese politics.

The relaxation of control takes a more radical form in the countryside than in the cities. While the work unit system (danwei) is still kept in place in urban areas, the commune system - the parallel system in the countryside - was abolished. If during the commune era life in the villages was highly regimented, after Reform (1978) peasants are freed from all bondage. The state in China removed all oppressive control over villages which is manifested in six areas:

- (1) politics: the three-tier commune structure is replaced by a looser structure (township and villagers' committee) in which peasants can enjoy a high degree of autonomy;
- (2) economy: the planned system of production, distribution and consumption is replaced by the household responsibility system which allows peasants to produce according to their wish;
- (3) social mobility: although the hukou (residential registration) system has not been formally abolished, peasants are free to travel or move any where in China without the need for permission from the authority;

⁸³Harding, Harry "Political Development in Post-Mao China," in A. Doak Barnett and Ralph N. Clough (eds.), Modernizing China. Post-Mao Reform and Development, Boulder: Westview Press, 1986, p. 17.

- (4) religion: peasants are not prohibited to believe in religion or folk religion;
- (5) social structure: households become the basic accounting unit of society, replacing the production teams.
- (6) social relations: the removal of class-labels terminates the state-made discrimination.

To describe this situation I borrow the concept developed by F.G. Bailey, 'nominal encapsulation,' a concept which describes the relations between the state and the villages where the state encapsulates the countryside at the nominal degree.⁸⁴ What has happened in the countryside since Reform (1978) is basically a new effort by the state to encapsulate the villages in new way by retaining only the basic structure. Instead of making peasants live in "honeycomb pattern" of villages⁸⁵ or in a "caste-like system,"⁸⁶ the state releases them by breaking the rigid structure of the commune and restores their autonomy. This situation is "nominal" only in comparison with that of the commune era when peasant lives were highly regimented. Thus, the term "nominal encapsulation" is used within the perspective of China's internal historical changes, and not in world-wide comparative perspective.⁸⁷

The nominal encapsulation brings two immediate effects. The first is that it restores the enthusiasm of the peasants to produce more grain and to start enterprises (village-owned or private). The spectacular increase of grain production as well as rapid development of village enterprises are testimony to this.⁸⁸ Secondly, it also

⁸⁴The opposite of nominal encapsulation are "predatory encapsulation" or "radical encapsulation," each of them demonstrates a higher degree of encapsulation. Bailey developed these concepts to analyze a village in India. Bailey, F.G. Stratagems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics, New York: Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 149-152.

⁸⁵Shue, Vivienne The Reach of the State. Sketches of the Chinese Body Politics, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988, p. 50.

⁸⁶Potter, Sulamith Heins and Jack M. Potter, China's Peasants, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 296-312.

⁸⁷Bailey, in fact, argues that all the developing countries invariably adopt the strategy of "radical encapsulation." Ibid., p. 151.

⁸⁸Ody, Anthony J. Rural Enterprises Development in China, 1986-1990, Washington, DC: World Bank, 1992.

helps to enhance the assertiveness of peasants after Reform (1978). Freedom and assertiveness are linked to each other: because they know that they have freedom, therefore they become assertive. This assertiveness is manifested in various forms such as acts of non-compliance, protests,⁸⁹ rebellion, violence.⁹⁰

B. Redefinition of roles

The nominal encapsulation has a direct and significant impact on the roles of village party secretaries. Although the presence of the party branches in the villages were not affected by changes as a result of decollectivization, and they continued to retain their preeminent position in the villages, the new political structure as well as the assertive peasants make the old roles of party secretaries of the commune era ("the commander in chief") increasingly untenable. To cope with the new situation, new roles have to be redefined both by the state and society.

First, from the state perspective ("from above"), the central leadership asks the party secretaries to continue to stay in their villages. Yet, given the situation of nominal encapsulation, the central leadership asks them to be "state agents" and "entrepreneurial agents." The role of **state agent** refers to the job of implementing all policies of the state intended to promote agriculture with final end to extract the surplus. I include the enforcement of birth-control within the role of state agent. It must be noted here that I do not make a distinction between "the state" and "the Party" as, in terms of policies, they are indistinguishable.⁹¹ The term "state"

⁸⁹O'Brien, Kevin J. and Lianjiang Li "The Politics of Lodging Complaints in Rural China," China Quarterly, No. 143, September 1995, pp. 756-783.

⁹⁰Perry, Elizabeth "Rural Collective Violence: The Fruits of Recent Reforms," Elizabeth J. Perry and Christine Wong (eds.), The Political Economy of Reform in Post-Mao China, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985, pp. 175-192.

⁹¹There are, however, a number of attempts to draw a sharp distinction between the state and the Party; see, for example, Shirk's distinction of the Party and the state as one of "principal" and "agent." Shirk, Susan. The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; 1993; pp. 55-56. For a detailed description of the current relationship between the Party and the state in China after Reform (1978), see Cabestan, Jean-Pierre Le système politique de la Chine populaire, Paris: PUF, 1994, pp. 215-222.

includes both the state and the Party.⁹² The role as **entrepreneurial agent** refers to his job to accelerate economic growth in the village with *xiaokang* (comfortable life level) as target. It is a job with a mandate to start an enterprise, to raise fund for it, and to run it.

Secondly, from the society perspective ("from below") village party secretaries are under considerable "moral obligation" to accommodate to the demands of his fellow villagers and members of their lineages who are uninhibited in showing their assertiveness. Firstly, their fellow villagers demand that the party secretary becomes their protector against undesirable state policies. This is a role which I term "**moral middleman**" because he interrelates the village and the township and at the same time, protects the interest of his village simply on the basis of moral considerations. Secondly, the people from his kin (who also resist similar state policies) demand that they give them special preferences over those who do not belong to the lineage.⁹³ I term this role as the role of "**lineage patron**."

The pressures "from below" are real and unavoidable. One factor which contributes significantly to this is the fact that village party secretaries are invariably local peasants. Being a local peasant, a village party secretary cannot act as a stranger who may be able to make a cool decision on all crucial and vital issues in the village. The fundamental reason for this is that a village is - in Bailey's words - a "moral community" where the interaction of its members is characterised by continuous judgment of right and wrong.⁹⁴ Madsen pushes even further by saying that in such

⁹²I am referring to the definition by Patrick Dunleavy and Brendan O'Leary of the state: "all institutions which are differentiated from the rest of its society as to create identifiable public and private spheres." Patrick Dunleavy and Brendan O'Leary, Theories of the State. The Politics of Liberal Democracy, London: Macmillan, 1987, p. 2.

⁹³"Few who have delved into the intricacies of Chinese history would deny that kinship groups (based on patrilineal descent) have played a leading role in political and economic affairs. Lineages, clans and surname groups were found in all levels of society; member of China's ruling elite often used the bonds of common descent to serve their own political ends;" James L. Watson, "Chinese Kinship Reconsidered: Anthropological Perspectives on Historical Research," The China Quarterly, No. 92, 1982, pp. 589-627.

⁹⁴Bailey, F.G. "The Peasant View of the Bad Life," in Teodor Shanin (ed.), Peasants and Peasant Societies, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971, p. 302.

a community there exist "moral discourses" which shape the behaviour the leaders.⁹⁵ The enhancement of village as moral community, in the last analysis, cannot also be separated from the situation of nominal encapsulation which serves as a precondition to it.

Hence, after Reform (1978), under the situation of nominal encapsulation, both the state and society (village community) redefine the roles for the village party secretary: state agent, entrepreneurial agent, moral middleman, and lineage patron.

C. Ruralisation of authority

This situation puts the party secretaries under double pressure as each side demand complete allegiance. This is clearly reflected in the study by Rozelle. On the basis of his vast observations and interviews with 75 township and village leaders in Jiangsu Province and Hubei Province, he systematically describes six goals that a village leader has in mind: status, promotion, job security, independence from higher officials, personal profit, and commitment to the village.⁹⁶ The first three goals apparently reflect village leaders' dependence over their superiors. High status is obtained through the achievement of programmes set by the township, whereas promotion and job security are decided by their superiors at the township and the county. The last three items reflect, on the other hand, village leaders' concern of their personal interest and dependence over their constituents.

Rozelle makes a strong point in arguing that "they must balance the interests of the township officials with those of their local constituents."⁹⁷ A Party secretary cannot ignore the instruction from higher authorities and at the same time cannot overlook the interests of his fellow villagers. If he leans too much toward his superior, he will lose support from his fellow villagers. If he is too much in favour

⁹⁵In his book, Madsen distinguishes, during the Maoist period, three moral discourses, Confucian, Liuist and Maoist, but each has its own paradigm which is irreconcilable to each other. Madsen, Richard, Morality and Power in a Chinese Village, Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1984.

⁹⁶Rozelle, Scott D.op.cit.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 31-32.

his fellow villagers, he will lose his position. He must be able to shoulder all the burdens imposed by both sides, and by bearing all those responsibilities, he will please both parties.

In other words, a party secretary has to be able to balance the pressures which come "from above" (the state) and those "from below" (village community). On the one hand, as demanded by his superiors, he will play the role of "state agent" and the role of "entrepreneurial agent." On the other hand, to accommodate to the demands of his fellow villagers and his lineage, he will have to play the role of "moral middleman" and the role of "lineage patron." I describe the phenomenon of a village party secretary playing four roles to accommodate double pressures as the "ruralisation of authority." "Authority" is defined as "a basis for the securing of assent or compliance concerning a decision or course of action."⁹⁸ The term "rural" is used to refer to a complex reality of peasants and peasant community. The concept of ruralisation of authority is to explain the process of a village party secretary adopting four roles as a result of the interaction between the state and peasants.

Authority conferred by the state to a village party secretary is to enable him to incur compliance from the villagers. The two roles from the state (state agent and entrepreneurial agent) are performed on the basis of such authority. Yet, contrary to Weber's expectation, this authority is rendered ineffective if it is not endorsed by the population,⁹⁹ and according to its specific values and beliefs.¹⁰⁰ As made clear above, in the village context, rural population or peasants endorse an authority only insofar as the person concerned show the ability to protect their interests *vis-a-vis* the state. The adoption of the roles as demanded by peasants (moral middleman and lineage patron) is therefore part of the attempts of a village party secretary to show to his fellow villagers that he is able to do the job they demand. In this way, his authority is endorsed by peasants according to peasants' values and beliefs, or his

⁹⁸Roberts, Geoffrey K. A Dictionary of Political Analysis, London: Longman, 1971, p. 14.

⁹⁹Friedman, Richard B. "On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy," in R. Flathman (ed.), Concepts in Social and Political Philosophy, New York: Macmillan, 1973

¹⁰⁰Flathman, Richard E. The Practice of Political Authority, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

authority is ruralised.

To sum up, the argument of this dissertation proceeds as follows. As China's central leadership embarks on the path of reform, the CCP undertakes the policy of relaxation of political control which, in the countryside, takes form of nominal encapsulation. Nominal encapsulation, in turn, shapes the behaviour of the village party secretaries toward the ruralisation of authority which combines four distinct roles in one hand, two from the state (the role of state agent and the role of entrepreneurial agent) and from society (the role of moral middleman and the role of lineage patron). Schematically, this argument can be described as follows:

NOMINAL ENCAPSULATION -----> RURALISATION OF AUTHORITY

III. METHODOLOGY

Ideally, a hypothesis is tested through one of three strategies: case study, comparative methods, and quantitative methods.¹⁰¹ The case study is to be adopted if the researcher wishes to construct a full portrait through close analysis; it basically emphasises, in Ragin's words, many features but less cases.¹⁰² The quantitative method, conversely, is used to obtain broad knowledge of relations among variables. Thus, it covers many cases but less features. The comparative study stands between the two extremes where "there are too many cases for close, detailed investigation of

¹⁰¹Ragin, Charles C. Constructing Social Research, London: Pine Forge Press, 1994.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 78.

each case, but too few for quantitative analysis."¹⁰³ This strategy allows us to identify and uncover complex patterns of similarities and differences.

The latter strategy seems to be most appropriate for testing the hypothesis of this study. For instance, we select a dozen of villages which are randomly selected in the whole of China, and spend one month at each village to conduct in-depth interviews with the village party secretaries. In addition, we also conduct a national survey of village party secretaries to complement the in depth-interviews. However, given the sensitive nature of the research, it is impossible to conduct such a strategy of research. Although China is more open to foreign researchers, research on the roles of village party secretaries remains politically sensitive.

Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is tested through a survey of published documents. The chapters on roles assigned by the central leadership are grounded on the survey on documents released by the office of the Central Committee of the CCP and handbooks designed to provide guidance to party branch secretaries. As to the chapters on roles demanded by the villagers, the approach is to gather as many cases as possible, both from newspapers and journals. Then, this data is corroborated with statistics by Chinese scholars in China, to arrive to a level of generalisation and overcome subjective bias. To check and clarify certain topics which are not immediately clear from published documents, I made several visits to a village to do observation.

Below, I explain the quality of the sources of my database.

A. Published documents

Oksenberg classifies five types of published documents in China: (1) the mainland press - books, journals, and newspapers - and monitored radio broadcasts; (2) interviews with and publications of former residents of Mainland China; (3) accounts by people who have visited the mainland; (4) Chinese fiction, particularly novels and short stories; and (5) secret Chinese documents and other data obtained covertly and

¹⁰³Ibid.

released by non-PRC agencies.¹⁰⁴ In a later article, Oksenberg indicates that China in 1990s provides unprecedented wealth of primary data.¹⁰⁵ He notes several novel developments in terms of the availability of primary sources: first, the "documentary collections" on high-level politics from the inception of the party to the Deng era; secondly, local gazetteers and archives at the local levels; thirdly, statistical information in the form of statistical yearbooks, encyclopedias, compendia, and almanacs.¹⁰⁶

How reliable is the Chinese media? It is pertinent here to quote a statement by a researcher on Chinese media:¹⁰⁷

"Mass media may show deviation from the official party line as a result of intraparty struggles, relaxed control from the party center, existence of liberal local leadership, vested interest in particular issues, genuine beliefs on the part of journalists, as well as attempts to lure audience and advertising money."

This does not mean that Chinese media is as free as that in the West; it only indicates that, for researchers, the media can provide valuable data as they are not put under strict control as before.

For this dissertation I rely on three types of published documents: newspapers, journals, and books; all of them are in Chinese and published in China.

a. Newspapers. Newspapers have been widely used by scholars as primary

¹⁰⁴Oksenberg, Michel. "Sources and Methodological Problems in the Study of Contemporary China." Chinese Communist Politics in Action, A. Doak Barnett (ed.) Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969, pp. 577-606.

¹⁰⁵Oksenberg, Michel "The American Study of Modern China: Toward the Twenty-first Century," in David Shambaugh (ed.) American Studies of Contemporary China, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1993.

¹⁰⁶On this point, he remarks: "China is now the best recorded of the developing countries." Ibid., p. 335.

¹⁰⁷Chan, Joseph Man "Calling the Tune without Paying the Piper: The Reassertion of Media Controls in China," in Lo Chi Kin et al. (eds.), China Review 1995, Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1995, p. 5.10.

resources.¹⁰⁸ As Schurmann has expounded, Chinese newspapers invariably are structured according to one principle, "from top down and from bottom up."¹⁰⁹ There are two types of articles which transmit policies from the central leadership, and there are two types of articles which illustrate the implementation of the policies with concrete stories from everyday life. "Concrete experiences are stressed because the Chinese Communists believe that policies are best understood in practice."¹¹⁰

The first type of the article usually contains success story of fulfilling a certain target of a policy, the second takes the form of criticism and it is always directed against individuals. Both types of articles, in my case, are about individual Party secretaries, one is a good Party secretary and another is a bad Party secretary.

Two major newspapers become my main sources: Renmin ribao (People's Daily) and Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily). The latter contains more cases about village Party secretaries than the former because Peasants' Daily is intended to address the need of peasants directly. Specifically about Nongmin ribao, according to Gordon White, recently, it does not only function as the state's loudspeaker but also society's voice.¹¹¹

"Another source of political pressure on agricultural issues, which only emerged during the reform era, was the media, in particular the Peasants' Daily (Nongmin ribao) which increasingly took on the role of advocating rural/agricultural interests, particularly from the mid-1980s onwards as the condition of agriculture deteriorated."

b. Journals. Journals often contain quantitative information acquired through a

¹⁰⁸Walder, Andrew G. "Press Accounts and the Study of Chinese Society," China Quarterly, No. 79, 1979, pp. 588-607.

¹⁰⁹Schurmann, op.cit., p. 66.

¹¹⁰ibid., p. 64.

¹¹¹White, Gordon Riding the Tiger. The Politics of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China, London: Macmillan, 1993, p. 90.

survey.¹¹² Stanley Rosen categorises three types of journals which contain survey research conducted by Chinese social scientists:¹¹³ first, academic/professional journals published by social science academies; second, journals published by universities; third, journals published by provincial and municipal research institute.¹¹⁴ There are problems related with the data, especially after the June 4 Incident, yet Rosen is quite confident that they can be used to test a hypothesis.

Some journals do publish articles analysing the situation of the Party secretaries in the villages. Some other journals publish survey of peasant reaction to the cadres. The authors normally provide a great number of statistics.

c. Books. There are two types of books about rural cadres, including secretaries: first, books published by party organizations; second, books published by research institutes. Books belonging to the first category are designed to provide a detailed guidance to grass-root cadres on every aspects of Party organization. These books are useful to know the official demands on cadres. Intended to give moral persuasion, some books contain a collection of stories of good Party secretaries.¹¹⁵

In the second category are academic books which report survey of villages and villagers. Some contain statistics related to cadres. These are books written by academicians with academic interest. For instance, a survey on the emergence of clan in the villages,¹¹⁶ or social stratification.¹¹⁷

¹¹²On the value of these surveys, see Manion, Melanie "Survey research in the study of contemporary China: learning from local samples," China Quarterly, No.139, September 1994, pp. 741-765.

¹¹³Rosen, Stanley. "Students and the State in China: The Crisis in Ideology and Organization." State & Society in China, ed. Athur Lewis Rosenbaum. pp. 167-192. Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1992, pp. 167-192; see also Rosen, Stanley and David Chu. Survey Research in the People's Republic of China Washington, DC: US Information Agency, 1987; "Value Change among Post-Mao Youth: The Evidence from Survey Data." Unofficial China: Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic, eds. Perry et al. Link. pp. 193-216. Boulder: Westview Press, 1989.

¹¹⁴Rosen, Stanley, "Students and the State in China," op.cit., footnote no. 1, p. 186.

¹¹⁵For instance, a book which contains stories of 200 good Party secretaries: Chen Yeping and Pei Shi, Zai dangzhibu shuji de gangwei xia (Under the post of Party branch secretaries), Shenyang: Baishan chubanshe, 1991.

¹¹⁶Wang Huning, Dangdai zhongguo cunluo jiazhu wenhua (Contemporary Chinese village clan culture), Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1991.

B. Observation

I conducted my observation in a village in Xiangyin County, Hunan Province where I spent one full month in 1993. During my stay I was accepted as an overseas Chinese, and I was allowed to stay in a family house. This stay gave me an ample opportunity to make observations on various aspects of village life. More important, I was able to make observations about the interaction among cadres, between cadres and peasants, and between Party secretaries and peasants. In addition to that, I also took the opportunity to talk with the party secretary of the village and the rural cadres.

¹¹⁷Hu Jilian (ed.), Zhongguo nonghu jingji xingwei yanjiu (A survey of peasant household economic behaviour in China), Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1992.

CHAPTER TWO THE MAKING OF A VILLAGE PARTY SECRETARY

"We should do a good job
in selecting party branch secretaries."
(Editorial Renmin ribao, 29 October 1994)

How is a village party secretary elected? What type of party secretaries are elected? How long are they permitted to stay in office? These are questions which are to be addressed before we enter into the discussion on the roles of village party secretaries. This is because the way village party secretaries are elected is one of the crucial factors which contributes significantly in shaping the way party secretaries behave. Party secretaries who are elected by party members only may be accountable to the party members, and less to the villagers. Party secretaries who are elected among villagers will naturally have more attachment to their own village than those who are not. Indeed, party secretaries who are elected from those who are ideologically motivated will have different work ethics from those who are not.

This chapter will be divided into three main sections. The first section will describe the standard procedure of election of a village party secretary; this section presents what is formally demanded by the central leadership. The second section is to present what is happening in the field. We will look into the variants as well as deviance from the standard procedure. The third section seeks to find the common pattern of the processes of electing party secretaries in villages.

I. THE STANDARD PROCEDURE OF ELECTION

A. Qualities required as candidates for party secretaries

To be elected as a party secretary, first of all, he/she should have been a party

member for at least two years. This is the formal requirement.¹ This means that one can become a party secretary only when he/she is twenty years of age as the minimal age requirement to enter the Party is eighteen.² Besides this, there is another set of requirements.

The first set of qualities demanded by the central leadership to select any cadres, including village party secretaries, is what is widely known as decai jianbei. According to this standard, those who would like to take positions of cadres should have "morality" (de) and "talent" (cai). "Morality," here, refers to political attitude and thinking; and "talent" refers to work ability and professional work.³ A cadre should have both qualities, none of them can be missed out.

This standard was, then, complemented by another demand, namely "si hua" or "four process". As the central leadership, in the beginning of Reform, aimed at reforming the leaders of party organizations at the grass-root so that they were fitted to the cause of Reform, they laid down four demands: young, educated, skillful, and revolutionary. Thus si hua consists of rejuvenation, intellectualization, specialization, revolutionization.⁴ This programme was launched by Hu Yaobang at the occasion of the Twelfth Party Congress (1982)⁵ Thus, to become a cadre one must possess, at least, six qualities.

To become a party branch secretary, however, there are additional requirements. According to a handbook for the party branch secretary, these

¹"Dangzhibu shuji de zhuyao zhiye he zhengzhi yewu suzhi," (the main function and the political and professional quality of a Party branch secretary) in Jiao Gengqiang and Jing Ri (eds.), Dangzhibu gongzuo shouce (A Manual for the work of a Party branch), Beijing: Zhongguo zhengzhi daxue, 1991, p. 116.

²Party Charter (1982), Article 1, states: "Any Chinese worker, peasant, member of the armed forces, intellectual of any other revolutionary who has reached the age of 18 and who accepts the Party's programme and Charter and is willing to join and work actively in one of the Party organizations, carry out the Party decisions and pay membership dues regularly may apply for membership of the Chinese Communist Party."

³"Decai jianbei" in Jing Bin (ed.), Zhongguo gongchandang da cidian (Grand dictionary of the Communist Party of China), Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 1991, p. 300.

⁴In Chinese, they are qingnianhua, zhishihua, zhuanyehua, geminghua.

⁵Hu Yaobang, Quanmian kaichuang shehui zhuyi xiandaihua jianshe de xin jumian (Thoroughly create the new situation of building socialist modernization) in NN, Shi yi jie san zhongquanhui yilai zhongyao wenxian xuandu (Collection of important documents since the third plenum of the eleventh party congress), Vol. I, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1987, p. 514.

requirements include "six abilities" (liu hui): (1) ability in doing party work; (2) ability in giving lectures on the Party; (3) ability to manage and monitor party members; (4) ability to tackle problems arising within the Party; (5) ability to carry out the work on ideology and politics; (6) ability to mobilize the functions of mass organizations such as the Chinese Youth League and Women's Federation.⁶ These are actual qualities that a leader, or more specifically, a party leader should possess.

But, a special handbook for party branch secretaries lists not less than twenty two qualities that party secretaries should master; they range from moral qualities to skill. These are: to have strong political principles, to master the Party's line, general and specific principles, to master the fundamentals of Marxism, to have the spirit of wholehearted service to the people, to observe Party discipline, to have a strong Party spirit, to have a strong belief in communism, to have the spirit of self-sacrifice for the Party and the people, to think and act in the same way, to be modest and prudent, to develop the work style of the Party's arduous struggle, to preserve honesty, to master Party history, to master the basic knowledge on the work of ideology and politics, to master natural science, to master social science, to master a certain degree of management science, to have a good ability of analysis, to have a certain degree of ability in coordinating organizations, to have a certain degree of ability of persuasion, to have a certain degree of ability in expressing oneself.⁷

So far, the qualities described are those which are required for general cadres or party secretaries. What are the specific requirements for village party secretaries? "A Handbook for Village Party Secretaries" presents all the twenty two qualities but they are organized into four clusters: politics, knowledge, ability, and work style.⁸ One additional quality is about physical health. The reason given is: "Village party secretaries, being at the front line of the construction of double civilizations, must

⁶"Dangzhibushuji dadao 'liuhui' de zhuyao neirong" (The main content of "six abilities" that a party branch secretary should reach), in Jiao Genqiang and Jing Ri (eds.), op.cit., pp. 124-125. For more details, see General Political Department, Xin shiqi dangzhibu shuji 'liuhui' gaiyao (Essentials of 'six abilities' for party branch secretaries of a new era), Beijing: Changcheng chubanshe, 1990.

⁷Li Kunrui, Dangzhibu shuji gongzuo shouce (Handbook for the work of party branch secretaries), Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe, 1992, pp. 75-100.

⁸Zhang Dianzhong, Nongcun dangzhibu shuji shouce (A handbook for village party branch secretaries), Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1990, pp. 28-30.

work hard not only by using their mouths to talk but also their hands to work. They must often work from dawn to dusk. Their job is very heavy."⁹

B. Candidates for party secretaries

Where do candidates for party secretaries come from? None of the official documents specify that candidates for village party secretaries should come from party members of the party branches in their villages. However, it may have become a common practice that party secretaries, invariably, come from the party branches of the village where they are from. For instance, from Qiu Zhirong's investigation of 735 village party secretaries, he found out that, in the process of searching for candidates for party secretaries, they used the principle "jiudi qucai" or "draw on local resources." As a result, 95 per cent of them are local people.¹⁰

Local people are usually peasants. Recently, there has been a growing trend where peasants who become party secretaries have done the military service for some time. Many years ago, these peasants applied to join the military service, and served for a number of years. Due to various reasons, they came back to their own villages. These retired servicemen, upon returning to their villages, are elected party secretaries. For instance, in the suburban districts of Jingin city (Shandong Province) 52 per cent of the ex-servicemen assumed the job as party secretaries.¹¹ Similar reports also came from Henan Province,¹² Hubei Province,¹³ Fujian Province.¹⁴

⁹Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁰Qiu Zhirong was Dongtai City Party Committee Secretary (Dongtai city is in Jiangsu Province). Qiu Zhirong, "Nongcun dangzhibu shuji duiwu jianshe de dongtai yangjiu (Dynamic investigation of the construction of the contingents of village party secretaries) Dang shi wen hui, 1989, No. 4, pp. 28-30. See, also NN. "Nongcun dangzhibu shuji houji fan ren xianxiang chu tan" (A preliminary investigation on the phenomenon of the dearth of successors to the post village Party branch secretary) Dang jian (Beijing), 1989, No. 6, pp. 12 & 47.

¹¹Renmin Ribao, 28 April 1991, p. 2.

¹²"Zhibu shi jichu, shuji shi guanjian: xinmi xuanba ganbu dao nongcun renzhi," (The party branch is the foundation, the party secretary is the crux: Xinmi City select cadres to be sent to villages to take up jobs) Renmin ribao, 11 March 1995, p. 3 in Zhongguo renmin daxue shubao ziliao zhongxin, 1995, No. 3, p. 139.

The advantage of employing retired soldiers, apparently, is that they have had lengthy training in organization and leadership skills, qualities which are needed to take up the job of party secretary (see, above).

The trend of assigning retired soldiers to become party secretaries seems to be an official policy. Zhao Zongnai, Deputy Head of the Central Organization Department, in his speech delivered during National Conference of Village Organizations in Caixi, Shandong Province, 5-8 October, 1990, argued that the selection of good party secretaries is crucial to the effort of constructing (jianshe) the party branches.¹⁵ He, then, proposed that party secretaries can be selected from retired soldiers. This view is echoed four years later in the wake of the campaign of rural party rectification in 1994, by Zeng Xianqing when he expounded his theory on the construction of party branches in the countryside.¹⁶

Both Mr. Zhao and Mr. Zeng actually also support the idea of recruiting candidates for party secretaries from the staff of village enterprises and educated youths who return to their villages. They even propose cadres who are already working at the township. This proposal is intended to overcome shortages of candidates for party secretaries.¹⁷

¹³Zhang Xinmei, "Xianshi nongcun shequ zhong de shili renwu," (Powerful persons in the contemporary village community), Shehuixue yu shehui diaocha, 1992, No. 3, pp. 35- 38.

¹⁴"Xuan, pei, ya, kao" (Select, educate, push, and check), Xiang-zhen luntan, No. 2, 1995, p. 4.

¹⁵Zhao Zongnai "Qieshi jiaqiang yi dangzhibu wei hexin de cunji zuzhi jianshe," (Carry out the strengthening of the construction of village-level organizations by taking the party branch as core) Xiang-zhen luntan, 1990, No. 9, pp. 6- 8.

¹⁶See, the article by Zeng Xianqing "Gaige kaifang zhong de nongcun jiceng dang zuzhi jianshe, (The construction of grass-root party organization in the countryside during reform and opening up) Dangjian wenhui (Shenyang), 1994, No. 3, pp. 4-5 in Zhongguo renmin daxue shubao ziliao zhongxin, 1994, No. 3, pp. 156-157.

¹⁷See, also Zhang Rui, "Shilun xin shiqi xuanba cun dangzhibu shuji de biao zhun yu tujing," (A discussion on the standard and avenues for selecting village party branch secretaries in the new era) Fuxun shehui kexue (Liao), 1989, No. 12, pp. 13-14. The author proposes five channels of acquiring candidates for party secretaries: (1) from the village itself; (2) from the township organ; (3) from village enterprises or the neighbouring village; (4) from the retired cadres; (5) from the non-party activists. Cf. "Kaiping qu wei xiang houjin cun dangzhibu zhuru xinxian xueye," (Kaiping District Party Committee injected fresh blood into backward village party branches) Nongmin ribao, 25 December 1990, p. 3. Here, party secretaries are elected from those who run village enterprises, but also from the retired cadres who have been working at state-run enterprises or state organs or research units.

The Fourth Plenum (1994) approved all of these proposals:¹⁸

"In some villages where suitable candidates for party branch secretaries cannot be found immediately, we may adopt such measures as selecting outstanding people from party and government bodies, as well as village and town enterprises, to take up jobs in the villages. We should broaden our horizons and widen the channels through which young intellectuals and retired servicemen in rural areas, key members in village enterprises and outstanding people who leave their hometowns to do business are uncovered in a planned manner and trained meticulously."

C. The procedure of election

The procedure of election within the party, after the introduction of Reform (1978) was laid down in the document released in February 1980, titled "Some Norms Concerning Political Life within the party."¹⁹ One of the norms, No. 8, governs the election which is actually a general norm to be applied to all elections within the party.

According to this norm, any election should proceed through four steps. First, the name of candidates are to be "fermented" (yunniang) among party members or their representatives. Secondly, party members or their representatives will approve the names of the candidates. Thirdly, the candidates will introduce themselves to the electors. Fourthly, election is conducted through secret ballot.²⁰

The election of a party branch secretary also follows the norms which are fully incorporated in what is called "Provisional regulations of the CCP on the election work at the grass-root organization" (1990).²¹ According to these "Provisional

¹⁸"CCP Circular on Strengthening Rural Primary and Grass-Roots Organizations," in SWB, 2 December 1994, FE/2168 G/5.

¹⁹The Fifth Plenum of the Thirteenth Party Congress, "Guanyu dang nei zhengzhi shenghuo de ruogan zhunze," 29 February 1980, (Some Norms Concerning the Political Life within the Party), in Jing Bin (ed.), Zhongguo gongchandang da cidian (Grand dictionary of the Communist Party of China), Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 1991. p. 908-914.

²⁰Ibid., p. 912.

²¹See Zhongguo gongchandang jiceng zuzhi xuanju gongzuo zanxing tiaoli (Provisional regulations of the CCP on the election work at the grass-root organization), in Sun Qi and Zhang Kemin (eds.) Zhongguo gongchandang jiceng zuzhi xuanju gongzuo wenda (Questions and answers on election work at the grass-root organization of the CCP), Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1992, pp. 116-122.

Regulations," the election of a party branch secretary should take place after the election of the functionaries of the party branch committee (Art. 16).²² A party secretary, thus, is not elected by the party branch congress, but by the new party branch committee. This does not mean that the party secretary is not responsible to the party congress. A party secretary, as the head of the party branch committee, is responsible to the party branch committee and, as member of the party branch committee, to the party branch congress; he must write regular reports to each bodies.

The process of election goes as follows. A list of names of candidates is prepared by the outgoing party branch committee (Art. 16). The outgoing party secretary presents the list to the members of the committee for "fermentation." They will make recommendation, and then make a preliminary selection.²³

The second step is to send the list of names to the township party committee for approval (tongyi). (Art. 16) Thirdly, after the new party committee receives a list of names from the township, it will start the "fermentation" again.²⁴ This stage of fermentation is different from the previous one because the new committee, supposedly, do not know the list of names in advance. Thus, this is a stage where the electors come to know the candidates and assess the quality of the candidates. Possibly, they get involved in debates about the suitability of the candidates. Most of the time, they may just approve, especially the incumbent party secretaries.

Finally, the election. Only the members of the new committee elect a new party secretary through a secret ballot and on the basis of absolute majority. The number of a party branch committee is not always big. The largest number permitted

All legal references in this section refers to this "Provisional regulations."

²² A party branch has two bodies: the party branch congress where all members take part, and the party branch committee which consists of a selected party members to act as standing committee to the party branch congress. On the structure of a party branch, see Appendix C.

²³ Sun Qi and Zhang Kemin, op.cit., Question No. 84, p. 41.

²⁴ Ibid.



is seven, and the smallest is three.²⁵ Thus, in a village with a big party branch and a big party branch committee, the election of party secretary is probably quite exciting. Otherwise, it is just an event for a small number of people in a village.

After election, the new party secretary himself must go to the township party committee and report himself for approval.²⁶ If the one who is elected as party secretary is not on the list previously agreed by the township party committee, then he will have to go through the process of scrutiny before being approved.²⁷

The township party committee and its Department of Discipline Inspection supervise the process of election. (Art. 30) In case there is an irregularity, according to its gravity, they can impose punishment ranging from criticism to disciplinary action. (Art. 31)

In special circumstances, where a party branch does not have a committee, all party members will "ferment" names of candidates, and then bring them to the township party committee to be scrutinized and agreed upon. (Art. 13 and 16). Afterward, all party members within the Party Branch Congress elect a new party secretary.²⁸

D. Re-election and terms of office

The term of office of a party branch secretary, including a village party branch secretary, is the same as that of the party branch committee. As the term of office for the party branch committee is only for two years, so is that of the party secretary. In other words, each time there is an election of a new party branch committee (every two years), a new party branch secretary is also elected.²⁹ The idea behind this regulation is probably linked to the status of party secretary within the party branch

²⁵See, Appendix C. Also, "Dang zhibu sheli de yuanze" (The principle of establishing a Party branch), in Jing Bin (ed.), op.cit., p. 347.

²⁶Sun Qi and Zhang Kemin, op.cit., Question No. 89, p. 43.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., Question 83, p. 41.

²⁹"Zhibu weiyuan hui" (The Party branch committee), in Jing Bin (ed.), op.cit., p. 348

committee, namely the head of the party branch committee.³⁰

A party secretary can be re-elected for many times as there is no limit to the number of office terms for party secretaries (also for members of the party branch committee). This practice may have become a long tradition. A typical case is one which is reported by Qiu Zhirong, Dongtai City Party Committee Secretary (Jiangsu Province). From his investigation of 735 village party secretaries who were under his jurisdiction, he found party secretaries coming from many different generations: 8 per cent from the time of collectivization (1958), 52 per cent from the time of the Cultural Revolution, and 40 per cent after the introduction of Reform in 1978.³¹ A report from Maoyou Village (Yuanjiang County, Hunan Province) explicitly argues about the long-life tenure of the party secretary. "As long as he does not make mistakes,³² is not ill, then he should not stand down."³³

The Fourth Plenum (1994), as a matter of fact, supports the idea of re-electing the incumbent party secretaries. "We should support incumbent party branch secretaries who have been tested in practice, who are equal to their jobs and who enjoy popular support."³⁴ This latest document, undoubtedly, further strengthens the tradition of re-electing incumbent party secretaries.

The reelection, however, is not always automatic. A party secretary can be asked to leave the post or even purged before his office term is finished. This usually happens during rectification campaigns. For example, Kang Nengcheng reported a rectification of "backward" party branches and their secretaries in 1989. At that time, there were 732,000 party branches and 15 per cent of them in the category "backward." Work teams were sent to the countryside, and one of the rectification activities was "to meticulously elect good party secretaries," after purging the old

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Qiu Zhirong, op.cit.

³²"Fan cuowu," in Chinese terminology, will include acts of corruption.

³³"Jiji fazhan nongcun qingnian rudang" (Actively recruit young peasants to join the Party) Nongmin ribao, 9 April, 1985, p. 3.

³⁴"CCP Circular," op.cit., p. 5.

ones.³⁵

II. VARIANTS AND DEVIANCE

What is presented above is the standard procedure. In this section I will explore some variants from the standard procedure which are officially sanctioned. This is not issued as a policy by the office of Central Committee of the Party but as a practice reported in handbooks and journals which are published with official approval. They are not yet incorporated in the standard procedure but will, in the future, be eventually recognized as standard. In the second part, I will describe the deviance from the standard procedure; this is not officially sanctioned but does exist in some parts of China.

A. The officially sanctioned variants

1. The first four of the variants are reported in the "Handbook for the Work of Party Branches." They are all practised in Ji County, Tianjin.³⁶ The first is "competitive variant." The candidates for party secretaries are decided by the whole party members and villagers. There is a session to discuss the candidates and also an opinion poll. Afterward, candidates are elected. Each of these candidates, then, have to make a speech, explaining their programmes of work, in front of party members. Party members will again discuss the candidates and their programmes. Election takes place after this discussion.

In this variant, two things are noticeable. Firstly, party secretaries are elected by all party members, not only by the party branch committee. Secondly, the candidates are to present programmes of work on the basis of which they are elected. This is the competitive character of this variant. A candidate with a better programme

³⁵In Chinese, Jingxin xuan hao dangzhibu shuji. See Kang Nengcheng "Jiaqiang nongcun jiceng zuzhi jianshe," (Strengthen the construction of village grass-root organizations) in Zhongguo nongye nianjian 1991 (China Agriculture Yearbook), 1991: pp. 141-142.

³⁶Jiao Genqiang and Jing Ri (eds.), op.cit, "Xuanhao nongcun dangzhibu shuji de si ge fangfa" (Four methods of selecting village party branch secretaries), p. 558-559.

is elected. Thus, the chance of "entering through the backdoor" is minimized.

This first variant of election, apparently, has quite a long history. The Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily), at least, since 1988 already reported it. The report says that in Xiannanxi County (Sichuan Province), 288 village party secretaries were elected by party members, and not appointed by the township party committees. This initiative, however, faced stiff opposition by party members.³⁷

This variant was accepted beyond Tianjin and Sichuan Province. Many reports come from various places in China on this variant. In Zunhua Township (Zunhua County, Hebei Province) party secretaries were elected by all party branch members.³⁸ Candidates, two to four, after delivering their speeches on administering the village in front of party branch congress, had to answer questions raised by the present party members. Afterward, election was conducted through secret ballots. Candidates could be someone who recommends oneself, or was recommended by the party, or by the masses. They, then, were approved by the party. This practice was carried out in 25 villages in the township.

The Party Committee of Xianyang County (Hubei Province), it is reported, elected 122 new party branch secretaries by using new criteria, namely to have good knowledge on commodity economy, business, and management.³⁹ The process of election itself was to follow "competitive procedure": the candidates were presented to the party members and the villagers, and let them "ferment." After that, the candidates were to give a speech and answer questions. The election was conducted openly, but only by party members. A similar practice also took place in Yancheng City (Jiangsu Province) where 1181 villages "conducted an open and competitive

³⁷"Minzhu xuanju cun zhishu shi gaohao dangzhibu banzi de guanjian," (Democratically electing village party secretaries is critical for the success of village party branches) Nongmin ribao, 20 December 1988, p. 3.

³⁸"Dangyuan men shuo, 'Zhei cai shi zhen minzhu'," (All party members said: 'This is real democracy'," Nongmin ribao, 4 April, 1989, p. 3.

³⁹Xiong Yuanhui and Zeng Jiangsheng, "Yong shengchanli biao zhun xuanren nongcun dangzhibu shuji," (Using production ability as standard to select village party branch secretaries) Xuexi yu shixian (Wuhan), 1989, pp. 47-49.

election of party secretaries."⁴⁰

2. The second is the "sent-down variant." A cadre from the township or county is sent down to a backward party branch of a particular village. This cadre is, unlike other village cadres, "a cadre leaving production" (tuochan ganbu), meaning a cadre who does not engage in production such as tilling the fields. He is actually a full-time cadre who draws his salary from the State. As he is sent down from the higher authorities, then there is no question of election. The higher authorities select the party secretary. But the selection is not arbitrary because - it is reported - "party members and the masses should basically know him."

This second variant, actually, does not present an election process; election takes place within the confinement of the township or county office and by the people in the authority. The local party members and villagers are not involved. Although they were asked their opinions, they ultimately have to accept the sent-down cadre. The report says that this method is intended to correct a deteriorating situation which has affected a village and its party branch for a long time.

Outside Tianjin, this variant is reported in Zhucheng County (Shandong Province).⁴¹ According to the report, the county party committee conducted a rectification, and in this process "they brought in young and outstanding party members" to replace the old ones. They were elected from party members of specialized households or economic cooperative organizations (jingji lianheti). There were 340 of them. Another report comes from Lishu County, Jilin Province which was written by the Deputy County Party Secretary. He reported the practice of sending township cadres to villages to take up jobs as party secretaries.⁴²

This variant is used as a means to remedy party branches which are

⁴⁰"Yancheng gongkai jingxuan cun dangzhibu shuji," (Yancheng openly select village party secretaries) Baokan wenzhai, 14 August 1995, p. 1.

⁴¹"Zhucheng nongcun tapi youxiu dangyuan danren zhibu lingdao," (A big batch of outstanding party members assume party branch leadership at Zhucheng Village) Nongmin ribao, 3 May 1985, p. 1.

⁴²Wang Shengke, "Xuannpai xiang-zheng jiguan ganbu dao cun ren dangzhibu shuji de tiaocha yu sikao," (Xin changcheng (Changchun)) 1993, No. 12, pp. 40-41, in Zhongguo renmin daxue shubao ziliao zhongxin, 1993, No. 1, pp. 146-147.

"backward." By sending an able cadre from the township, one author argues, it is expected that this cadre will correct all irregularities and ameliorate the situation.⁴³ The central leadership accepted this practice. On 1 December 1990, a circular was issued jointly by the Central Committee and the State Council. To remedy the shortcomings of the backward party branches, it urged the party committees at county and township levels to select "some party members who are honest, fair, aggressive, and competent," and appoint them "to act as party branch secretaries to help those party branches improve their organizations."⁴⁴

3. The third is the "guardian variant." This is also about a cadre who is sent by the township or county authorities. Unlike the second variant, this cadre is not to become party secretary. However, he will act as the guardian to the local party branch and its secretary to put the party branch and the village in better shape. As part of this package, it may happen that he will also assist the local party branch to select a new party secretary. This cadre will not stay in the village for a long time. As soon as he considers that the party branch can operate well, he will leave the village.

Similar to the second variant, the third variant presents an election process. However, the whole process of electing party secretaries is put under the "guidance" (zhidao) of the sent-down cadre. It is not known the extent of this guidance; it may range from preparing the list of names of candidates to conducting the election itself. Yet the idea of sending an assisting cadre is not to overhaul the party branch in question because it is considered not to be in a very bad state. What it needs is only a temporary remedial measure.

Not many reports are found on this variant. Besides Tianjin, in Zhucheng County (Shandong Province), it was reported, that beside sending down youthful cadres to take up the jobs of party secretaries in the villages, the county also asked outstanding party members who were currently working temporarily outside the

⁴³Wen Xianfang, "Tongguo duozhong tujing peibei nongcun houjin dangzhibu daitouren" (Approve various approaches in providing leaders to the lagging behind Party branches in the village) Dangjian yanjiu, 1990, No. 6, pp. 43-44.

⁴⁴"Zhonggong zhongyuan guowuyuan guanyu yi jiu jiu yi nian nongye he nongcun gongzuo de tongzhi," (A circular by the central committee and the state council on the 1991 work of agriculture and villages), 1991, p. 1-3; also Renmin ribao, 5 December 1990, pp. 1-2.

village to go back to the village. This latter group (43 people), according to the report, was then distributed by the county to the villages to help the new leaders in carrying out their duty.⁴⁵

4. The fourth is what the handbook itself terms: "circle round variant." The candidates for the village party secretary are prepared and trained by the township party committee. They are required to work at the township for a certain period of time. When election time comes, they are sent back to their own village to take part in the election of party secretary.

According to the handbook, this method is to overcome firstly, the shortages of talented candidates, and secondly, the insurmountable problems in the village concerned. The latter means that "the village is in a very complicated (fuza) state and is severely under the influence of clans." In this kind of environment, where it is difficult to breed good cadres, it is necessary - the book argues - that the township party committee takes initiatives. The term "circle round," apparently, means that the township party committee circumvents the difficulties: the candidates are still local peasants yet they are already transformed.

The fourth method basically does not alter the fundamentals of the standard procedure of election of party secretaries. The party branch committee still has to discuss the candidates and elect them. The only difference lies in the fact that the list of candidates are not prepared by the party branch committee.

This variant was reported also in 1991, in Changde city (Hunan Province).⁴⁶ The city party committee succeeded in training 8563 cadres, and 8000 of them were eligible to become party secretaries. Four years later, after undergoing varied on-job training in the villagers' committee as well as in Party organization, 875 of those cadres were ready to take up jobs. At that time, there were 4149 party secretaries, and 800 of them were advanced in age.

⁴⁵"Zhucheng nongcun tapi youxiu dangyuan danren zhibu lingdao," (A big batch of outstanding party members assume party branch leadership at Zhucheng Village) Nongmin ribao, 3 May 1985, p. 1.

⁴⁶"Changde shi peiyang cun dangzhishu houbai ganbu" (Changde city trained cadres to take up job as party village branch secretaries) Renmin ribao, 6 January, 1991, p. 3.

5. The fifth variant is an election which involves the villagers. The first report was from the Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily) 1986. The election of party secretaries in villages in Changqing County (Shandong Province), for instance, was said to be conducted "through open competition." Four hundred party secretaries were elected through this process.⁴⁷ It provided a detailed report. At the first stage, candidates were recommended by the party, or by the village people's representative, or party member recommended oneself. Secondly, these candidates were examined by the township party committee. Thirdly, an enlarged party branch congress was convened where the people's representative also attended. During this meeting, the candidates read out their programme of administering the village, and replied to questions from the masses and examining small groups. Fourthly, election was conducted within the party through secret ballots, and results were announced on the spot.

This variant was reported in Renmin ribao (People's Daily) in 1995. According to this report, four hundred new party secretaries (and more than 1000 members of party branch committees) in villages under Zoucheng city (Shandong Province) were elected "by involving party members and the masses."⁴⁸

B. Deviance from the standard procedure

Deviance from the standard procedure is caused by the activity of social groups in society. Two types of deviance are identified: the first is buying votes by the bourgeois class, and the second is the muddling of election by lineage groups.

1. Buying votes to win an election is reported by Yang Liping in his article published at the Dangjian yanjiu (Research into the construction of the party) in 1992.⁴⁹ Mr Yang writes this article on the basis of his research conducted in Zhejiang Province

⁴⁷"Changqing gongkai jingxuan nongcun dangzhibu shuji," (Changqing openly select village party branch secretaries) Nongmin ribao, 21 March 1989, p. 3.

⁴⁸"Zoucheng nongcun dangzhibu jianshe you xin jizhi," (The construction of village party branches in Zoucheng city has new mechanism) Renmin ribao, 26 May 1993, p. 4.

⁴⁹Yang Liping, "Nongcun jieji bianhua he dang de jianshe," (Class changes in the countryside and the construction of the Party) in Dangjian yanjiu (Jing), 1992, No. 1, pp. 43-46.

which has undergone rapid economic growth. First of all, he identifies the emergence of classes in the countryside, and analyses their impact on various aspects of village life. In his observation, there are five classes emerging in the countryside, agricultural workers (nongye laodong zhe), staffs at village enterprises (xiangzhen qiye zhigong), village and township functionaries (xiangcun guanli zhe), private merchants (geti gongshang hu), and private enterprises (siying qiye hu).

One serious impact is that classes are competing to have control over the village and party organizations. Mr Yang writes: "After the village class ranks undergo structural changes and diversification of the economy, different strata increasingly demonstrate numerous differences relating to economic interest, value orientation, and behaviour." Using a typical Marxist analysis, he further argues: "Different strata are hoping to acquire their own representatives within the political organizations, to protect and consolidate their interests."

In Mr. Yang's observation, interest groups in villages are competing to influence the process of election of the village party committee. The means they use is money. "There emerges the phenomenon of buying votes in order to be elected to the committee. Consequently, in some places it is not possible to elect cadres for the party committee, nor possible to satisfy the numbers. Many persons who are not qualified for the jobs are elected to the party committee. This influences the leadership of the party in the countryside." One of the consequences shows that - as he writes - "there are even cases where the party leadership is rejected (paichi)."⁵⁰

This type of deviance is quite new, and typically found in rich and prosperous villages.

2. The muddling by lineage groups is reported in various media. Quoting again the results of an investigation of 745 party secretaries by the Research Centre of Dongtai City Party Committee (Jiangsu Province), it is reported that old party secretaries breed their successors.⁵¹ The practice is called 'dai tu shi' (bringing in one's disciple) "At present, the majority of party secretaries are all examined, trained, and

⁵⁰All of the quotations from, Ibid., p. 80.

⁵¹Research Centre of Dongtai City Party Committee, op.cit.

recommended by the 'old party secretary.'" These old party secretaries, then, judge and select their own successors according to their own standard. The researchers argue that it is very difficult for these people to be impartial. The researchers believe that when they do the selection of their successors, they will certainly be influenced "by blood relations and lineage consideration" because they prefer to have successors of the same surname (tong xing dang).

In Xiang County, Hubei Province, this phenomenon is called "Bo Le" system.⁵² It is reported that out of 620 party secretaries, about 20% of them are not able "to meet the demand of new era." The authors point out that one of the reasons is that in villages there is a practice called "Bo Le." Bo Le was a man living in Qin State in the Spring and Autumn Period, well-known for his outstanding ability to judge a horse's worth only by looking at it. It is now used as a metaphor indicating a person who is able to discover, recommend and know how to choose the right person for the right job.

There is no objective criteria, of course, in these two election processes. The person who selects his own successor chooses him on the basis of his personal taste. There is little doubt that in this process, a party secretary is elected more on the basis of lineage consideration.

The muddling by lineage groups in the election of party secretaries can be more subtle than the above mentioned. In his investigation in Xing Village (Hubei Province), Zhang Xinmei finds a very sophisticated influence of lineage.⁵³ The author shows that the ladder to the position of party secretary has been decided long before. As we know from the previous section, many retired servicemen are taking up jobs as party secretaries. This opportunity is apparently used by some lineages. Thus, a lineage will help one of his members to enter the military service. After four

⁵²Xiong Yuanhui and Zeng Jinsheng, "Yong shengchanli biao zhun xuan ren nongcun dangzhibu shuji" (Using a standard of election to select village Party branch secretary), Xuexi yu shixian (Wuhan), No. 4, 1989, pp. 47-49

⁵³Zhang Xinmei "Xianshi nongcun shequ zhong de shili renwu," (Powerful persons in the contemporary village community) Shehuixue yu shehui diaocha, 1992, No. 3, pp. 35- 38. Although this article does not mention Party secretaries directly, it indirectly refers to "xiang, cun, zhu xingzhen fuzeren" to which party secretaries belong.

or five years, he may return and with a greater chance, to becoming party secretary.

Indeed, Mr. Zhang argues that to become a powerful person (shili renwu), or to stay in power, one needs strong support from his lineages in many ways. Thus, after one is elected party secretary, to consolidate his power, he further needs the support of his lineage because - he writes - "power in a village is "unstable" (bu wending) where a party secretary can be forced to step down if there arises a serious problem." To advance in his career, a party secretary must also rely on his lineage without which, it will not only stop his career but also may damage it with eventual result of relegation. The author states that "the close relationship between powerful persons and lineage or kin is a clear objective fact in the village community."⁵⁴

This second type of deviance displays the strong influence of lineage groups whether it is through personal selection or democratic election. This is more probable in villages of one-single surname (first form) or one-dominant surname (second form).⁵⁵

III. PATTERN OF THE MAKING OF PARTY SECRETARIES

A. The process of election

Thus far we have seen seven types of election of village party secretaries: five are authorized and two are unauthorized by the central leadership. This section, however, will analyze the authorized types as these types of election are actually the authorized versions though constrained by social groups in society.

The three authorized types of election demonstrates a concentric circle; the farther from the circle the "more democratic." The first type, the standard one, is the most undemocratic where party secretaries are elected only by members of the party branch committees. At the second circle lies the type which involves all party members (Variant 1) and at the most outer circle (Variant 5) is the one which is the most democratic although the villagers do not yet directly elect the party secretaries. (See **Diagram 1**)

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 37.

⁵⁵On this distinction, see Chapter Six.

Evidently, there is a clear trend toward broadening the base of electorates. Party secretaries, in the standard procedure, are elected by members of the party branch committee only; then they are elected by all party members; eventually, they are elected by all party members by taking the voice of the villagers. These various approaches may be urgently needed in order to restore the authority of the CCP in the countryside which is rapidly declining. The document of Fourth Plenum (1994)

Diagram 1

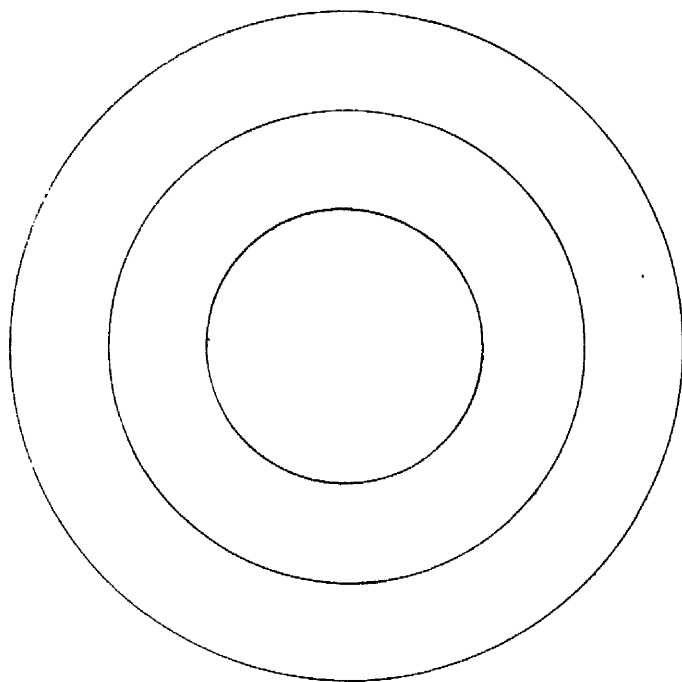
The three types of election demonstrate in a concentric circle; the farther from the core the "more democratic."

The core: party secretaries elected by the party committee; second circle: party secretaries elected by party members; third circle (Variant I): party secretaries elected by involving the villagers (Variant V).

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admitted this openly when it acknowledged the fact that the branches were "loosely-organized or paralysed" to the extent that they were unable to solve "the prominent problem that has obstructed reform and development and affected our efforts to maintain stability."⁵⁶ If party secretaries are elected by a broader electorate, it is expected that they will be made accountable to a larger number of constituents who, in turn, will support them if they do their job well.

Variants 2 and 3 are used in an emergency situation. In both cases, the villages in question are in a bad situation or, in CCP terminology, "a paralysed and semi-paralysed state" to the extent that they are not able to elect party secretaries on their own, not to mention democratic election. Thus, party secretaries are not elected but imposed by the higher organs. Or, if they are elected, the election might be under the influence of the "guardian cadre."

Variant 4 is also utilized to remedy a helpless situation. Yet, unlike variant 2 and 3, it tries to retain the democratic character of the election. Although the candidates are given training by the higher authorities, they must go through an election process to become party secretaries. This variant may help to mitigate the resentment of villagers which may arise if either Variant 2 or 3 is used. On the one hand, this variant retains the right of the higher organs to change the paralysed state of a village party branch; but, on the other hand, the higher organs also restrain themselves from imposing their will arbitrarily. Variant 4 can, actually, be viewed as a milder variation of Variant 2 and Variant 3.

B. Candidates to become party secretaries

In terms of candidates, there is another trend which shows a trend toward "localism," namely that party secretaries are to be local people. As we have seen in Section I.B, candidates for party secretaries are always sought among local people. The retired servicemen which have fed the current need of party secretaires are actually also local peasants, although, due to their service, have left their villages for quite a long time.

Except the second variant, all the other four variants of election emphasize

⁵⁶"CCP Circular," op.cit., G/4.

local people as party secretaries whether they are elected democratically, appointed by the higher authorities, or even trained by the township authorities. The standard procedure does not explicitly make a statement about localism, yet its silence cannot be interpreted as prohibiting the practice either. Variant 1 also exhibits a similar feature: party secretaries are elected by all party members who can be safely inferred to be party members of local village party branches. Variant 5, the only type of election which involves the whole population of a village, is certainly the one which gives a clear indication toward localism.

This tacit agreement, apparently, acknowledges the importance of local people to become leaders for themselves. Only local people know their place, and therefore, only local people can govern and rule better. This principle, as a matter of fact, cannot be better in serving the needs of the state itself as "the glue."⁵⁷ The more the state wants to extract surplus from the countryside, the more it needs local people; local people link peasant society with the state which otherwise is estranged from the society it rules.

There have been attempts to alter this trend because localism can produce, among other things, the deviance as we have seen above. For instance, Li Wentong does not hesitate to support the idea that, in order to remedy the situation in the countryside, the township party committee should send township cadres to take the job as party secretaries in the villages.⁵⁸ Researchers from the Research Centre of Dongtai City Party Committee (Jiangsu Province) clearly argue against the practice of jiudi qucai (to recruit local people) in selecting village party secretaries. In its place, like Mr Li Wentong, they also make a proposal that party committees at the township or county send good and able cadres to backward party branches or poor-area party branches to become party secretaries.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Shue, Vivienne The Reach of the State, Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p. 87.

⁵⁸Li Wentong, "Jiaqiang cun ji dang zuzhi jianshe de ji dian sikao," (Some reflection on the strengthening of the construction of village-level party organization) Shaoxing shizhuan xuebao, 1994, No. 4, pp. 80-83 in Zhongguo renmin daxue shubao ziliao zhongxin, 1995, No. 2, pp. 105-108.

⁵⁹Researchers from Research Centre of Dongtai City Party Committee "Nongcun dangzhibu shuiji houji fan ren xianxiang chu tan" (A preliminary investigation on the phenomenon of the dearth of successors to the post village Party branch secretary) Dang jian (Beijing), 1989, No. 6, p. 47.

The Editor of Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily) supports this idea but only under a certain condition.⁶⁰ This editorial speaks a lot about 'houjin dangzhibu' or backward party branches which are described as "bu li, bu he, bu qin, bu lian" (no strength, no harmony, no hardwork, no honesty). To remedy this situation, it needs more than rectification; it needs new leadership or a new party secretary. According to the editor, almost all backward party branches do not have ideal party secretaries as party members just take turns among themselves to become party secretaries (lunliu zhizheng). The solution, therefore, is that "to them the higher party organization must send capable party members from outside."

These proposals, actually, do not fundamentally alter the basic trend of localism. Party secretaries should invariably be local people, and only under certain circumstances, can they be people from outside the villages. The trend of localism, apparently, will continue if the central leadership would like to effectively govern and rule the countryside. The central leadership clearly opts to abide by the old tradition. For example, the only comprehensive document on village party branches, the document on party rectification of the Fourth Plenum, 1994, is silent about this matter. There is no mention about altering the trend of localism. Indeed, the document urges "to broaden our horizons and widen the channels"⁶¹ in recruiting candidates for party secretaries, yet it does not explicitly encourage the breaking up of localism. Perhaps, they expect that the local party committees (township and county) will make experiments before it becomes a nationwide policy.

Thus, we find two main patterns in the process of making a village party secretary: the broadening of the base of the electorate and localism. These two trends are thought to be beneficial by the central leadership in their efforts to restore the authority of village party branches.

⁶⁰"Jiaqiang jiceng zuzhi jianshe yao mingque zhidao sixiang," (Strengthening grass-root organizations need a clear guiding thinking) Nongmin ribao, 28 January 1991, p. 1.

⁶¹"CCP Circular," op.cit., G/5.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have tried to describe, first of all, the necessary qualities that a candidate for party secretary should possess: the decai jianbei in combination with si hua and liu hui. These qualities plus 22 other are believed to be vitally important to invigorate the party branches in all the units which, in the era of Reform, have to carry out various different jobs at the same time. Candidates for village party branch secretaries still have to possess one additional quality, namely "health."

Secondly, candidates for party branch secretaries are recruited from various channels, but are invariably local peasants. Recently, retired servicemen have become the main sources of candidates for party secretaries. This group of people, having vast experience in the matter of organizational and other skills, is thought able to become party secretaries with the necessary qualities mentioned above.

Thirdly, apart from the authorized types, there are two unauthorized types of electing party secretaries. These are deviances which emerge as the result of the influence of social groups in society. The first is buying votes by the bourgeois class in villages, and the second is the muddling of the election by lineage groups. The buying votes may be typically found in rich and prosperous areas, although the same chance cannot be ruled out in the poorer areas. The lineage groups which have become more and more assertive recently, use the available opportunity to exert their influence in the election of party secretaries in many ways.

Fourthly, the authorized types consist of one standard procedure and five variants. From these six types, there are three types which are utilized for a normal situation, and another three for a special situation. In the latter, the higher authorities exert a direct intervention by sending down cadres who replace the existing party secretaries or by training a number of party members to be candidates for party secretaries. In the former, there is a clear trend towards broadening the base of the electorate, from one which is confined to selected members of the party branch committee to one which includes the villagers at large.

Finally, we also find out that although there is no official regulation, party secretaries are invariably local people. This is closely related to the source of candidates being always local, and to the method of election which is also always

rooted locally. Party secretaries may not be local people but this is only in an extremely special situation such as in totally paralysed party branches.

The broadening of the base of electorate and the persistence of localism, evidently, form the main pattern of the making of a village party secretary after Reform (1978). This will certainly bring an impact on the way village party secretaries exercise their authority in their villages.

CHAPTER THREE
THE PARTY SECRETARY AND HIS SUPERIOR (1):
THE ROLE OF STATE AGENT

"Without the Communist Party,
there would have been no new China"
(One of patriotic songs)

As indicated in Chapter One, there are two roles which come "from above." This chapter concerns with one of the two roles which originates from a village party secretary's relationship with his superior, a hierarchical relationship which is rooted in the very nature of his being the secretary of a party branch of the Chinese Communist Party. That is the role as state agent.

This chapter will be divided into two major sections. The first section will discuss the role of state agent. The second section will deal with explaining the origin of the role by looking into the agenda of the state. I will demonstrate that this role is part of the state's attempt to raise the enthusiasm of the peasants to produce more which, in turn, leads to the adoption of the strategy of nominal encapsulation.

I. THE ROLE OF STATE AGENT

A. The definition of the role of state agent

The state is understood as - following Michael Mann - centralized institution.¹ As such, the state monopolizes the power to formulate policies for its population through various means, democratic or non-democratic. This is what Mann calls "infrastructural power" namely "the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm."² In this perspective, the Party and the government are taken as one entity as they are

¹Mann, Michael "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results," in John A. Hall (ed.), States in History, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, pp. 112.

²Ibid., p. 113.

closely interlocked with each other.³

The term "state agent," therefore, means people who work for the state to implement the state's policies. An agent is a person who is assigned to a specific task as part of a big operation, and must complete it with perfection. The person him/herself does not have his/her own plan separate from the grand design. He/she simply has to carry out a task. In our case, a village party secretary must listen and obey the instructions from the higher authorities (township or county).⁴

B. The objective

The main job of a state agent is to implement a set of objectives set by the state. What is the content of the objective for the Chinese countryside? Generally speaking, they are objectives which have something to do with agriculture and village society. Since the introduction of Reform (1978), the central leadership has issued a vast amount of policies on "village work" (nongcun gongzuo). At the beginning of every year, in the first week of January, there is always a national conference in Beijing to evaluate the situation of agriculture of the previous year and set a plan for the coming year. The decision produced during this conference usually becomes a decision on village work.

Village work, in the beginning of Reform, simply meant programs to increase agricultural production. But in 1984, village work had a broader meaning. The Central Committee decided that "village work" should include "overall development"

³Lieberthal writes: "Thus, at each level of the political system in China - the Center (Beijing), the province, the prefecture, the city, the county and the locale (township or commune) - there is a full array of party and state organs, with the party in addition having committees, branches, and cells embedded within the state organs. In principle, the party is to make policy and state is to administer it, but as we shall see, reality has not been that neat." See Lieberthal, Kenneth Governing China, London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995. p. 77.

⁴Cf. The definition of "agent" by the "Oxford English Dictionary": (1) He who operates in a particular direction, who produces an effect; (2) One who does the actual work of anything as distinguished from the instigator or employer; hence, one who acts for another, a deputy, steward, factor, substitute, representative, or emissary. (The Compact Edition of Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 178.

of the village.⁵ "It should not be concerned only about increasing production, but also about guiding the peasants to learn book-keeping, and to pay attention to efficiency. It should not only be anxious about production, but also exchange, distribution, consumption, and other things. It should not only be about agriculture, but also about developing all aspects of citizens' economy as well as culture, education, technology, health, physical training, etc."⁶

Village work goes hand in hand with another subject, namely "ideology and politics" or sixiang zhengzhi. "As policies for the countryside become broader, commodity economy becomes more developed, it is even more necessary that the Party strengthens the work on ideology and politics."⁷ What does this mean in the countryside? It was, for the first time, presented in the famous "Document No. 1" (1 January 1982).⁸ The document maintains an assumption that "peasants inescapably preserve the old custom and thinking which they inherit from the old society," and considers it as a "paralysed and weakened situation." Yet, it only gives an abstract statement without specification of the content of "the education of ideology and politics."

The following year, 1983, a document titled "Strengthen the work on ideology and politics in the countryside" elaborated further this point.⁹ The "old thinking" is defined as feudalism, capitalism, anti-socialism, and other criminal activities, and these are to be eradicated from the peasants' mind. The project of education in ideology and politics means: "step by step elevate the political and ideological consciousness of the peasants, and make them strive to become socialist

⁵Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu yi jiu ba si nian nongcun gongzuo de tongzhi (Central Committee of the CCP on the announcement of 1984 village program) Zhongguo nongye nianjian, 1984 (China agriculture yearbook), Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1984, pp. 1-4.

⁶Ibid., p. 4.

⁷Ibid.

⁸"Quan guo nongcun gongzuo huiyi jiyao" (The summary of the national conference on village works), in Xin shiqi nongye he nongcun gongzuo zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (Selection of important documents on agriculture and villages in the new era), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992, p. 130.

⁹This is also known as "Document No. 2" See, Jiaqiang nongcun sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo (Strengthen the work on ideology and politics in the countryside), Zhongguo nongye nianjian, 1983 (China agriculture yearbook), Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1983, pp. 5-7.

peasants who possess idealism, virtue, culture, discipline, love for the motherland, love for socialism, love for the Party, and love for the collective."¹⁰ But it is warned that the final goal is not to "demand every peasant to become a communist."¹¹

For the first time, in the same Document No. 2, the central leadership introduced the slogan "building material and spiritual civilization" for the village (wuzhi wenming and jingshen wenming). "Therefore, it is imperative that, according to the strategic plan of the Twelfth Party Congress, while building the high level of material civilization, one must also build a high level socialist of spiritual civilization."¹² The building of spiritual civilization is, apparently, part of the "education in ideology and politics." After going through the "education in ideology and politics," peasants are expected to gain "spiritual civilization."

From then on, it becomes the slogan in the countryside: "building material and spiritual civilization." In concrete terms, to build "material spiritualization" means that village party secretaries must be able to increase the production of grain and other agricultural products. In addition to that, they should manage the infrastructure for the production such as irrigation, distribution of agricultural inputs, transportation of agricultural products, etc. To build "spiritual civilization" means that they must eradicate the old practices among peasants such as belief in gods, clans, gambling, etc.¹³ Three additional tasks not included in the celebrated slogan are birth control, land management and tax collection. Probably, these policies are, in the eyes of the central leadership, to be accepted without special slogans and to be implemented without question. However, peasants' failure in these three areas are interpreted as weaknesses in the "ideology and politics." Cadres, then, must go and conduct "the

¹⁰Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹Dangqian nongcun sixiang zhengzhi xuanchuan jiaoyu tiyao (A summary of educating and disseminating ideology and politics in the contemporary countryside), Zhongguo nongye nianjian, 1983 (China agriculture yearbook), Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1983, p. 13.

¹²Ibid.

¹³For further discussion on "spiritual civilization," see Barry, Peter "Building Up a Spiritual Civilization," Tripod, No. 91, 1996, pp. 21-27.

education of ideology and politics" to the peasants.¹⁴

Thus, the objective set by the central leadership for a village party secretary consists of two goals at the same time: "village work" which concentrates on agricultural production and "ideology and politics" which focuses on peasant thinking. Along with these are an additional three tasks of birth control, tax collection and land management.

C. The practice of the role of the state agent

The objective set by the central leadership is actually one which the whole party branch should achieve. The Party Charter (1982), Art. 32, stipulates that party branches, in general, should first, disseminate policies, and secondly, carry out "the education of ideology and politics." While these tasks are valid for all party branches in the whole of China, in 1990, a document, entitled "Minutes of summary national conference on the building of village level organizations," designed a special place for a party branch in a village.¹⁵ In this document, it is stated that the party branch should become the "core" (hexin). In the countryside there are a number of organizations with particular goals, but the party branch lies in the core. It reads: "The village party branch is the leadership core of all organizations and works."¹⁶

Thus, it is the party branch which actually is mandated to achieve the objective of village work, and is responsible for its completion. The party secretary, as part of the party branch, naturally, must also achieve the objective. The party secretary cannot act less than that which is mandated to the party branch. This is clear from the

¹⁴Questions No. 69, 72, 78 of a handbook on handling "education of ideology and politics." See, Xu Shaochen (ed.), Nongcun sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo 100 ge zeme ban? (One hundred how-to in carrying out the work on ideology and politics in the villages), Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe, 1990.

¹⁵"Quan guo cunji zuzhi jianshe gongzuo zuotanhui jiyao" (Key notes of national conference on the building of village level organizations), in Shi san da yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian, Vol. II (Selected important documents since the Thirteenth Party Congress, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991, pp. 1332-1345.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 1335. The idea of party branch as leadership cores is repeated in the Fourth Plenum of the Fourteenth Congress 1994. See: "Dali jiaqiang nongcun yi dangzuzhi wei hexin de jiceng zuzhi jianshe" (Vigorously strengthen the constructions of the grass-root organizations by taking party organization as core," in Renmin ribao, 25 November 1994, p. 1; "CCP Circular on Strengthening Rural Primary and Grass-roots Organizations," in SWB, FE/2168 G/4-9, 2 December 1994.

fact that he is to make report to the party branch committee once every month and to the whole party branch once every three months.¹⁷

A party secretary, however, is not just doing secretarial work for the party branch. Although he is elected by the party branch committee, he is in equal position to it. He is to convene the party branch committee and the party branch congress, he is even to prepare the agenda of the meetings. He is a leader for both the party branch and the party branch committee. As one handbook describes it, he is "the leader and the organiser of the daily operation of the Party branch."¹⁸ It is quite fitting, therefore, if, in CCP's terminology, a party secretary is designated as "zhuyao fuzeren" or important person who holds the responsibility. He must shoulder the responsibility of both successes and failures of the work of the party branch.

Party secretaries, indeed, are considered by the central leadership to occupy a central position within party branches. For instance, in 1990, Song Ping, arguing for building party branches in the countryside, says that "to be able to increase the construction of party branches in the countryside, the crucial thing is to find a good squad, especially to select honest and active party members to become party secretaries."¹⁹ Song Ping believes that the fate of a party branch is closely related with the quality of its party secretary. A good party secretary guarantees the completion of works assigned to the party branch.

A party secretary is designated various titles. Using prose, the handbook graphically describes the role of the party secretary in the village as a wild goose (yan) which leads the other geese. The prose goes as follows:

If wild geese have no leader, it would be impossible for them to fly for a long distance. If there is one leading wild goose, the flock of geese will be able to

¹⁷See "Dang zhibu shuji" (The Party branch secretary), in Jing Bin (ed.), Zhongguo gongchandang da cidian (Grand dictionary of the Communist Party of China), Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 1991, p. 349.

¹⁸Jiao Gengqiang and Jing Ri, Dangzhibu gongzuo shouce (A Manual for the work of a Party branch), Beijing: Zhongguo zhengzhi daxue, 1991, s.v. "Dangzhibu shuji de zhuyao zhize he zhengzhi yewu suzhi." (the main function and the political and professional quality of a Party branch secretary), p. 115.

¹⁹Song Ping, "Jiaqiang nongcun gongzuo, shenhua nongcun gaige" (Strengthen the work in the countryside, and deepen reform in the countryside) in Xin shiqi nongye he nongcun gongzuo zhongyao wenxian xuanbian, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992, p. 620.

fly far and high, from north to south, heading in a direction.²⁰

Thus, says the proverb qun yan gaofei tou yan "(if the flock of wild geese want to fly high, then a leading wild goose should lead them). Taking the image from military circles, village party secretaries are also described as "battle station" (zhandou gangwei). These images are to convey the idea of the centrality of the position of the party secretary in the party branch. Although the mandate is given to the whole party branch, it is its party secretary which is essential to the success of the implementation of the mandate.

How should the party secretary deal with various organizations in the village? A handbook for village party secretaries explains that a village party branch secretary "should always maintain a close relationship with the responsible persons in the Party Branch Committee, the Villagers' Committee, and mass organizations, to exchange experience, to complement each other, and give support to their work."²¹ Following this instruction, the party secretary normally organises meetings with the head/chairman of each organization existing in the village: chairman of the villagers' committee, head of the People's Militia, chairwoman of the Women's Federation, the branch secretary of the Youth League. So, altogether, he must often meet with about six to seven people. There is no fixed time table for this kind of meeting, however.

This forum, apparently, only serves as a forum of communication. Here, the cadres share their experiences or exchange views; no decision is taken. This is probably also a forum to coordinate various activities in a village. The party secretary, although he may not make decision, can make various suggestions to each of the participants.

At what forum, then, are problems arising in the village discussed? There are two fora for discussing problems, namely the Party branch committee and the villagers' committee. As a standing committee of the party branch, the party branch committee must convene, at least, once a month, and discuss all sorts of problems,

²⁰Chi Mian, Zenyang dang hao nongcun dangzhibu shuji (How to become a good village party secretary), Revised edition, Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1987, p. 1.

²¹See, "Cun dangzhibu shuji zhize" (Responsibility of a village party secretary), in Zhang Dianzhong, Nongcun dangzhibu shuji shouce (A handbook for a village party secretary), Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1990, p. 23-24.

and respond to these problems. Two departments of the party branch committee are generally in existence, the department of organization and the department of propaganda. The department of organization mainly deals with problems related to the well-being of the party branch such as membership fees, recruitment, education of the members, etc.²² The department of propaganda tackles almost all problems in the village because this department is responsible for disseminating the Party's policies.²³ It is in the latter that the party secretary may make decisions to tackle problems regarding policy implementation in the village.

The second forum, the villagers' committee, also discusses problems arising in the village.²⁴ According to Art. 2 and 4 of "The Law of Villagers' Committee," it is the job of the villagers' committee to manage both social and economic affairs. In Art. 2, it stipulates that the villagers' committee is to handle "the public affairs and utilities of the village, mediating disputes among villagers, assisting in maintaining public order;" in Art. 4 it is "to support and organise villagers in promoting production, supply and marketing, credit, consumption" and in addition to that, "to coordinate and provide services to production in the village."²⁵ The villagers' committee, therefore, tackles a wide range of problems. The chairman of the villagers' committee, assisted by his staff, solves all sorts of problems which arise everyday.²⁶

The Fourth Plenum (1994) gives further details:²⁷

"Matters of importance in the village, including economic and social development plans, public services and other hot issues of interest to all

²²See, Appendix C

²³Ibid.

²⁴See, Appendix A

²⁵The translation is from "The Organic Law Governing Village Committees of the People's Republic of China (Trial)," in FBIS-CHI, 27 November 1987, p. 21.

²⁶This daily activity is made possible by the fact that the chairman and vice-chairman of the villagers committee are permitted not to work in the field, and receive salaries. See, The Law of the Villagers' Committee, Art. 8.

²⁷See, "CCP Circular" SWB FE/2168 G/6-7

villagers, should be submitted, in accordance with relevant laws and regulations, to the meeting of villagers' representatives or the village congress for discussion and a decision in accordance with the principle of democratic centralism."

"All matters relating to the interests of all villagers, especially when it comes to finances, assigning housing sites, names of women who have been approved to have a child that year and how revenues from fines are used, should be published in a notice at regular intervals so that people can exercise supervision."

The party secretary must be present at the meeting of the party branch committee because he is formally the head of it. Here, he can do more than make suggestions; he make decisions on problems which - according to the party branch committee - violate the Party's line, principles, and policy. To what extent is the party secretary involved in the affairs of villagers' committee? In principle, the party secretary is not permitted to get involved in the villagers' committee because it is, according to Art. 2, an autonomous organization.²⁸ However, a document released in 1990 opens the possibility of the intervention by the party secretary: as part of the party branch, he is also supposed to "exercise leadership," and, indeed, "investigate and supervise."²⁹ Under this arrangement, the party secretary may be present at meetings of the villagers' committee, and may intervene in decisions.

The document released in the following year, 1991, opens the possibility wider when it allows cadres concurrently to take posts at the party branch, the villagers' committee, or economic organization.³⁰ Indirectly, this document also allows the

²⁸Art. 2: "Villagers' committees are the mass organizations for the autonomy of villagers at the grass-roots level by way of self-management, self-education, and self-service." in Ibid.

²⁹"The villagers' committee is under the leadership of the party" and that "the party branch shall conduct investigation and supervision over cadres and party members working in the autonomous organization of villagers' committee." See, "Quan guo cunji zuzhi jianshe gongzuo zuotanhui jiyao" (Minutes of summary of national conference on the building of village level organizations), in Shi san da yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian, Vol. II (Selected important documents since the Thirteenth Party Congress, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991, pp. 1337-1338.

³⁰"Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jin yi bu jiaqiang nongye he nongcun gongzuo de jue ding," (The decision by the Central Committee and the State Council on the strengthening of agriculture and village works), 29 November 1991, in Shi san da yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian, Vol. III (Selected important documents since the Thirteenth Party Congress, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991, pp. 1778. This decision is reaffirmed by the Fourth Plenum of the Fourteenth Party Congress 1994; see "CCP Circular" in SWB FE/2168 G/6.

party secretary to take up the job as chairman of villagers' committee. If this is the case, then the party secretary can wholly intervene in the affairs of the villagers' committee.

The relationship between the party secretary and the chairman of the villagers' committee is very complicated. On the one hand, the party secretary must exercise "leadership" over him; on the other hand, he must also acknowledge the fact that a villagers' committee is an autonomous body. The first is crucial to the authority of the Party in the countryside, whereas the second is critical to the enthusiasm of the peasants to produce more. Tensions and conflicts between the two most senior leaders in a village are surely unavoidable.

The party secretary probably has to spend most of his time with the villagers' committee as the problems tackled by the villagers' committee are central to the village and vital to his future career. The activities of a village party secretary, however, are more than that.³¹ First of all, he must take care of the Women's Federation. This organization is crucial in the work of birth control in the village. Although the scope of the work of the Women's Federation is broader than handling birth control, it has become, eventually, the only place to handle the birth-control program. Given the strenuous campaigns by the leadership, the party secretary cannot but pay serious attention to this particular organization if the birth-control program is to succeed. The woman who is in charge of this organization is normally under heavy pressure from the villagers; the party secretary's job is to give encouragement and help her to find better solutions. Often there are times, when the Women's Federation gives up, and the party secretary himself must face the angry villagers.

Secondly, the party secretary also has to take care of the Youth League in his village. The Party Charter (1982) still considers the Chinese Youth League as feeder to the Party,³² and asks the party organization to pay close attention to it.³³ The

³¹On various political organizations in a village, see, Appendix A.

³²In the Party Charter (1982) it is stated that Youth League is "a school where large numbers of young people will learn about communism through practice," and in addition to that, "it is the Party's assistant and reserve force." (Art. 49)

³³"Party committees at all levels must strengthen their leadership over the Communist Youth League organizations." (Art. 50)

position of the party branch is quite clear: leadership. Thus, the party secretary can sometimes take part in the meeting of the Youth League. Thirdly, the party secretary is to exercise leadership over the People's Militia.³⁴ The function of this organization is increasingly unclear as wars, especially people's war, become a very remote possibility. Its existence in the village is justified simply by long-time tradition. The leadership that the party secretary should exercise is quite direct: he is to be the "company political instructor" (lian zhidao yuan).³⁵ To these two organizations, the party secretary, perhaps, pays a minimal attention as they have a very insignificant impact on the village.

The activities of the party secretary with the Party are not the least of all. As mentioned above, his job is to regularly convene the party branch committee and the party branch congress. In addition to that, he must also take care of the rank-and-file. The handbook for village party secretaries, for instance, states that the party secretary should "understand and grasp what the Party members think, do, and learn."³⁶ At present, this job becomes very complicated as there are more and more party members who leave the village to find job, or more and more party members from other villages coming to the village to work.³⁷ Each group has to be handled separately and with special attention. The party secretary may not be directly involved in this work, and may ask the head of the department of organization to handle the matter. Yet he still is expected to give instructions on special cases. Is a party secretary always to get involved in the details of all problems in his village? The central leadership, clearly, does not explicitly ask village party secretaries to do so; what is asked is to become "leadership core" (lingdao hexin). As such, a party secretary, theoretically, is not to interfere or intervene in the internal affairs of other organizations. This role of leadership core seems to be about monitoring. The

³⁴On this organization, see Han Huaizhi (ed.), Dangdai zhongguo minbin (Contemporary Chinese People's Militia), Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1989.

³⁵Zhang Dianzhong, op.cit., p. 98.

³⁶Ibid., p. 23; cf "Dang zhibu shui" (The Party branch secretary), in Jing Bin, op.cit., p. 349

³⁷A good discussion on this topic, see Hsi-sheng Ch'i, Politics of Disillusionment, the Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1991, pp. 234-236.

handbook for village party secretaries says that one of the tasks of a village party secretary is "to investigate the situation as well as the problems in the implementation of the plan and decisions of the work of the party branch." After the investigation, he is supposed to make a report to the party branch committee, to the party branch congress, and to the higher authorities (shangji dang zuzhi)³⁸

Thus, a village party secretary is not expected to intervene directly in the works of the organizations in his village; his job is to make investigation and write a report. In some places, this is interpreted as the party secretary being "to do the overall" (zhua quanmian).³⁹ The whole idea is to put the party secretary more as primus inter pares (one among equals) than a commander in chief. Each organization in the village works on their own, without daily instruction from the party secretary, to achieve the target.

However, the central leadership also clearly wants him to become "zhongyao fuzeren." He should be held responsible for the success or failure in completing the state's objective for the countryside. If a village is successful, it is to praise the party secretary; if a village fails, the party secretary is to blame. This is the axiom of the central leadership.⁴⁰ The party secretary is to become the only motor for all sorts of activities in the village, or to be the leading goose. In other words, he is expected to be the leader of his village.

Thus, the central leadership wants village party secretaries to be both primus inter pares and motor. These roles are not easy to perform: a certain degree of passivity required by being a primus inter pares is contrary to the nature of being a motor. One of the solutions is to use the method of "the education of ideology and politics" (sixiang zhengzhi jiaoyu). This method is to be used in combination with the

³⁸Zhang Dianzhong, op.cit., p. 23.

³⁹This is the formulation from Caixi County, Shandong Province, see Fang Yan and Bao Yong Hui "Cunmin zi zhi: jiceng minzhu zhengzhi de zuzhi he zhidu jianshe," (The political autonomy of villagers: the construction of a system and a political organization which is democratic at the grass- root) Neibu wengao, 1992, No. 7, pp. 16-19.

⁴⁰This has always been the argument to have a good party secretary as a guarantee for a good village; see "Gaibian mianmao guanjian zai banzi" (In order to change the situation, the critical thing is the leaders) Nongmin ribao, 10 March 1987, p. 3; also "Village Scene," China News Analysis, No. 1524, 15 December 1994, p. 8.

available means, namely the party members. For this purpose, the central leadership encourages a new approach called "nongcun dangyuan lianxi hu" or "village party members linking up with households."⁴¹ A party member, according to his/her choice, links up with one or more households, and maintains constant contact with them. In this interaction, he/she will disseminate the Party's policies, especially new policies. Furthermore, he/she will also help them in many other areas such as production, how to use new technology, to provide market information, etc.

The central leadership takes Liuzhuang Village (Qiliying Township, Xinxiang County, Henan Province) as a village which perfectly represents this ideal. The story about this village is published as the headline in Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily).⁴² The name of its party secretary is Shi Laihe who has been elected as the national worker's model, a member of the standing committee of the People's Congress, and as possessing the true qualities of protector of ordinary people. The party branch committee, according to the reporter, puts the work on ideology and politics as its top priority. It has 14 members, seven of whom are assigned to the matter of ideology and politics.

In the whole of the party branch there were 72 party members, each of them linked to 2 or 3 households for which they were held responsible for ideology and politics. The reporter argues, that "in this way, the party branch can timely know and grasp the pulse of the thinking of the peasants." To these party members, the party branch demanded that they transmit "the Party's line, general and specific lines" to the households. They were also asked "to lead the peasants toward prosperity, teach them the system of the law, help them to obey the law." But they must "listen to opinion and demands of the masses." A report about the situation of the households should be made regularly.⁴³

⁴¹Zhang Diangzhong, op.cit., p. 165.

⁴²"Liuzhuang cun dangzhibu jiaqiang xin xingshi xia de sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo" (Works on ideology and politics as newly implemented by Liuzhuang village Party branch) Nongmin ribao, 22 November, 1985, p. 1.

⁴³For other experiments in other places in China, see for example, "Shiying xin xingshi, zuohao nongcun dangzhibu gongzuo" (Adapt to the new situation, do well the work of village party branch). Zhongguo nongmin bao, 18 June 1981, p. 1; Wang Shudong, "Nongcun dangzhibu de xin shixian" (The new practice of village party branches) Zhibu jianshe, 1986, No. 2, pp. 12-13; "You le kunnan zhao dangyuan"

This particular approach does not place the party secretary in the position of interfering in other organizations. He can continue to become primus inter pares. Yet he has something to do in regard to policy implementation in his village. He can be active in this area as he is in full command of the party members.

This new role which I call "state agent" combines both the position as primus inter pares and "motor". The party secretary shall look into the completion of the state's objective in the village but without constraining other organizations and the peasants. The Fourth Plenum (1994) aptly outlines this idea.

First, the idea of the party branch as core is stressed. "We should regard the construction of rural grass-root organizations as a systems project and make coordinated efforts to build up village-level organizations with party branches as the core." Being the core, it does not mean that party branches and the secretaries can dominate their villages. Therefore, the text goes on to write: "At the same time, we should pay attention to building an operation system aimed at providing better services and to building a work system based on democratic management." Indeed, the drafter warns everybody that "building in these areas is an inter-related entity; therefore, it should be carried out in all areas, not just in one of them." Or, in other words, the party branches should become core but by abiding to what is called "democratic management."⁴⁴

The latter is mentioned again in relation to the discussion on "strengthening autonomous villagers' organizations, collective economic organizations and mass organizations." The document reads: "We should extensively launch activities aimed at establishing relevant institutions in accordance with the law, administering villages within the framework of those institutions and exercising democratic management to inspire peasants' initiative for becoming masters of their own affairs."⁴⁵ A strong

(If you have difficulties, go and look for party members) Nongmin ribao, 13 May, 1986, p. 3; Run Qingwen "Nongcun dangzhibu de huodong fangshi" (The pattern of activities of a village party branch) Dangzhibu jianshe (Shanxi), 1987, No. 1, p. 27; "Ruhe fahui dangyuan xianfeng mofan zuoyong? Dangyuan lianxihu zhidu shi youxiao fangshi" (How to make party members play the role of vanguard model? The system of party members linking up with households is the best model) Nongmin ribao, 26 December, 1989, p. 3.

⁴⁴"CCP Circular" in SWB, FE/2168 G/6-7.

⁴⁵Ibid. G/6

warning is given: "We must not allow one or a few individuals to monopolise decision-making powers."⁴⁶

The pressure put on the shoulder of the party secretary is not made lighter. The central leadership demands accountability from the party secretary with regard to the completion of the state's objective. If anything goes wrong in a village, the state is quick to blame its party secretary. Indeed the state, considers him as its agent, regardless of his formal title.

The Editorial of Nongmin Ribao (Peasants' Daily) makes this clear.⁴⁷ "As soon as a party grass-root organization is found in a paralysed situation, people must be sent immediately to help them, to carry out rectification, and do not let it drift for a long." This job is to be carried out by the county party committee.

II. THE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP AND PARTY BRANCHES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Why is it that village party branch secretaries are to adopt the role of the state agent? The answer to this question cannot be separated from the strategy of "nominal encapsulation" adopted by the central leadership. The strategy of nominal encapsulation allows organizations in a village to have relative autonomy; the party branch and its secretary basically retreat from the day-to-day control and intervention. The consequence is that the party branch secretaries have to find a new role, the role of the state agent.

A. The concern of the central leadership

The first and foremost concern of the central leadership, at the beginning of Reform as well as at present, is to increase the agricultural production. At the early period of Reform, the daunting task was how to revitalise peasants' enthusiasm to produce

⁴⁶Ibid. G/6-7.

⁴⁷"Kaichuang nongcun dang de jiceng zuzhi jianshe gongzuo de xin jumian," (Make a breakthrough in the work of constructing the village party grass-root organization) Nongmin ribao, 4 December 1985, p. 1.

more. At that time, it was widely acknowledged that the biggest stumbling block was the commune system itself. The Editor of China Peasants' Daily, for instance, argues that during the Commune Period, "it was frequently easy for the leaders to use administrative command to direct production, and this influenced the material interests of the villagers, hurt their enthusiasm to produce, and brought no benefit to the healthy development of the collective economy."⁴⁸

Along with the introduction of the new economic system for the peasants (the household contract responsibility system), in early 1980s, the central leadership gradually dismantled the three-tier political structure in the countryside, the commune system. These measures had, inevitably, direct impact on the operation of the party grass-root organizations in that the party has to share authority with other organizations in a village. At the township (formerly commune), under the arrangement of zheng she fenkai, the party committee has to sit side by side with the township government. At the village (formerly brigade) the party branch has to sit side by side as well with the villagers' committee. Indeed, the presence of village enterprises and other private household businesses in villages make the idea of party committees or party branches which command everything further untenable.

After this storm of changes, there is one question left: what should be the proper role for the party branches in villages? More specifically, what is the proper role for a village party secretary? If he is only one of many chairmen/chairwomen, it would undermine the leadership of the Party. If he continues to play the role of commander, it would jeopardise the new household contract responsibility system. Thus, the central leadership had a dilemma: to salvage the economy or the Party's leadership.

B. Party branches as "leadership core" in villages

One solution which was apparent in the beginning of Reform (1980) was to separate the Party from the government under the program of "dang zheng fenkai." This was

⁴⁸"Huifu xiang zhengquan, shixing zhengshe fenshe," (Restore the political power of the township, and implement the separation of commune and government) Zhongguo nongmin bao, 18 January, 1983, p. 3.

actually not an exclusive program for party branches in the countryside; the Party from the central down to the party branches nationwide, urban as well as rural, have to be separated from the government. Deng Xiaoping in 1980 wrote that the Party had dominated the government so much that it created a situation called "yi dang dai zheng" (to use the Party as a substitute the government) and accordingly, "bureaucratism".⁴⁹ Deng personally supported the idea of reforming the political structure in China, and indirectly, the strategy of separation of the Party from the government.

This does not mean that Deng would want to dismantle the Party. He clearly affirmed in 1979 that China should uphold "the Four Cardinal Principles" (si xiang jiben yuanze), one of which is to accept the leadership of the CCP.⁵⁰ The program of separation of the Party from government was intended - in Zhao Ziyang's words - to restore the leadership of the Party. If the Party gets too involved in administrative and economic affairs, there will be not enough attention for Party affairs, he argued.⁵¹ The strategy of separation of the Party from the government was formally adopted by the Thirteenth Party Congress, in 1987.⁵²

Within the framework of the separation of the Party from government, the leadership of the Party over the State is defined as "mainly in political, political,

⁴⁹"Bureaucratism", according to Deng, is: "standing high above the masses, abusing power, divorcing oneself from reality and the masses; spending a lot of time and effort to put up an impressive front; indulging in empty talk; sticking to a rigid way of thinking; being hidebound by convention; overstaffing administrative organs; being dilatory, inefficient, and irresponsible; failing to keep one's word; circulating documents endlessly without solving problems; shifting responsibility to others; and even assuming the airs of a mandarin, reprimanding other people at every turn, vindictively attacking others, suppressing democracy, deceiving superiors and subordinates, being arbitrary and despotic, practising favouritism, offering bribes, participating in corrupt practices in violation of the law." Deng Xiaoping, "Dang he guojia lingdao zhidu de gaige" (On the reform of the system of Party and state leadership), 18 August 1980, in Deng Xiaoping wenxuan (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping), 1975-1982, Hubei: Renmin chubanshe, 1983, p. 287.

⁵⁰"Jianche si xiang jiben yuanze" (Uphold the four cardinal principles) in Deng Xiaoping, Ibid, pp. 144-170.

⁵¹Zhao Ziyang, "Guanyu dang-zheng fenkai" (On the separation of the Party from the government), 14 October 1987, in Shi er da yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (Selected important documents since the twelfth party congress), Vol. III, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1988, p. 1469.

⁵²Zhao Ziyang's report to the Thirteenth Party Congress, Yanzhe you zhongguo tese de shehuizhuyi dalu qianjin (March along the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics), in Shi san da yilai zhongyao wenxian xianbian (Collection of important documents since the thirteenth party congress), Vol. I, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991, pp. 4-61.

ideological, and organizational leadership."⁵³ In other spheres, such as concrete economic measures, legal relations and day-to-day affairs, Party leadership is to be exercised through the governmental institutions and regularised procedures according to the State Constitution and the specific laws and regulations based on it.⁵⁴ In other words, the Party abandons its previous claim of absolute control, and limits itself from intervening in state organs.

In the countryside, the program of separation of the Party from the government was carried out hand in hand with the dissolution of the communes. In place of communes, township governments were established and separated from the township Party Committee.⁵⁵ The separation of the Party from the government at the village level (formerly, production brigade), however, was not perfectly applicable because there was no governmental division at village-level. Villagers' committees which emerged in the villages in the middle 1980s, according to the law, are not designated as state administrative organs, and must elect their own chairmen.⁵⁶

The strategy of separating the Party from the government had unintended consequences: party branches in the countryside were in a state of confusion.⁵⁷ The

⁵³Party Charter (1982); further elaboration, see Hu Yaobang, "Quanmian kaichuang shehuizhuyi xiandaihua jianshe de xin jumian" (Entirely create new situation of the construction socialist modernization), in Shi yi jie shan zhongquanhui yilai zhongyao wenxian xuandu (Selected readings of important documents since the Third Plenum), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1987, p. 514.

⁵⁴Further discussion on these issues, see Harro von Senger, "Recent Developments in the Relations between State Norms and Party Norms in the People's Republic of China," in Stuart Schram (ed.) The Scope of State Power in China, London: SOAS. 1985, pp. 171-207.

⁵⁵"Zhonggong zhongyang guowuyuan guanyu shixing zheng-she fenkai jianli xiang zhengfu de tongzhi" (An announcement by the Central Committee and the State Council on the implementation of the separation of the government from the commune and establishment of township government), 20 October 1983, in Xin shiqi nongye he nongcun gongzuo zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (Selected important documents on agriculture and village works in the new era), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992, pp. 220-222.

⁵⁶The State Constitution (1982), Art. 111; The Organic Law Governing the Villagers' Committees (1987), Art. 2 and 8.

⁵⁷"Cunji zuzhi jianshe wenti tantao" (A discussion on the problem of the construction of village level organizations) Nongmin ribao, 30 December 1987, p. 4. Citing an investigation at "a certain county," it is reported that out of 114 villages, 60 per cent of them do not have a clear division of labour between the party branches and the villagers' committees, and 24 per cent suffered severe conflicts. See, also Burns, John P. "Local Cadre Accommodation to the 'Responsibility System' in Rural China" Pacific Affairs, Winter 1986-86, Vol 58, no 4, pp. 607-625.

concept of the leadership in ideology and politics was probably too difficult for the peasants to understand. Many village cadres were confused. Apparently, the party branch secretaries found themselves in an awkward situation. They felt that they were supposed to lead but did not know exactly what to do. The central leadership was quick to acknowledge "the paralysed and semi-paralysed situation."⁵⁸ During this first stage (1980-1990), the role of the party secretaries was unclear (leadership in ideology and politics).⁵⁹ This was the stage when many party secretaries played almost no role in villages. The decline of grain production in 1985 through to 1988 might have forced the central leadership to rethink the role of the party branch secretaries. After assessing the situation of the poor performance of agriculture, the Central Committee in 1988 went on to admit that "at present, one part of village-level grass-root organizations is paralysed." There are many reasons, but one of them is the fact that "leadership is not strong enough."⁶⁰

The second stage started in 1990 with the abandonment of the strategy of separation of the Party from the government,⁶¹ and adoption of a new strategy of the party branch as "leadership core" or lingdao hexin. Song Ping, member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo and in charge of organization, was the main proponent of this concept. He emphasised the importance of the party branch in the countryside. In one of his reports (on Anhui Province), he wrote: "If villages would

⁵⁸"Quan guo nongcun gongzuo huiyi jiyao" (The summary of the national conference on village works), December 1981, p. 131; and "Zhonggong zhongyang, guowuyuan guanyu yi jiu ba liu nian nongcun gongzuo de bushu" (The central committee and the state council on the strategy for the village work in 1986), 1 January 1986, p. 383; both in Xin shiqi nongye he nongcun gongzuo zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (Selection of important documents on agriculture and villages in the new era), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992.

⁵⁹This certainly was one of the reasons for tension, even conflict, with the villagers' committee which were becoming more and more assertive in demanding their autonomy.

⁶⁰"Zhonggong zhongyang, guowuyuan guanyu duoqu ming nian nongye fengshou de jueding" (The decision by the central committee and the state council on seizing agriculture harvest of next year), 25 November 1988, in Xin shiqi nongye he nongcun gongzuo zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (Selection of important documents on agriculture and villages in the new era), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992, p. 529.

⁶¹Indeed, this program was shelved after the June Fourth Incident in 1989; Willy Wo-lap Lam argues: "The CCP insisted after June 4, 1989, that political reform had not stopped. However, the party's definition of the 'reform of the political structure' was changed to exclude separation of party and government and participation by non-party or non-mainstream politicians and intellectuals." Willy Wo-lap Lam, China, After Deng Xiaoping, Singapore: John Wiley & Sons, 1995, p. 241.

deepen reform, would develop economy, the crucial point would be to have good party branches, and to have good party secretaries."⁶² Secondly, Song addressed the fundamental question: What should the party branch do? This topic was discussed in the National Conference on the Construction of Village-level Organization, in Beijing, August 1990.⁶³ At this occasion, Song Ping, for the first time, launched his idea of party branches to be "leadership core" (lingdao hexin) in their villages. In his view, a village is a "small society" (xiao shehui) in which there are a number of organizations and many works. A party branch would play leadership-core role within this situation. He does not explain further why the party branch, and not the villagers' committee, should adopt the role. He only states: "Only the party branch can become leadership core." No definition of "leadership core" is given, however. Song Ping did not make any reference to the program of separating the Party from the government. Song Ping's idea of the leadership of the Party is not something similar to the period of commune, yet neither it is anything like a "paralysed situation." The concept of "core leadership" is in between those two extremes.

This concept is, on one hand, still rooted in the idea of Party leadership contained in the Party Charter (1982) which is also the foundation of the concept of the separation of the Party from the government. The Party must respect the autonomy of the government and other mass organizations. Thus, the party branch and its secretary must not directly intervene in the villagers' committee, in other mass organizations, and especially in village enterprises. Party secretaries are not to monopolise power or abuse their power,⁶⁴ but to be primus inter pares.

⁶²"Song Ping zai Anhui kaocha shi zhichu: yao qieshi jiaqiang nongcun jiceng dang zhuzhi jianshe" (During his investigation in Anhui, Song Ping points out: we must carry out the construction of village grass-root party organizations) Nongmin ribao, 27 October 1989, p. 1.

⁶³Song Ping "Zai quan guo cun ji zuhzi jianshe gongzuo zuotanhui shang de jianghua (zhaiyao)," (A speech at the occasion of national conference on the construction of village-level organization (summary)) Xiang-zhen luntan, 1990, No. 9, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁴This phenomenon was identified by the central leadership, see "Zhonggong zhongyang zhengdang gongzuo lingdao weiyuanhui guanyu nongcun zhengdang gongzuo bushu de tongzhi" (Announcement by the leading committee of the central committee on the work of rural party rectification on the deployment of the work of rural party rectification, in Xin shiqi, *op.cit.*, p. 366-368.

The concept, on the other hand, is also dictated by the need for strong leadership which can make sure that village works are completed according to the state's demand, and prevents chaos in the countryside. Faithful to the Leninist heritage, the central leadership believes that this strong leadership can only be provided by the CCP as the vanguard party. In 1980 Deng wrote: "The modernization program in China needs our Party."⁶⁵ Deng's insistence that the CCP should stay as vanguard party for modernization is indeed unambiguous. In the same article he says: "Essentially, without the leadership of the Party, there will be no modern China. [...] Without the leadership of the Party, there will be no correct political line."⁶⁶

So, the party secretary as the embodiment of the Party is to become leader and to be responsible for the completion of the village works. The new concept is an attempt by the Party theorists to rescue what is good from Lenin's concept of the vanguard party and what is required for conducting market-oriented reform in the countryside. Although the leadership of Post-Tian'anmen repudiated Zhao's idea of the separation of the Party from the government, they retained its fundamental tenet of limiting the power of the Party.

The concept of "leadership core" was put to the test three years later, in 1993. During that year China saw the worst riots in villages in several provinces since the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949.⁶⁷ Then, the following year, 1994, China was hit by severe cotton crisis.⁶⁸ These riots and cotton crisis, perhaps, were part of the reasons which prompted the central leadership to carry out another

⁶⁵Deng Xiaoping, "Muqian de xingshi he renwu" (The current situation and task), 1980, in Deng Xiaoping wenxuan (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping) 1975-1982, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1983, p. 237.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 230-231.

⁶⁷"The Social Unrest in the Countryside," China News Analysis, No. 1492, 1 September 1993; "Sichuan renshou da-za-qiang shijian xiangqing" (The details of smashing-looting case in Renshou, Sichuan) Wenhui bao, 13 June 1993, p. 2; "Jinnian yilai guanyu nongcun wenti de ji jian da shi" (Several big incidents related to village problem since beginning this year) Ming bao, 26 July 1993, p. 8. This last article presents a table describing several incidents around China: Sichuan, Anhui, Hunan, Hubei, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Guizhou, Guangxi for various different reasons.

⁶⁸"Muqian mianhua zhiliang wenti yanzhong" (At present, cotton problem is very serious), Renmin ribao, 22 May 1994, p. 2; "Cotton in crisis," China News Analysis, No. 1506, 15 March 1994.

rural rectification campaign beginning in late 1994;⁶⁹ it was supposed to last two to three years. Numerous party secretaries fell from power during this campaign.

It was the Fourth Plenum of the Fourteenth Congress in autumn 1994 that decided upon the decision of the campaign and was also the first plenum which exclusively and comprehensively addressed the role of party branches in the countryside. Here, in order to allay doubts and hesitation, the central leadership reaffirmed the concept of the party branch as "leadership core" proposed by Song Ping (who was no longer a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo after the Fourteenth Party Congress, 1992). Evidently, it also accepts the role of the party secretary as leaders' core, or which I call "state agent" who should act as primus inter pares and yet shoulder the responsibility for the implementation of the state's policies.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have described what the central leadership wants the village party branch secretaries to do in their village, and argued that they have to play the role of state agent. This is a role which requires the party secretary to bring into completion a set of objectives on village works, by positing himself as primus inter pares among other figures from other organizations. Of course, the party secretary has to provide leadership, but this is to be carried out in cooperation and consultation. In CCP's terminology, he is to play the role of the "leadership core."

The role of the state agent is distinct from that during the period shortly before the Reform (1978) or the period of Cultural Revolution. During that period of time, village party secretaries played the role of "commander in chief" who gave commands, reasonable or unreasonable, to the villagers. This role was quite compatible with the nature of the commune system which was actually a type of regimentation. Party secretaries, not surprisingly, were nicknamed "tu huangdi" or "local emperors."

The role of the state agent was formulated in 1990 by Song Ping, then

⁶⁹The first was between 1986-1987 (rectification to root out the "remnants of Cultural Revolution"), the second was between 1991-1992 (the campaign of "socialist education").

member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the CCP. Partly as a reaction to the decline of agricultural production, and partly as an attempt to correct the strategy of "separation of the Party from the government," the role was designed both to reaffirm the centrality of the role of the party branches and their secretaries in the countryside, and to retain what had been stated in first stage where the party branches were assigned to perform leadership in ideology and politics. As I have shown, the formulation process of the role went through two stages; the first stage (1980-1990), the stage of the separation of the Party from the government, and the second stage (1990-) the stage of the party branch as leadership core.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE PARTY SECRETARY AND HIS SUPERIOR (2):
THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL AGENT

To become rich is glorious.
(Deng Xiaoping)

In the last chapter, I have described the role that the central leadership has designed for village party secretaries, namely as state agent. This chapter will describe another role, the entrepreneurial agent, which the central leadership wants the village party secretaries to play.

I will argue that this role is the result of the central leadership's effort to bring prosperity in the countryside through the acceleration of economic growth. The standard terminology used by the CCP to describe this situation is xiaokang. In the role of the state agent, the central leadership also exerts strong pressure on village party branches to achieve this objective. The current regime, which is legitimised through its success in economic terms, cannot afford to be lax on this front.

This chapter will be divided into two major sections. The first section will deal with the practice of the role as demanded by the central leadership. The following seeks to explain the rationale behind this role. Why does the central leadership want party secretaries to perform this particular role?

I. THE ROLE OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL AGENT

A. The objectives

The objectives that village party secretary must have as entrepreneurial agent¹ is closely connected to the state's effort in accelerating economic growth. Economic growth in the countryside, in the beginning of Reform, was clearly formulated in late 1978 when the Central Committee issued the document titled "Decision on Some

¹I am using the concept of agent as defined in the Chapter Three.

Problems in Accelerating the Development of Agriculture."² This decision basically stressed the comprehensive development of agriculture, industry and commerce. Unlike policies of the previous period, it recognised that rural policy should have a wider perspective than its previous concentration on crop farming.³

Coupled with a policy issued in March 1984 on village enterprises, the central leadership gives further encouragement to economic development in the countryside.⁴ This document officially accepts village enterprises as the focus of rural development, and - as we shall see - party secretaries must be involved in it. By designing these policies, obviously, the central leadership aimed at achieving "agricultural modernization" which was proclaimed as one of the Four Modernizations.

Thus, from 1978 the main objective for village party secretaries to achieve was about developing the economy of their villages. The central leadership did not give a specific target. This strategy of rural development was then superseded in 1991 by the policy of xiaokang or "comfortable life."⁵

²Zhongguo gongchandang di shiyi jie zhongyang weiyuanhui di san ci quanti huiyi baogao (Report of the third plenum of the eleventh congress of the central committee of the CCP), 22 December 1978, in NN, Nongye jitihua zhongyao wenjian huibian, 1958-1981 (Collection of important documents on agricultural collectivization, 1958-1981), Beijing: Zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1982, pp. 967.

³"We surely must with correct attitude and in an integrated way implement the policy which "simultaneously elevates agriculture, forestry, husbandry, fishery, and sideline production" and "by taking grain as the key link, develop the overall according to the local condition and according to an appropriate centralization." Ibid. p. 990.

⁴"Zhonggong zhongyang, guowuyuan zhuanfa nongmuyuyebu he budangzu 'guanyu kaichuang shedui qiye xin jumian de baogao' de tongzhi" (Circular from the Central Committee and State Council to transmit the report by the Ministry of Agriculture, Husbandry, and Fishery and by the Party Group of the Ministry on Creating a New Situation in Commune and Brigade-run enterprises)," 1 March 1984, in Zhongguo nongcun faqi 1984 (China Rural Laws 1984), Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1986, pp. 343-356.

⁵The discussion on xiaokang had been going on for several years before the decision for the countryside in 1991. It was mentioned by Deng Xiaoping in 1979, and adopted by the Twelfth and Thirteenth Party Congress in 1982 and 1987. The Seventh Plenum of the Thirteenth Congress (1991), when designing the Eighth Plan, defined xiaokang as follows: "The lives of the people should proceed from subsistence level to comfortable level, then life materials should be abundant, the structure of spending should be more rational, the living quarters should clearly improve, cultural life should be richer, the standard of health should continue to improve, and social service should continually be better." See, Deng Xiaoping, "Shixian sige xiandaihua de hongwei mubiao genben zhengce" (The glorious and basic policy of carrying out the four modernizations), in Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guoshi tongjian (General lesson on the history of the PRC), Vol. IV, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1993, p. 114; Hu Yaobang's report to the Twelfth Party Congress, Quanmian kaichuang shehui zhuyi xiandaihua jianshe de xin jumian (Thoroughly create the new situation of building socialist modernization), op.cit., p. 477; Zhao Ziyang's report to the Thirteenth Party Congress, Yanzhe you zhongguo tese de shehuizhuyi dalu qianjin (March along the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics), in NN, Shi san da yilai zhongyao wenxian

At the end of 1991, the Central Committee of the CCP issued a document, titled: "The Decision of the Central Committee on Further Accelerating Agriculture and Village Work." For the first time, it was decided that peasants, not only the urbanites, should embark on "comfortable level" or xiaokang by the year 2000. It states: "The overall target: in developing the foundation of village economy, is to make peasant life relinquish subsistence level and reach a comfortable level."⁶

The target of xiaokang for the countryside, since then, occupied speeches by central leaders. For example, PM Li Peng at the Conference on Exchanging Experiences of Villages Rushing toward Xiaokang, 12 April 1993, was quoted as saying: "Without comfortable life for 900 million peasants, it is impossible to talk about comfortable life for the whole nation."⁷ The Fourth Plenum of the Fourteenth Party Congress (1994), a plenum on rural Party rectification, reiterated this target. "We should consistently regard economic construction as the central task; set our aim on enabling the masses to achieve xiaokang and on building new socialist rural areas."⁸

Xiaokang is more than the rise of GNP; it is about quality of life. Therefore, the objectives of xiaokang includes a wide range of indicators, such as consumption of meat, brick house, television, electricity, education, etc. In order to avoid

xianbian (Collection of important documents since the thirteenth party congress), Vol. I, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991, p. 16; Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhiding guomin jingji he shehui fazhan shi nian guihua he 'ba wu' jihua de jianyi (A proposal by the central committee on the formulation of ten-year plan of social development and 'eighth five-year' plan), 30 December 1990, in Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guoshi tongjian (General lesson on the history of the PRC), Vol. IV, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1993, p. 970.

⁶Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jin yi bu jiaqiang nongye he nongcun gongzuo de jueding (Central Committee's Decision on Further Strengthening Agriculture and Village Program), 29 November 1991, in Shisan da yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (A selection of important documents since the thirteenth party congress), vol. III, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1993, p. 1760.

⁷The conference was attended by more than 100 county leaders which annual per capita income are more than 100 yuan. "Meiyou jiu yi nongmin de xiaokang, jiu tanbushang quan guo de xiaokang" (Without a comfortable life for 900 million peasants, it is impossible to talk about a comfortable life for the whole nation) Renmin ribao, 13 April 1993, p. 1. Arguing in similar vein, see interview with Liu Jiang, the Minister of Agriculture, in Ji Bin and Zhao Lianqing, "Zhongguo shixian xiaokang de guanjian zai nongcun" (The crucial point for China in achieving comfortable life lies in the countryside) Liaowang, 19 April 1993, pp. 4-5.

⁸"CCP Circular on Strengthening Rural Primary and Grass-roots Organizations," in Summary of World Broadcast [thereafter: SWB], 2 December 1994, FE/2168 G/4.

arbitrariness, the target of xiaokang is usually determined by every province. In Hunan Province, for instance, Xiaokang was defined as "six items and 12 indicators":⁹

1. Income
 - a. annual net average income: 1200 yuan (taking the price of 1990 as standard)
2. Material life indicator
 - b. "enge'er" index: under 50%
 - c. annual consumption of meat: over 30 jin
 - d. brick houses: more than 80%
3. Spiritual and cultural life
 - e. spread of television: more than 70%
 - f. spending on service: more than 15% of consumption
4. Quality of population
 - g. the rate of population growth: below ten per one thousand.
 - h. average education: eight years
5. Life environment
 - i. the spread of toilet: more than 90%
 - j. the spread of electricity: more than 95%
 - k. area reached by road: more than 95%
6. Security
 - l. the number of criminals: less than 5 per ten thousand persons.

B. The practice of the entrepreneurial agent

The role of the party branches in the economy is never put in doubt since the

⁹I could not obtain the complete document, but it is mentioned in an article by Yang Yaohui, "Hunan nongcun beng xiaokang yanjiu" (A research on Hunan villages to achieve comfortable life), in Xiao Haohui (ed.), Hunan: nongye, nongcun, nongmin wenti yanjiu (Hunan: a research on problems concerning agriculture, village, and peasant), Beijing: Zhongguo shangye chubanshe, 1993, p. 37-40. This decision is also reported in Hunan nianjian 1993 (Hunan Yearbook 1993), Changsha: Renmin chubanshe, 1993, p. 76.

beginning of Reform. One book titled "How to Become a Good Village Party Secretary," demands that village party secretaries in the new era should be able to do economic works.

"In the old time, if one would evaluate a village party secretary, one should see whether or not he spent his time in the field, whether or not his face is black due to sun-burn, whether or not his hands are marked with thick calluses, whether or not his clothes are patched, whether or not he often pays a visit to the poor and the needy. In the present time, if one would evaluate a village party secretary, the most important thing is to see whether or not he has courage and vision to bring prosperity, whether or not he can crack his brain, produce ideas, to lead us on the path of prosperity."¹⁰

This passage is crucial to many party secretaries. If the old-time party secretaries were people who shared the fortune of their fellow villagers, being poor with the poor, it is no longer the case now. If during Maoist period, a party secretary should become the model of a selfless communist who untiringly serves the masses,¹¹ after Reform, the party secretaries are just to do the reverse. They should provide a strong leadership in leading peasants toward prosperity.

This was perfectly echoed in an editorial in Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily) of 10 March 1987. This editorial argues that the success of many villages in changing their situation lies in good leadership by party secretaries. "If you want to change poor appearance, you have to construct a good village grass-root party branch leader's squad. [..]. If peasants want to get rid of their poverty and reach prosperity, they need capital, skill, and various other services. Thus, more than ever they need the party branch to animate all aspects of enthusiasm."¹²

In one of his reports (on Anhui Province), in 1989, Song Ping gave the clearest statement on the importance of the party branch in the countryside in economy. He says: "If villages would deepen reform, would develop economy, the

¹⁰Chi Mian, Zenyang dang hao nongcun dangzhibu shuji (How to become a good village party secretary), Revised edition, Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1987, p. 13.

¹¹This is well documented by Chen, A.S., see "The Ideal Local Party Secretary and the 'Model' Man," China Quarterly, No. 17, 1964, pp. 229-240.

¹²"Gaibian mianmao guanjian zai banzi" (In order to change the appearance, the critical thing is the leaders) Nongmin ribao, 10 March 1987, p. 3.

crucial point is to have good party branches, and to have good party secretaries."¹³ Party secretaries, in Song Ping's view, are the key to success for villages in developing their economy.

Handbooks for village party secretaries never fail to include advice on developing economy. One piece of the advice that the "Handbook for a Village Party Secretary" (1990) gives is about village enterprises. They are important because, it says, they "can help to diversify the economy of the villagers into agriculture, sideline production, industry, and commerce." Furthermore, village enterprises can "raise the income of the villagers and alleviate their burden."¹⁴ Diversifying the economy is important not only because it can raise income but also "make full use of labour, the means of production, land and other natural resources," the author says.¹⁵

The handbook, furthermore, gives special advice on sideline production. It is basically non-agricultural activity which consists of transport, gathering, processing, handicraft, and "other subsidiary production which do not belong to agriculture." To develop sideline production, it argues, is "to carry out a rational division of labour and make full use of skilful craftsman." In the end, sideline production, the author says, can raise income and satisfy the various needs of the people.¹⁶ Apparently, the author of the handbook would like to convince village party secretaries that sideline production is as equally important as industry and commerce.

In terms of resources, village party secretaries are advised to use local resources, i.e. resources which are existing in their own villages. This principle was

¹³"Song Ping zai Anhui kaocha shi zhichu: yao qieshi jiaqiang nongcun jiceng dang zhuzhi jianshe" (During his investigation in Anhui, Song Ping points out: we must carry out the construction of village grass-root party organizations) Nongmin ribao, 27 October 1989, p. 1. One of the five goals of the Fourth Plenum (1994) specifically emphasizes the crucial position of village party secretary again: "We should build good leading bodies, paying particular attention to appointing good secretaries who can unify and lead the people in firmly implementing the party's line, principles, and policies. See, "CCP Circular," op.cit., p. G/4.

¹⁴Zhang Dianzhong, Nongcun dangzhibu shuji shouce (A handbook for a village party secretary), Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1990, p. 118.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁶Ibid., 130.

declared at the beginning of Reform when the household responsibility system just started. Advising on how to develop various type of responsibility systems, the National Conference on Agriculture Work (December 1981) says: "In formulating plans for developing agriculture, forestry, husbandry, sideline production, fishery, industry and commerce, production teams must work out measures which suit local conditions."¹⁷ Production teams cannot operate beyond the limit of its local resources. In 1991, the Central Committee reiterated this principle when it said: "One must use the local resources in developing production, initiating collective enterprises, and raising the income of unified management economy."¹⁸ The Fourth Plenum (1994) which produced the most comprehensive document on village work stressed this principle. Indeed, this principle is also applicable to poor areas.¹⁹

A study made by the World Bank confirms the practice; it shows that village enterprises "typically enjoy close ties to specific rural communities, with the supply of both capital and labour overwhelmingly local in origin."²⁰ If state-owned enterprises acquired their loans from a national credit plan, loans for rural firms were mostly generated from incremental rural deposits.²¹ There is no free labour market in the countryside. Between 89.7 per cent and 94.0 per cent of workers in the rural enterprise come from the same township.²² The report seems to suggest that there is administrative intervention when it cites a case in Wuxi County (Jiangsu Province)

¹⁷"Quan guo nongcun gongzuo huiyi jiyao" (The summary of the national conference on village works), December 1981, in Xin shiqi nongye he nongcun gongzuo zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (Selection of important documents on agriculture and villages in the new era), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992, p. 120.

¹⁸"Guowuyuan guanyu jiaqiang nongye sehuihua fuwu tixi jianshe de tongzhi" (State Council's circular on strengthening the construction of agriculture social service system), 28 October, 1991, in Ibid. p. 767.

¹⁹"CCP Circular," SWB op.cit., p. 5. "Economically-underdeveloped villages should be self-reliant, should work diligently, tap their potentials and step up mutually-beneficial cooperation with develop areas to quicken the pace of casting off poverty and achieving prosperity."

²⁰Ody, Anthony J. Rural Enterprise Development in China, 1986-1990, World Bank Discussion Papers, No. 162, Washington DC: The World Bank, 1992, xi.

²¹Ibid., p. 11.

²²Ibid., p. 12.

where labour is allocated to community enterprises by the township authorities.²³

So far, it has been made clear that village party secretaries are assigned by the central leadership to develop the economy of their village by using local resources. The next question is: How should the village party secretaries carry out this job? If village party secretaries are asked to develop the economy of their village, do they themselves have to get involved in economic activities? Should they start the enterprise and run it as well? None of the official documents, however, explicitly advise party secretaries to engage in commercial enterprises. There are, however, some authoritative documents which can be freely interpreted to implicate that notion. The often quoted saying of Deng Xiaoping is one of them; it reads:²⁴

"In economic policy, I am of the opinion that it should be allowed that a small number of areas, enterprises, workers, peasants, through their effort and diligence, get more money, and live better. If a group of people live better, then they will produce a powerful example, influencing their neighbours, animating people from other areas and units to learn from them."

This quotation is widely used to justify anybody who becomes rich in China. There is nothing wrong in becoming rich as long as it is "through their effort and diligence." This principle is applicable to all Chinese people, including party members. A handbook for village cadres, "Questions and Answers on Village Work,"²⁵ starts with a question: "If a CCP member takes the lead in becoming rich through hard work, can it be said that he/she abuses power for him/herself? The answer of the handbook is 'no.' The quotation of Deng Xiaoping above is used here. This document, implicitly, can accept the fact that rural party cadres (including party secretaries) are engaged in business and, possibly, become rich. Party secretaries are actually those who are targeted by the author. To foster his argument, the author cites

²³Ibid.

²⁴Deng Xiaoping, "Jiefang sixiang, shishi qiushi, tuanjie yizhi xiang qian kan" (Emancipate your mind, seek truth from facts, unite to march onward), in Deng Xiaoping wenxuan (Selected works of Deng Xiaoping), 1975-1982, Hubei: Renmin chubanshe, 1983, p. 143.

²⁵NN, Nongcun gongzuo wenda (Questions and answers on the work in the countryside), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985, Question No. 155. This book is commissioned under the auspices of several other government institutions, such as the Policy Research Office of the Secretary of the Central Committee Village Policies, Research Centre on the Development of the Countryside in China, Policy Research Office of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery, etc.

an example of a party secretary in a village in Shanxi Province who, through his initiative, brought economic development to his village.

Party secretaries, therefore, are implicated in Deng's quotation and other official documents that, when they develop the economy of their village, they should lead their fellow villagers by engaging themselves in the enterprises: take initiative, look for the needed resources, and manage the business. The reason for the vagueness of the official statement is probably attributed to the fact that it is impossible to write a direct and clear document on the subject since becoming an entrepreneur contravenes the basic credo of Marxism.²⁶

The central leadership circumvents this by adopting non-official channels. This may partly explain the rise of publication of confessions, biographies, and adventure stories of village party secretaries who have been successful in leading their fellow villagers by engaging themselves in various enterprises. This genre of literature, apparently, functions as effectively as unofficial statement about policies which cannot be published due to ideological constraint.

A confession of a model party secretary is illustrative here. Shi Laihe was a successful party secretary from Liuzhuang Village, Henan Province. In his article, titled "How to become a good village party branch secretary" and published in Renmin ribao (People's Daily) 22 December 1990, he gave an equivocal exhortation to his fellow party secretaries.²⁷ He wrote: "At present we are carrying out socialist commodity economy. If you don't have any ability, then you're finished. As a party secretary, one should not only be able to do the work on ideology and politics, but also to do the work on economy, organization, solving disputes, birth control." He further argued that village leaders, especially the party secretary, should maintain a high degree of credibility. "If he does not bring prosperity to the masses, fails to

²⁶This is actually a problem of legitimation. Communist regimes, invariably, struggle to acquire legitimation from the population as "the masses" they control continually fall on "motivation crises." This argument is developed in Ding, X.L. The Decline of Communism in China, Legitimacy Crisis, 1977-1989, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 19.

²⁷Shi Laihe. "Zenyang dang hao nongcun dangzhibu shuji?" (How is it to become a good village Party branch secretary?), Renmin ribao, 22 October, 1990. He has been awarded the medal of "national model" four times, and had reportedly met in person national dignitaries such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian, etc. All of these attributes might have given special weight to Shi's authority in writing this article.

fulfil his duty, and commits corruption, then no one will listen to him. If he convenes a meeting, no one will come to attend."

Another example is a confession by Li Yuzong, party secretary of Hechengli Village (Longjing City, Jilin Province).²⁸ He was elected as "national model of worker" (quan guo laodong mofan). He write as follows: "If you do your job well, they will obey you and follow you. If not, then no one will listen to you. It can be said that obedience comes from whether or not you have created material benefit and profit for the masses and the masses can see it. The best benefit is one which everybody can enjoy. The only way to obtain this kind of benefit is to develop the economy of the collective of the village, namely village enterprises."

In these two pieces of articles, the good party secretaries developed their village and led their fellow villagers "toward prosperity" (dailing zhi fu), by starting profitable enterprises. Any party secretary is asked to emulate them. One special book which has collected, from newspapers across China, more than 100 stories of successful village party secretaries serve the same purpose.²⁹ As the title of the book suggests "Under the post of the party secretaries," the central leadership, apparently, purposefully intends to make it as part of the propaganda, that village party secretaries, as the models suggest, work hard to set up varied enterprises in all types of variations. Some of those model party secretaries are presented in Table 1 below.

The central leadership, evidently, uses this genre to give unofficial approval to village party secretaries to play the role of entrepreneurial agent. This policy is even more emphasised by the persistent use of the reward method. As evident from the stories about the model party secretaries, those who excel in promoting economic growth in their villages are rewarded with acknowledgment by the state. In fact, it has become an annual event for the state to give awards to villages and their party secretaries for their achievement during the past year. For instance, in 1990, the journal Xiang-zhen qiye announced one hundred most successful villages in China in

²⁸"Zen yang dang nongcun dangzhibu shuji" (How to become a village party branch secretary) Nongmin ribao, 28 June 1991, p. 3.

²⁹See, Li Yicong, Zai dangzhibu shuji de gangwei shang (Under the post of the party secretaries), Shenyang: Baishan chubanshe, 1991. Stories in this book are collected from nation wide newspapers.

Table 1
Party secretaries and the enterprises they set up

	Name of party secretary	Village	Enterprise
1.	Xie Mengchang	Xin Village Chang'an County, Shanxi Province	Acetylene factory
2.	Liu Qinzhong	Nanjie hedian village, Yongnian County, Hebei Province	Paper factory, Ferroalloy facto- ry, Wooden furni-ture factory.
3.	Zhang Xiumei	Jiankang Village Tianmen city, Hubei Province	Weaver factory
4.	Ma Lihai	Liuja Village Ningyang County, Shandong Province	Shoe factory
5.	Yang Zhiguo	Xiashitang Vill. Yibin County, Sichuan Province	Wine factory
6.	Yu Tianruan	Xishuangdan Vill. Xian County, Hebei Province.	Orchard, Candied fruit factory, Aquatics
7.	Zhang Weiji	Nanling Village Bao'an County, Guangdong Prov.	Silk flower fac- tory, Feed processing plant
8.	Zheng Meiyun	Zhulinhu Village Huanggang Dist., Hubei Province	Brick and tile factory
9.	Li Zhongyang	Ludun Village Jin County, Liaoning Province	Vegetable shed
10.	Yue Xianjie	Jinqiao Village Yushan County, Jiangxi Province	Feed processing plant; Tomato yard
11.	Chang Yuchun	Bachakou Village Shan County, Shandong Province	Asbestos factory
12.	Zhu Haishui	Henggang Village Guixi County, Jiangxi Province	Bamboo goods factory

Sources: Li Yicong, *Zai dangzhibu shuji de gangwei shang* (Under the post of the party secretaries), Shenyang: Baishan chubanshe, 1991: (1) pp. 81-84; (2) pp. 115-117; (3) pp. 129-132; (4) pp. 239-240; (5) pp. 338-340; (6) pp. 364-368; (7) pp. 413-415; (8) pp. 479-480; (9) pp. 490-492; (10) pp. 517-520; (11) pp. 605-607; (12) pp. 631-634.

developing village enterprises.³⁰ These villages and their party secretaries are usually awarded with banners and nationwide press coverage. In this way, party secretaries who do not do well are put under heavy pressure.

The role of the entrepreneurial agent, as is clear from the explanation above, is actually about setting up village enterprises. More village enterprises mean an increase in economic growth in villages. When the central leadership adopted the policy of xiaokang for the countryside, it by no means altered the trend. In fact, the position of village enterprises become even more significant: more village enterprises lead to the increase in economic growth, and economic growth leads to xiaokang. The drafter of the Fourth Plenum (1994) document may also have this logic in mind when he writes: "In strengthening party branches, we should focus on building leading bodies and selecting good party branch secretaries so that they will become strong collectives capable of leading peasants towards xiaokang."³¹ Thus, since 1991, village party secretaries are demanded by the central leadership to develop the economy of their villages by setting up village enterprises to the degree that the villages will reach the level of xiaokang.

The demand is quite absolute. The central leadership explicitly states that party secretaries who do not do well in developing the economy of their village toward xiaokang are to be "strengthened." The Fourth Plenum (1994), the plenum which approved the rectification campaign of party branches in the countryside, said: "The building of leading bodies of average villages should be strengthened, their economic development should be speeded up and greater efforts should be made to build a spiritual civilization in these villages to attain the objective of enabling their residents to live a more comfortable life (xiaokang)."³² In this statement, "average villages" are those which are left behind in their attempt to reach xiaokang, and for this reason, their "leading bodies" (i.e. party secretaries) have to be "strengthened"

³⁰"Zhongguo xiang-zhen qiye 'shi da bai qiang'" (One hundred powerful town-village enterprises in China) in Xiang-zhen qiye, No. 12, 1991, pp. 4-5.

³¹"CCP Circular", ibid., p. 5.

³²ibid.

(which may range from being sent to party school to purging).³³

II. THE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP AND PARTY BRANCHES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Why is it that the central leadership ask party secretaries to become its agents to promote a comfortable life for villages in China? This role also cannot be separated from the strategy of nominal encapsulation adopted at the beginning of Reform. Similar to politics, in economy the central leadership first of all liberated controls over the use of land and labour and returned them to peasant households. The price increases for agricultural products purchased by the government actually injected a large amount of funds into the countryside, which, in turn, were vital for reinvestment. Thus, at the same time, there was surplus labour and new sources of capital. As peasants were now free to use their labour and funds to specialise in production, they were quick to divert resources to non-agricultural activities. This liberalisation of labour and capital partly explains the boom in enterprises in the countryside.³⁴

Under these new circumstances, the central leadership was forced to define a new role to be assigned to party secretaries. This section is to examine the process whereby the central leadership came to the decision of assigning the role to village party branch secretaries. The first part describes the hesitation on the part of the central leadership as reflected in the debates on whether or not party secretaries should play the role; the following part is concerned with the process leading towards the formulation of the policy for party secretaries as entrepreneurial agents.

A. Debates on party secretaries who take a lead in becoming rich

The debates exploded in early 1985. They were serialised for two months in

³³The central leadership takes a lenient attitude toward party branches in poor areas.

³⁴For a fuller account on agricultural policy, see Ash, Robert "The Evolution of Agricultural Policy," in China Quarterly, No. 116, December 1988, pp. 529-555; Findlay, Christopher et al., Policy Reform, Economic Growth, and China's Agriculture, Paris: OECD, 1993.

Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily) under the heading "Is it permissible for a village party secretary to take a lead in achieving prosperity?" and had drawn participants from all over China. The editor wrote that since the opening of the forum, it had attracted not less than 800 letters from across China.³⁵ The key term debated was about "to take a lead toward prosperity" (daitou zhifu): "to take a lead" means that party branch secretaries in the villages are permitted to start and run an enterprise.

One letter with the pen-name Nongyou (the friend of peasants) from Shaanxi Province expressed an anxiety: "I just heard this story. There was a party secretary who bought a "Jiefang" car and then transported goods of the village by becoming a driver himself. For half of the month he did not live at home. When there was problem in the township, he was not there; when village cadres faced problems, they could not find him; when villagers had problems, they could not find him either." The anonymous writer basically argued that business had taken too much of his time, and consequently, the attention, of party secretaries for village and party affairs. Mr. Rong Zhaolu from Shandong Province defended the right of party secretaries to engage themselves in business activities. But, they should avoid using their power to run the business. He mentioned a series of examples of corrupt practices by party secretaries. "If they become rich in this way, it is really inadvisable. We sincerely advise that these kinds of party secretaries should repent as soon as possible (gaixian gengzhang).³⁶ He actually praised party secretaries who set up in business as specialised households (zhuan yue hu).

In the following week, a letter by Wang Baodong from Hebei Province attacked again corrupt practices by party secretaries. For example, some party secretaries, under the pretext of contract, monopolised the sideline production of the whole village. "This is not taking a lead in achieving prosperity, but making oneself prosperous." Still in the same edition, another letter by Yao Dazheng from Shanxi Province, opened up with a statement: "One thing is sure that village party secretaries

³⁵"Nongcun dangzhibu shuji gai bu gai daitou zhifu?" (Is it permissible that a village party secretary take a lead in achieving prosperity?) Nongmin ribao, 4 June 1985, p. 3.

³⁶ "Nongcun dangzhibu shuji gai bu gai daitou zhifu?" (Is it permissible for a village party secretary to take a lead in achieving prosperity?), Nongmin ribao, 26 April 1985, p. 3. See: "Gongzuo ying shi di yi wei de" (The work should be on the first priority), and Rong Zhaolu, "Wenti zai yu zhen yang zhifu" (The problem is how to become rich).

should take a lead in achieving prosperity." The qualification that the writer made was similar to the previous two letters. Party secretaries must do so in an ethical way. "He should not do so in crooked ways (waimen xiedao)."³⁷

Two days later, the editor wrote an introductory comment, saying that the leadership of party secretaries was necessary. It was necessary, first, in the time when the villagers did not dare to become rich, and secondly, when the villagers already had the courage to become rich. In both situations, party secretaries should play the role of leadership towards prosperity. However, underlining the opinions of the previous letters, the editor warned against the abuse of power by party secretaries.³⁸ Examples of party secretaries (from Hebei and Liaoning) who led their fellow villagers towards prosperity but in an honest way were given. They both mobilised local resources through a cooperative effort of the whole village.

The edition of 21 May 1985 presented the counter views. A letter from Fangshan County (Beijing) vigorously argued against the role of party secretaries in leading towards prosperity. The writer, Mr. Liu Lin, came up with three reasons. First of all, he said that what party secretaries should do was not to take a lead in achieving prosperity but "to help the masses to prosper;" secondly, it was impossible to do two things at the same time (business and village work) as energy was limited; thirdly, there was the danger of abusing power, leading consequently, to irregularities (bu zheng zhi feng). It is the last point that most worried writers. The writer proposed that party secretaries either do the village work or do business; they must choose.³⁹

Mr. Liu's view was shared by Mr. Shen Qingguo from Jiangsu Province. He wrote: "If he is busy with his own family for the whole day, how many factories can

³⁷"Nongcun dangzhibu shuji gai bu gai daitou zhifu?" (Is it permissible for a village party secretary to take a lead in achieving prosperity?) Nongmin ribao, 3 May 1985, p. 3. See: Wang Baodong, "Zhi wei ge ren zhifu, fu de you gui" (To enrich only oneself, is to become rich in a shameful way), Yao Dazheng, "Daitou zhifu, yao zou zhenglu" (To lead towards prosperity means to walk the correct path).

³⁸"Nongcun dangzhibu shuji gai bu gai daitou zhifu?" (Is it permissible for a village party secretary to take a lead in achieving prosperity?), Nongmin ribao, 7 May 1985.

³⁹Yang Lin, "Buyi tichang dangzhishu daitou zhifu" (Party secretaries should not take a lead in achieving prosperity) in "Nongcun dangzhibu shuji gai bu gai daitou zhifu?" (Is it permissible for a village party secretary to take a lead in achieving prosperity?) Nongmin ribao, 21 May 1985, p. 3.

his village have?" From his observation of prosperous villages in Jiangnan, he found the fact was that those villages that became rich had little to do with party secretaries. "It should not be that the families of party secretaries become rich first and then lead." Instead, it was because, he argued, the party secretaries "propagated and implemented policies from the Party." Mr Shen simply did not believe that party secretaries should take a lead in achieving prosperity.⁴⁰

In a more specific way, Mr. Kong Lingming from Hebei Province pointed out that the reason why party secretaries were not being allowed to take a lead in achieving prosperity was that because as yet there was no law regulating them. "If in a very short time there is no regulation, I'm afraid there will be no end of trouble for the future." Equipped with so much power, party secretaries would easily use it for their private interests, not for the interest of their villages. So he did not agree with the new role for party secretaries; for him, apparently, the danger that party secretaries would abuse their power and become corrupt was too real.⁴¹

Apparently, in response to these views, the editor of Nongmin ribao argued in the following week that one should treat "party secretaries like ordinary citizens" (yi ban bai xing). If ordinary citizens are allowed to follow the principle "one section of the people to become rich first," this principle should then be applicable to party secretaries as well. Party secretaries, therefore, are to be allowed to become rich.⁴²

The next question is about "all and at the same time become rich" (gongtong fuyu),⁴³ a question which is rooted in the very nature of the CCP. But, interestingly, this question was shifted into a question of timing. Or, as a letter written by Mr. Ye Mao, from Inner Mongolia summarised it: Should party secretaries become rich "before, after, or at the same time"?⁴⁴ Mr. Ye argued that this question should be solved on the ground; party secretaries should look to their next door

⁴⁰"Si tongzhi de kanfa" (The opinions of four comrades), Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²"Nongcun dangzhibu shuji gai bu gai daitou zhifu?" (Is it permissible for a village party secretary to take a lead in achieving prosperity?) Nongmin ribao, 4 June 1985, p. 3.

⁴³The term 'gongtong fuyu' is used here, which literally means 'all and at the same time become rich.'

⁴⁴"Duo xiangxiang zuolin youshe" (Look out to your next neighbours), Ibid.

neighbours (xiang zuoling youshe) if they wanted to become rich. This same argument was put forward by Mr. Lin Guohua from Beijing. They should "work out measures which were suited to local conditions and local people (ying di ying ren zhiyi)."⁴⁵ For both Mr. Ye and Mr. Lin, party secretaries were persons who should place the people as their top priority, even by sacrificing their own private interests. "If party secretaries suffer losses, they really deserve it," wrote Mr. Lin.

In other words, becoming rich is not a matter of morality or legality, but of common sense. The editor also agreed with this point. Of course, party secretaries should be allowed to become rich but they should also consider their status as members of CCP. The editor said: "Thus, party secretaries should not mix with the ordinary rich families. If they are already rich, they should consider how to lead the masses towards prosperity."

So far, we have seen that the debates have proceeded on three levels. On the level of ideology, the debates suggest that there is nothing wrong for a party secretary to become rich. One letter written by Wang Shihong, Deputy Head of Tanghu Township (Jiangxi Province), in fact, warned of the danger of "leftist eye" in evaluating what the party secretaries were doing.⁴⁶ Party secretaries who become rich do not violate any ideological tenet. On the legal level, there was also no obstacle, although one letter had already raised this problem. Party secretaries were allowed to become rich despite the absence of legal arrangements.

The problem lies at the level of society. All letters raised objections to party secretaries taking a lead in achieving prosperity simply because it hurt society's sense of justice. Villagers knew too well how party secretaries, holding power in their hand, were enabled to take over village enterprises for themselves and their families. Villagers, not being connected to them, were marginalised. By taking a lead in prosperity, in the peasants' view, party secretaries were actually granted a double privilege: power and wealth. Thus, many writers rejected the idea of party secretaries taking a lead in prosperity simply because they did not want to see this accumulation

⁴⁵"Ye tan xian fu, houfu, gongtongfu" (Speaking about before, after, or at the same time become rich) Ibid.

⁴⁶Wang Shihong, "Zhengque kandai dangzhibu shuji zhi fu" (Correctly treat party secretaries who become rich), Ibid.

of wealth and power falling into one hand. Mr. Wang angrily wrote: "Their wealth is tremendous, and their power enormous. They do become 'head' but do not 'lead.'"⁴⁷

This problem is not easy to solve. There are two suggestions: firstly, that party secretaries should look to their neighbours (by Mr. Ye Mao); secondly, that party secretaries should take a lead if they live in poor areas, and not do so if they live in prosperous areas (by Mr. Li Guohua). The last forum of the debates (Nongmin ribao, 18 June 1985) apparently took up these two views. The editor wrote "At present, there are party members who overly stress becoming rich first, and forget prosperity for all. We are in the opinion that if the masses have doubts as to the Party's policies, party cadres should not take a lead in achieving prosperity. If the masses can understand the Party's policies, and have courage to achieve prosperity, then the focus of the works of party cadres should be laid on how to lead the masses towards prosperity for all."⁴⁸

B. Towards the formulation of the role

The year of 1985 was indeed a pivotal year. It was not surprising that the debates occurred in that year. This was partly because in the previous year (March 1984) the central leadership took a decisive action by officially accepting village enterprises as the focus of rural development.⁴⁹ Naturally, villagers were questioning the role of party secretaries, especially when party secretaries themselves became directly involved in the starting and running of the enterprises. As mentioned above, three

⁴⁷Here, Mr Wang plays with words which cannot be imitated in English. The debates were about daitou zhi fu, the two words dai and tou combined are translated "to take a lead" but they literally mean "to lead at the head." His criticism is that party secretaries only do the second word, tou (head) Wang Baodong, op.cit.

⁴⁸"Nongcun dangzhibu shuiji gai bu gai daitou zhifu?" (Is it permissible that a village party secretary take a lead in achieving prosperity?) Nongmin ribao, 18 June 1985, p. 3.

⁴⁹"Zhonggong zhongyang, guowuyuan zhuanfa nongmuyuyebu he budangzu 'guanyu kaichuang shedui giye xin jumian de baogao' de tongzhi" (Circular from the Central Committee and State Council to transmit the report by the Ministry of Agriculture, Husbandry, and Fishery and by the Party Group of the Ministry on Creating a New Situation in Commune and Brigade-run enterprises)," 1 March 1984, in Zhongguo nongcun faqui 1984 (China Rural Laws 1984), Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1986, pp. 343-356.

related questions emerged: ideology, law, and social, and they created a crisis of confidence of the peasants in the party secretaries.

The debates, apparently, were to tackle this crisis. The result - as we have seen - was quite unsuccessful since they were unable to come up with a clear definition of the role of party secretaries. The ideology issue was sidetracked by condemning it as "leftist" and the law issue was shelved as unimportant. Party secretaries were, then, given liberty as to whether or not to take a lead in prosperity; and this was to be completely at their discretion.

Thus, during this first stage (1978-1991), party secretaries were practically left alone in developing the economy in the village; there was no specific demand to develop the economy within the framework of xiaokang. The national media frequently reported excesses where party secretaries single-mindedly develop the economy, either that of their own villages or that of their own families. A typical case is the report of an investigation conducted in villages in Beijing suburb.⁵⁰ The findings showed four major weaknesses displayed by the village party secretaries. Below is a quotation from the conclusion of the article which may give more flavour:

"Firstly, the foundation of their thinking is not solid enough. [...] In the process of prosperity, these people do not care about the collective, do not care about other people, they only work hard to enrich their families. Some of them even have a strong individualism. Secondly, they all lack the knowledge about the Party and experience in politics. These cadres are mostly young cadres, about 40 years of age, many of them enter the Party in the process of prosperity. [...] Especially after they assume the job as Party secretaries, they concentrate only on production. In some villages, Party's activities practically stop. Some Party secretaries have two jobs at the same time, many of them assume positions in construction projects. They often go out from their villages, and have little attention to develop Party activity in their villages. [...] Thirdly, they do not have enough knowledge on major policies. The higher authorities prohibit them from doing it, but they think they could go ahead and scoop money, even in an adaptive way. [...] Fourthly, the village leadership does not display a collective leadership. Many Party secretaries simply act alone, there is no collective leadership."

⁵⁰Department of Organization of the Beijing Municipality Party Committee, "Beijingshi jiaoqu ba ge xian zhifu nongmin zhong de dangyuan, danren cun dangzhibu shuji de qingkuang diaocha" (An investigation of Party members and village Party branch secretaries of eight counties belonging to Beijing suburb), Dangjian (Beijing), 1988, No. 10, pp. 38-39. For similar report, see, for example, Yu Yunhui et al. Xin shiqi dang de jiceng zhuzhi jianshe (The construction of Party grass-root level organization in the new period), Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1991, p. 21.

In the meantime, the central leadership was grappling to define a new ideological foundation for the new phenomenon of rich peasants in the countryside. It seems that the ideological problem was more pressing at this particular time. On 16 May 1987, Nongmin ribao published an article defending against allegation that the household responsibility system and the commodity economy in the countryside had led to retrogression. The author strongly argued that there was nothing wrong in that because the main criterion for judging progress or regression was "whether or not it is advantageous to the promotion of the development of productive forces."⁵¹ The author said that revolution in China was different from what Marx and Engels envisaged. "In an economically and culturally backward country, after the victory in the proletarian revolution is won, if productive forces do not develop, the people's gradually increasing material and cultural needs can hardly be satisfied, nor can the strong points of the socialist system be shown."⁵²

In November 1987 Zhao Ziyang delivered his famous speech on "the primary stage of socialism." Zhao said: "If one thinks that we can jump over the primary stage of socialism without passing through a massive development of production forces, this is a fantasy about the development of revolution, and the source of 'leftist' mistakes."⁵³ Zhao and his associates wanted to end the debates on the ideology question, and accordingly, pushed forward with his agenda of reform on market liberalisation both in the cities and the countryside. Zhao said: "At the primary stage, [...] with an eye for prosperity for all, we encourage one group of people to become rich first through honest labour and lawful business."⁵⁴

Zhao's speech contributed significantly to two areas. Firstly, it helped to mitigate the criticism levelled against rich entrepreneurial party secretaries. If at the

⁵¹"Whether or not it is beneficial to the emancipation of social productive forces is the main hall mark for judging it is progressive or retrogressive," Nongmin ribao, 16 May 1987, p. 1 in FBIS-CHI, 27 May 1987, K12-13.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Zhao Ziyang's report to the Thirteenth Party Congress, Yanzhe you zhongguo tese de shehuizhuyi dalu qianjin (March along the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics), in Shi san da yilai zhongyao wenxian xianbian (Collection of important documents since the thirteenth party congress), Vol. I, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991, p. 10.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 14.

primary stage of socialism a group of people is allowed to become rich first, then party secretaries as "ordinary citizens" - as indicated in the debates above - should be allowed to do so. Thus, there should be no ideological problem for village party secretaries to take a lead in becoming rich as long as they do so "through honest labour and legal business."

As important as the issue of the role of party secretaries, secondly, Zhao's speech also gave ideological foundation for the existence and survival of village enterprises in China.⁵⁵ Being at the primary stage of socialism, China can still afford to have enterprises in the countryside which generate rich peasants (in the popular Chinese terminology: yiwanyuan hu or the 10,000-yuan households). This certainly gave new confidence to party secretaries to continue their role in the economy. It must be noted that the fate of village enterprises are inherently linked to the debate on the role of party secretaries. If village enterprises had been banned because of their capitalist nature, then party secretaries would have lost their economic role in the villages.

As the ideological obstacle to the existence of village enterprises and the party secretaries who run them had been overcome, in the late 1980s the central leadership shifted their attention to find a proper place for village enterprises within the policy of rural development. The sustained development of village enterprises, most probably, encouraged the central leadership to formulate the policy for rural development within the framework of xiaokang; villages also should stride towards xiaokang.

The earliest pronouncement of xiaokang for the countryside was made by Du Runsheng, the head of the Agricultural Policy Research Department of the General Secretariat of the Central Committee. In March 1987 this department issued a document which stated two main policy aims for rural areas: (1) the per capita grain

⁵⁵The debates on village enterprises, in fact, did not end here. Those who disagree with the emergence of capitalists in the countryside take every opportunity to undermine village enterprises. In order to defend the survival of village enterprises, in 13 January 1990, the "China Township and Village Enterprise Association" was established with Bo Yibo as head and He Kang, the Minister of Agriculture, deputy head. ("Bo Yibo and He Kang appointed to new rural enterprises body," 13 January 1990, in SWB, FE/0663 B2/6-7). Three months later, Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily) published an article on the ten advantages of village enterprises, just to allay doubt on village enterprises ("Zhengque pingjia xiang-zhen qiye de zuoyong" (Correctly evaluate the role of village enterprises), Nongmin ribao, 15 March 1990, p. 1)

consumption in 2000 must be 400 kg per annum; and (2) the average rural incomes must approach urban incomes in year 2000.⁵⁶ Du seemed to believe that villages had the potential to achieve the target simply because of the existence of village enterprises. Thus, there is a direct link between the potential of village enterprises and xiaokang.

The decision of incorporating the countryside in xiaokang scheme - as we have seen in section A - was announced by the Central Committee at the occasion of the Eighth Plenum of the Thirteenth Party Congress, 29 November 1991.⁵⁷ At this stage, the central leadership seemed to have come to a firm conclusion that the countryside, having such a potential for growth, was not to be looked down upon.⁵⁸ Village enterprises, albeit their having capitalist colour, are legitimate activities within the framework of xiaokang which is characteristically linked to socialism at the primary stage. Bo Yibo's speech on the occasion of the inauguration of "China Town and Village Enterprises Association" on 13 January 1990, argued along this line: "The 1990s will be the most important and crucial period for China's economic development. In order to double our output value and become well-off, we need only maintain a 6 per cent growth rate. However, it will be impossible to attain this goal if we fail to develop town and village enterprises."⁵⁹

The confirmation of xiaokang 1991 for the countryside, in turn, helped to shape the policy on the role of party secretaries as entrepreneurial agents for xiaokang. Party secretaries are not only to play a leading role in economy, but more importantly, to do it with xiaokang as a target for the whole village. From 1991 onwards we are entering the second stage in which party secretaries are to play the

⁵⁶Nongmin ribao, 3 March 1987.

⁵⁷Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jin yi bu jiaqiang nongye he nongcun gongzuo de jueding (Central Committee's Decision on Further Strengthening Agriculture and Village Program), 29 November 1991, in Shisan da yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (A selection of important documents since the thirteenth party congress), vol. III, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1993, p. 1760.

⁵⁸Kelliher emphasizes this point in his explanation of conflict between the state and peasants where the state clearly takes side with the rich peasants; see Kelliher, Daniel "Privatisation and politics in rural China," in Gordon White (ed.), The Chinese State in the Era of Economic Reform, London: Macmillan, 1991, pp. 318-341.

⁵⁹"Bo Yibo and He Kang appointed to new rural enterprises body," in SWB, FE/0663 B2/6.

role of entrepreneurial agents towards xiaokang. In this way, all economic activities of party secretaries which were considered ideologically deviant and separated from the national scheme, find their legitimate place.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have described what the central leadership wants the village party branch secretaries to do in their villages, namely the role of economic growth. This is a role which requires party secretaries to bring into completion the plan for achieving a comfortable life or xiaokang. This objective is set in a series of quantitative targets to be completed by the year 2000.

Village party secretaries are allowed to start and run enterprises but should do so by mobilizing local resources. Handbooks for village party secretaries give them plenty of advice, and models are used to encourage those party secretaries in starting. The central leadership justifies this policy by relying on the quotation of Deng Xiaoping.

There are two stages of development of the role of party secretaries in economy. In the first stage (1978-1991) party secretaries acted as entrepreneurial agents in a literal sense. The central leadership did not demand more than growth. In the second stage which started in 1991, party secretaries were asked not only to develop the economy of their villages but also to do so with a target towards xiaokang. Now, the central leadership demands more than growth. The shift is partly prompted by an apparent potential of village enterprises to achieve the target, and partly by the definitive solution to the ideological question related to the nature of village enterprise itself and also to that of party secretaries who become rich.

In general, this role can be said to be part of the concept of the party branch secretaries as core (Chapter III); but, specifically, it gives additional responsibility to party secretaries. Party secretaries are not considered only as playing a political role but also an economic role. This is certainly something which goes beyond the shift from "revolutionary cadres to party technocrats" as Hong Yung Lee has

suggested.⁶⁰ This additional role demonstrates that party secretaries in the countryside are not only technocrats but also "econocrats."

⁶⁰Hong Young Lee, From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China, Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1991.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE PARTY SECRETARY AND HIS FELLOW VILLAGERS (1):
THE ROLE OF MORAL MIDDLEMAN

"The Heaven is high, and the Emperor is far"
(Chinese proverb)

In the preceding chapters, I have described and explained the two roles that originate "from above" or from party secretaries' with their superiors. This chapter will describe and explain one role which emerges from the interaction between a village party secretary and his fellow villagers, namely the role of "moral middleman." This role, I will argue, is the result of villagers' demands based on their "moral discourse":¹ he should protect their fellow villagers who are protecting their village from the intervention of the state.² As a village party secretary is always a local peasant (see Chapter Two), and therefore part of the village community, he is put under the moral obligation to cooperate with his fellow villagers to confront the state. This assertion is to be understood in the light of village community as "moral community" where "moral discourse" is inevitable.³

¹This term originates from Richard Madsen, Morality and Power in a Chinese Village, Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1984. I follow his argument on moral discourse which shapes the conduct of village leaders in China. In general, discourse theory analyses the way systems of meaning or 'discourse' shape the way people understand their roles in society and influence their political activities. For a further discussion on discourse, see David Howarth, "Discourse Theory," in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds.), Theory and Methods in Political Science, London: Macmillan, 1995, pp. 115-133.

²The state is defined as all institutions which are differentiated from the rest of its society as to create identifiable public and private spheres; see Patrick Dunleavy and Brendan O'Leary, Theories of the State. The Politics of Liberal Democracy, London: Macmillan, 1987, p. 2.

³"Moral discourse" is intimately linked with village as "moral community." As Bailey understands it, in a "moral community" the interaction of its members is characterized by continuous judgment of right and wrong. Beyond the community such judgements do not apply: to cheat an outsider is neither right or wrong: it is merely expedient or inexpedient. It is difficult to draw the boundary of a particular moral community. Thus Bailey gives an example "For the villagers whom I knew the moral community comprises their own family, the members of their own caste in the same village, their fellow villagers (markedly graded according to their distance from ego in the caste system), their kinsmen in other villages and their caste fellows in other villages, and getting near to the limit, people of other castes in those same villages. Then, after a gap, come people who are villagers like oneself, with the same style of life and speaking the same dialect, but with whom, as yet, no connexion can be traced: if they desire to be admitted to the moral

This chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section deals with the role of a moral middleman. It will describe how a village party secretary plays this role. The following section will look into the dynamics within a village which generates this role.

I. PARTY SECRETARY AS MORAL MIDDLEMAN

A. The definition of "moral middleman"

The phenomenon of middleman has been explored by scholars such as Gluckman in his article on the African headman.⁴ Since then, a number of scholars have taken part in that enterprise, such as Fallers, Mitchell, and Fortes. While they introduced the label of "intercalary," Wolf developed the concept of political and cultural middleman in his discussion on Mexico.⁵ Geertz proposed the concept of cultural middleman or "broker."⁶

Among the differences of the concept of middleman, Swartz singles out three patterns of middleman: (1) one who interrelates with two different political cultures, (2) one who interrelates with two communities, or (3) one who interrelates with two groups.⁷ He is "the man who interrelates and articulates the needs, aspirations, resources, and traditions of his local village or tribe to the corresponding demands, supplies, resources, and jural order of the province and the nation."⁸ Bailey

community, the villagers use elaborate and rigorous techniques to test their cultural credentials." See, Bailey, F.G. "The Peasant View of the Bad Life," in Teodor Shanin (ed.), Peasants and Peasant Societies, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971, p. 302-303.

⁴Gluckman, M. "The village headman in British Central Africa," in Africa, XIX (2), April 1949, pp. 89-106.

⁵Eric Wolf, "Aspects of group relations of group relations in a complex society: Mexico," in American Anthropologist, no. 58, pp. 1015-78.

⁶Clifford Geertz, "The changing role of the cultural broker: the Javanese kijaji," Comparative Studies in History and Society, no. 2, 1960, pp. 228-249.

⁷Swartz, Marc J. "Part III. The political middleman," Marc J. Swartz, ed. Local-Level Politics. Social and Cultural Perspectives London: University of London, 1968, pp. 199-204.

⁸ibid., p. 199-200.

specifically argues that the task of a middleman is "to bridge a gap in communications between the larger and the smaller structure."⁹

A middleman can be a schoolteacher,¹⁰ a missionary,¹¹ a policeman,¹² a village chief,¹³ a religious leader,¹⁴ etc. But, regardless of his official occupation, a middleman must be able to please both sides to whom he serves. He is not to defend the interest of both sides, nor sacrifice either one. This situation leads Swartz to characterise him as "Janus-faced". "He must play distinct versions of the local leader to the local community as against the higher politicians, and equally distinct versions of the national party or government worker to both of these audiences or publics."¹⁵

There are two types of middleman: a go-between and a broker. The difference between the two lies in the manner in which the task of intermediary is performed. "Where messages or instructions are handled faithfully, we recognise the role of go-between, but where they are manipulated and 'processed', we recognised the role of broker."¹⁶

In this chapter, I chose the term "moral middleman" to describe the role that a village party secretary performs in the period after Reform 1978. A middleman is - in Bailey's words - to bridge the communication of two structures, the state and the

⁹F.G. Bailey, Stratagems and Spoils, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970,

¹⁰Harald Eidheim, "The Lappish movement: an innovative political process," in Marc J. Swartz (ed.), op.cit., pp. 205-216.

¹¹Georg Henriksen, "The transactional basis of influence: white men among Naskapi Indians," in Robert Paine (ed.), Patrons and Brokers in the East Arctic, Newfoundland: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1971, pp. 22-33.

¹²Milton Freeman, "Tolerance and Rejection of Patron Roles in an Eskimo Settlement," in Robert Paine (ed.), ibid., pp. 34-54.

¹³Swartz, Marc J. "Process in Administrative and Political Action," in Marc J. Swartz, ed. Local-Level Politics. Social and Cultural Perspectives London: University of London, 1968, pp. 227-243.

¹⁴Clifford Geertz, loc.cit.

¹⁵Marc J. Swartz, "Part III The Political Middleman," loc.cit., p. 203.

¹⁶Robert Paine, "Introduction," in Robert Paine (ed.), Patrons and Brokers in the East Arctic, Newfoundland: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1971, p. 6.

village. He receives messages from the state and transmits it to his fellow villagers, and vice versa. In this exercise, he must be able to please both sides. A moral middleman, however, is a middleman who interrelates his village as moral community and take an accommodative position when they react against the state's policies. Thus, he does not possess the perfect characterization of a middleman or broker, namely "Janus face" as Swartz suggests. Another distinctive feature of a moral middleman is that he plays the role because of the moral obligation, expressed in moral discourses, and not because of pressure from political pressure groups as normally happens in the cities.

The role "moral middleman" is defined as a role to mediate between the state and his village as moral community by which the person, under the moral obligation, takes an accomodative position or protects the peasants who conduct resistance against undesirable state policies which he himself must implement. Peasants, according to Scott, have various different strategies to counter the state policies such as foot-dragging, false compliance, flight, feigned ignorance, sabotage, theft, and, not least, cultural resistance.¹⁷ A moral middleman will accommodate any of the strategy adopted by peasants and find ways and means to conceal it; in our case, these are strategies of foot-dragging and feigned ignorance.

B. The practice of moral middlemanship

The first important job that a village party secretary as middleman must do is to regularly have contact with his superiors both in the township and in the county. This is conducted through various meetings in both places. After the meetings he will go back to his village, and convene a series of meetings again with village cadres. These cadres, in turn, will communicate the message to the villagers. Sometimes, the party

¹⁷Scott, James Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, p. 36. This is only part of everyday forms of peasants' resistance. In Scott's conceptualization, everyday forms of resistance is "informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate, de facto gains." (p. 33) It may take various forms. Peasants sometimes resort to sporadic physical action (p. 249), at another time boycott (p. 251), but most of the time, "routine resistance." (p. 255) However, never do the peasants take "collective resistance" (p. 242). In this way, the resistance of the poor peasants is "usually inconclusive." "The perpetrators move under cover of darkness or anonymity, melting back into the 'civilian' population for protective cover." (Ibid.)

secretary himself will go to villagers and transmit policies from the central leadership. For instance, in the early period of Reform, the party secretary of Qili brigade (Jiangsu Province) admitted that he had to attend numerous meetings. From November 1978 to October 1979, for example, he attended meetings at the county for 35 days, meetings at the commune for 62 days, local activities for 12,5 days, do inspection for 5,5 days, open various meetings at the brigade for 168 days. In one year, he had to spend 283.5 days at meetings.¹⁸ In 1993, another village Party secretary admitted that he had to attend not less than 100 days of meetings in a year.¹⁹

Transmitting policies, however, is only half of the job of a middleman. After transmitting the policies, he will implement them in his village with the help of all cadres. Implementation is followed by the delivery of the output of the implementation to the higher authorities. This activity, apparently, takes place on a regular basis. One report says that the activities of village cadres in the whole year can be summarised as follows: "chuntian zai shu," "xiatian ge du," "qiutian ru ku." It means: in the spring they plant trees, in the summer they conduct birth control, and in autumn they collect taxes and grain.²⁰ Summer and autumn are the seasons of hard work for cadres as during those seasons they have to deliver the results of the implementation of the unpopular policies.

Delivering the results of the implementation is the most critical phase for a middleman because the delivery of results highly depends on the willingness of the villagers. As he is a middleman mainly involved in policy implementation, the situation is more uncertain as some policies are welcome by peasants and some are not. The delivery of results is easier or much easier for popular policies; and it is true with the reverse.

¹⁸"Hui duo cheng zai, ganbu nan dang" (Numerous meetings mean disaster, it's very difficult to be a cadre) Zhongguo nongmin bao, 20 April, 1980, p. 3.

¹⁹"Cun ganbu de fudan ye gai jianqing" (The burden of village cadres should also be alleviated), Renmin ribao, 5 July, 1993, p. 2.

²⁰ See, "Xiang cun ganbu de jingli ying fang zai nali?" (Where should township and village cadres put their energy?) Nongmin ribao, 17 June, 1987, p. 2.

These unpopular policies are exactly the area where the middleman must adjust himself to the demands of his fellow villagers. What are those policies which are not popular among peasants? One seminar held in Liyuan Township (Pingdu County, Shandong Province) in 1989 reports that there are three areas of policies which peasants reject: liang or grain (obligation to sell grain at fixed price), qian or money (taxes) and ming or life (birth control).²¹ Another investigation in Shaping Township (Yizhang County, Hunan Province) in 1990 reveals peasants' attitude toward policies from the central leadership. "Many peasants do not want to carry out birth control, do not want to fulfil their duty to deliver the contracted grain, do not want to sell grain to the state." ²²

Peasants' rejection of policies on birth control, taxes, and grain is not a local issue. These problems were addressed in a conference in Qinzhou City (Guangxi Province) in 1990 which was attended by delegates from 11 provinces.²³ The delegates tried to find the solution for these problems. In an apparent response to actual problems, a handbook for village party branches does not fail to warn village cadres nationwide the difficulty of implementing policies of birth control and tax-grain collection (zhenggou tiliu).²⁴

Confronted by the persistent resistance by their fellow villagers, village party secretaries are left with little choice but to accommodate their demands. Let us first take the birth control issue. An article written in Nongmin ribao by two authors from Jiangsu Province reveals this.²⁵ From their investigation in Subeimo Township (Yancheng County, Jiangsu Province), they found since 1982 the township has

²¹"Cun ganbu nandang ma?" (Is it difficult to become a village cadre?) Nongmin ribao, 18 July 1989, p. 3

²²"Xian zhuang yu yuanyin" (The current situation and its reason) Nongmin ribao, 17 July 1990, p. 3. Shaping Township has 15 party branches and 366 party members.

²³Tang Jiahou, "Huigu guoqu, sikao weilai" (Looking back the past, reflect the future), Nongmin ribao, 6 March 1990, p. 3.

²⁴Zhang Gengqiang and Jing Ri, (eds.), Dangzhibu gongzuo shouce (Handbook for a party branch work), Beijing: Zhongguo zhengfa daxue chubanshe, 1991, pp. 112-113.

²⁵"Nongcun chaosheng xianxiang yanzhong jidai jiejie" (Violation of birth control in the countryside is serious, it needs urgent solution) Nongmin ribao, 4 January 1991, p. 4.

exceeded the quota by 1300, or about 55.5%. In one village, there are 601 inhabitants but one sixth of them are 'hei hu kou.' The authors argue that there are a number of reasons to explain this. One of them is that village cadres simply do not implement the birth-control policy strictly. "They do not strictly implement the penalty system, the economic penalty is not uniform. ... As a result, this system becomes weakened by those cadres. Many households which have to be penalised for having violated birth control are not penalised, those which have to be fined are not fined or fined very little." In addition to that, there is also a practice called "yi qian dai za" (avoid operation by paying a sum of money). This policy which is originally designed to help unhealthy couples, is diverted by village cadres who do not want to get involved in difficulties.

Cheng Dongliao and Qi Tongxian in their article published in journal Renkou Yanjiu (Population Research), in 1990, point out that on the basis of their research in Henan Province, peasants do indeed reject the policy of birth control but they also find that cadres are not willing (bu yuan) to implement it. "They just do what is possible, but they do not want to put pressure on peasants."²⁶

Here, we see party secretaries who try to protect peasants who resist the state's policy on birth control by adopting the strategy of "feigned ignorance." Party secretaries know too well that peasants know the policy of birth control because they never fail to propagate the policy. Yet when peasants ignore the policy, the party secretaries also know that peasants just pretend to ignore it. Instead of exerting pressure over peasants (their fellow villagers), party secretaries accept the feigned ignorance. They protect this action by devising ways to conceal it such as black card registration or payment of money.

Moving to the area of grain delivery, we also find a similar situation. There are two types of grain to be delivered by peasants, one is the contracted grain and another is grain as tax. Both types of grain are collected by village cadres who go from house to house. Party secretaries indeed have to supervise these activities. However, as collecting grain is always met with resistance by peasants, party

²⁶Cheng Dongliao and Qi Tongxian, "Henan sheng nongcun jihua shengyu gongzuo de xiankuang yu duice (The current situation and respond to the work of village birth control in Henan Province) Renkou yanjiu, 1990; No. 4: pp. 58-60.

secretaries find it very difficult to push hard. Already in 1988, Party secretary Wang Xiaocheng from Yanfang Village (Wuwei City, Gansu Province) has complained: "In the past, when the harvest time came, the party secretary didn't have to go to single house. Grain would be delivered row by row (pai cheng chang dui). But, now, the party secretary must go from door to door to rouse them. Peasants, however, are not willing to deliver." Indeed, the reporter who interviewed cadres from the Wuwei City down to the villages found a unanimous voice that the most difficult task is to collect grain."²⁷ The best way to do it is just to accommodate the wish of the villagers; they delay the delivery of grain, and just wait until the villagers are ready to do it. A typical case is reported from Shaping Township (Yizhang County, Hunan Province), when in 1990 the whole township still owed 125 tons of grain of the previous year to the state. ²⁸

There are no national statistics, however, which report the delay of grain delivery. Yet the unanimous admission that grain collection is difficult indicates that delay (or even failure) of collecting grain has happened in most parts of China. The clearest admission is found in the document from the National Seminar on the Construction of Village-Level Organizations (10 August 1990) which indirectly refers to this problem. Explaining the four targets for the construction of village organizations, the document says that one of them is "to fulfil the task assigned by the Party and the government on time." (emphasis added) It further adds: "This fourth point is the most basic demand."²⁹ Although making no specific reference to grain, it is safe to say that grain delivery is one of the tasks that village cadres cannot fulfil on time.

The details of the problem of tax collection did not emerge until early 1990s when the central leadership vigorously addressed the problem of "peasant burden"

²⁷"Nongmin yue lai yue bu tinghua le ma?" (Do peasants become less and less obedient) Jingji ribao, 22 December 1988.

²⁸"Xian zhuang yu yuanyin" (The current situation and its reason) Nongmin ribao, 17 July 1990, p. 3.

²⁹"Quan guo cun ji zuzhi jianshe gongzuo zuotanhui jiyao" (Summary of minutes of national seminar on the construction of village-level organizations) in Xin shiqi nongye he nongcun gongzuo zhongyao wenxian xuanbian, Beijing: Zhongyang chubanshe, 1992, p. 645.

(nongmin fudan). The central leadership, trying to explain the importance of tax for the state, distinguishes two types of taxes, the reasonable (heli) and the non-reasonable (bu heli). The editor of Renmin ribao (People's Daily), for instance, at pains, tries to explain what "reasonable taxes" are.³⁰ It argues that those taxes must be paid by peasants, whereas the "arbitrary taxes" can be ignored.

Despite all this effort, peasants think that any tax is unacceptable. For them, there is no distinction between "reasonable taxes" and "arbitrary taxes." Party secretaries are put in a very difficult position; they have to wait until the villagers are ready to pay. A similar strategy of foot-dragging is adopted here. Quoting the example from Shaping Township (Hunan Province) again, it is reported that this township in 1989 was unable to deliver 49 thousands yuan of agricultural taxes, or 27.2% of the obligation.³¹

An identical case is reported in Zhengtong Township (Changning County, Hunan Province). The committee party secretary Shi Guolin, revealed his anxiety. He became party secretary in December 1985, but during this short period (about 18 months) he faced insurmountable difficulties of dealing with peasants, especially in collecting taxes. For instance, out of 20 thousands yuan of taxes to be paid by peasants to the township, only 10 thousands yuan were collected. The whole township was allocated 170 thousands yuan of government bonds, but only after one and a half months later did the money start to come in. The township had to collect 5658 yuan of taxes for special agricultural products. It happened that peasants refused to pay, and the money had to be obtained from the collective fund. In villages, there was not even a collective fund, and the party secretaries had to pay

³⁰Editor "Shenme shi heli fudan? Shenme shi luan tanpai?," (What is reasonable burden? What is arbitrary fee?) Nongmin ribao, 26 January 1991, p. 1. This editorial distinguishes three types of taxes: to the State, to the collective, and to the township which are to be considered as "reasonable burden." Taxes to the State: agricultural taxes (nongye shui), village special production tax (nongcun techan shui), tax on slaughtering animals (tuzai shui). Those are engaged in commerce, have to pay product tax (chanpin shui), business tax (yinye shui), and income tax (suode shui). Tax delivered to the collective are used for accumulation fund (gonjijin), public welfare fund (gongyijin), and costs of administration (guanlifei) from which cadres draw their salary. Tax delivered to the township is used to finance schools managed by both village and township, birth control, provision for servicemen's families, provision for households of old persons with no child or infirm to enjoy five guarantees (wubaohu), and training for the people's militia.

³¹"Xian zhuang yu yuanyin" (The current situation and its reason) Nongmin ribao, 17 July 1990, p.3.

from their own pockets.³²

As in the case of grain collection, there are also no national statistics on the delay or failure of tax collection. Therefore, as in grain collection, we can only rely on the statement contained in the document from the National Seminar on the Construction of Village-Level Organizations (10 August 1990): village cadres should fulfil the task assigned by the Party and the government on time. It has developed so far that it has become a grave concern for the delegates to the seminar in Beijing and that a special instruction has to be included.

Apparently, in both cases (grain delivery and tax collection) peasants adopt the identical strategy, i.e. the foot-dragging strategy. While resenting the state's policies, they choose not to deliver grain and pay taxes on time. Instead, they delay and delay which eventually leads to debt. In the face of this situation, party secretaries, similar to when they deal with birth control, protect their fellow villagers. They just wait until peasants are willing to pay.

The role of the moral middleman that a village party secretary performs does not imply that he could totally protect the interest of his fellow villagers. Peasants eventually must deliver the grain, they must eventually pay taxes. At one point, peasants agree to pay, and party secretaries stop protecting them. This is simply because the township and/or the county authorities can check the delivery grain and taxes easily. They check the account book, and send people to the villages to demand the grain or taxes.

Birth-control violation is relatively easy to protect. As reported in our case above, a party secretary can just turn a blind eye with the consequence that many children in his village have "hei hukou" or black registration cards. When he has to report to the township, he just makes up fake statistics.³³ As birth control

³²Yi wei xiang dangwei shuji de kunao (The anxiety of a township party committee secretary) Nongmin ribao, 15 April 1987, p. 1.

³³Indeed, it is now widely admitted that statistics on birth control in China are not accurate as there are many births unregistered or unrecorded. See, Ling Zhijun, "Wei shenme hai yao fukua?" (Why should be boastful?) Renmin ribao, 11 April 1994, p. 2. According to this article, there is a widespread practice of cheating statistic figures. One city mayor is reported to say that statistics reported to the higher authority are inflated up to 30%. This includes statistics of birth control. Then people start talking about "fukuafeng" (boasting style). According to the author, this practice is prompted by reward-punishment system to control cadres: good cadres receive an award (subsequently, promotion) and bad cadres punishment.

supervision needs on-the-spot visit, and as the township or the county authorities very seldom go down to villages, party secretaries can continue to play the role of the moral middleman.

The pattern seems to be that the more difficult a policy, the more sophisticated will be the method of protection adopted by a village party secretary. Thus, protection from birth control needs more sophistication: from black registration card to paying a sum of money. Whereas protecting his fellow villagers from delivering grain and tax just needs a delaying tactic. Sophisticated method, however, does not mean that the risk of being purged by the higher authority is higher. Grain delivery and tax collection can be delayed but not for a very long time because it will be discovered immediately by the township authority. Violation in birth control, on the contrary, is hardly detected by the township authority unless they make an on-the-spot investigation. The latter is something which rarely happens.

Party secretaries can normally safely play the role of moral middleman. The township as well as county authorities can do very little to stop it or just do nothing. For example, Chen Bin, from the department of agriculture of Nantong City Party Committee (Jiangsu Province) talks about the 'broken string' between villages and townships as well as counties. In his opinion, "although counties and the townships have worked very hard, and have made various activities, they are 'held up' (qiake) at the villages, numerous works generally stop at counties and townships." ³⁴ To complicate the matter, township authorities know very little about what is happening in the villages under their jurisdiction. This is admitted openly by the Party Committee Secretary of Liulihe Township (Fangshan District, Beijing City). He heard only words of praise. Although he is fully aware that such words do not mean anything, he makes no effort to pursue further.³⁵

Dongtai City Party Committee Secretary (Dongtai City, Jiangsu Province), Qiu Zhirong, in 1989, made an investigation of 735 village party secretaries who are

³⁴"Nongcun cunji zhuzhi ji dai jiaqiang" (Village level organization urgently need to be fortified) Nongmin ribao, 25 August 1987, p. 3.

³⁵"Liulihe xiang dangwei he cun ganbu duihua" (A dialogue between Liulihe Township Party Committee and village cadres) Nongmin ribao, 1 December 1987, p. 3.

under his jurisdiction.³⁶ Mr. Qiu observes that party secretaries are "plagued with fears of implementing certain policies: birth control, tax collection, and funeral ceremony." They are afraid to implement policies in those areas. In his opinion, this problem is rooted in institutional weakness, which means that there is not enough control from his superiors both at county and township level; they do not act when they have to. He overheard a village party secretary saying: "The Party committee is only keen to develop 'ten-thousand yuan families'³⁷ but is afraid to handle the backward party branches."

This does not mean, however, that party secretaries do not make any effort to persuade their fellow villagers to abide by birth-control rules (as well as grain and tax delivery). They work hard for this and are quite persistent. A survey in six villages under Hengyang City (Hunan Province) reveals³⁸ that birth control and disputes among villagers consume most of cadres' time: 44.7% for birth control, and 16.8% for handling disputes. Three other sensitive areas in which cadres also must spend a lot of time: collecting grain (12%), collecting taxes (10.5%), agriculture (10.3%). In these areas, cadres must use various techniques of persuasion which otherwise they will face serious challenge from the peasants.

The role of moral middleman is not easy. He must know exactly the balance between tightening and relaxing his grip. He must push when the peasants are willing to be pushed, but must relax when they are not willing. Naturally, to play this role needs a lot of time; a village party secretary cannot work in a hurry. He must be patient and wait. In the case of birth control, sometimes he must give up the idea of seeing a good result. In other words, the role of moral middleman is a role which need a lot of experience. A newly installed party secretary might make mistakes in pushing too hard.

³⁶"Nongcun dangzhibu shuji duiwu jianshe de dongtai yanjiu" (Dynamic investigation of the construction of the contingents of village party secretaries) Dang shi wen hui, 1989, No. 4, pp. 28-30.

³⁷"Ten thousand yuan family" or wan yuan hu is a term to describe peasant families who manage to become rich, so rich that they earn ten thousand yuan a month.

³⁸"'Chun feng' wei he nandu 'yu men guan'" (Why does the 'spring wind' cannot pass through the 'gate of heaven') Nongmin ribao, 13 January, 1987, p. 3.

II. PRESSURE FROM VILLAGE COMMUNITY

Why does a village party secretary adopt the role of moral middleman? Why does this role emerge during the period after Reform? This role comes from nothing but the nature of the village community itself. After the introduction of Reform in 1978, the state, in its dealing with villages, reverses the previous policy of "radical encapsulation;" in its place, it conducts "nominal encapsulation." This new strategy basically means that the state retreats from its day-to-day intervention in the lives of peasants and allows peasants to manage their own lives. Peasants, as a consequence, are no longer under strict and tight control of village cadres. In this way, village communities in the whole of China recapture their original nature again. This section seeks to explain the origin of the role of moral middleman by attributing it to the basic nature of the village community.

A. A village as community

The basic nature of a village is one of community. Anthropologists have long recognised this when, for instance, Redfield defines the village community as a "little community."³⁹ Here the idea of "smallness" is particularly stressed. Members of a village are no strangers to each other, talk with each other, and work together. Though the boundary of the community is sometimes determined by a river or a road, it is determined more by villagers' consciousness.⁴⁰ The sense of community of the village, in this way, is laid on more solid ground.

This sense of community was prevented from developing during the period before Reform in 1978. Chinese peasants were identified by administrative division, by their membership to a commune or to a production team. Although the production brigade (which is coextensive with a village boundary) was recognised as a division

³⁹Redfield, Robert "The Little Community" in Redfield, Robert The Community and Peasant Society and Culture Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Scott, writing about a village in Malaysia, says that although "villagers are not quite sure where Sedaka ends," "the moral existence of the village is recognized in discourse." Scott, op.cit., p. 87.

between commune and team, it is not so significant.⁴¹ From morning to night the team head organised their lives, whereas at the commune their records were kept.⁴² The dissolution of communes (the three-tier structure) and subsequently, the revolutionary committee, paves the way for the emergence of the village as a community. A village is recognised as a single unit (termed "xingzheng cun") with a party branch looking after it. This is further strengthened by the establishment of villagers' committees (cunmin weiyuanhui) in the villages⁴³ which are designed to be autonomous mass organizations.⁴⁴

Since Reform in 1978 peasants take their village community as their touchstone again;⁴⁵ peasants start to think in terms of their village, not their production team or commune. Village community is important again. The aspiration of both villagers and their leader is grounded on the community. The story of Party secretary Tang Fangbi from Qiaoziping Village (Yuanling County, Hunan Province) is illustrative here. One morning, when he was standing on a hill he was suddenly enlightened: "I must lead my fellow villagers to rebuild my village."⁴⁶ This translation does not convey the emotive meaning of the original Chinese sentence. There are two special words which express the party secretary's feeling for his

⁴¹This is also Helen Siu's observation of a village in Guangdong Province. "Villages might have retained their physical boundaries, but the social meaning of their existence was being changed from within by the Maoist paradigm." See Siu, Helen, Agents and Victims in South China, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 6.

⁴²For a good description of activities around production team and commune, see Leeming, Frank Rural China Today, Essex, England: Longman, 1985, pp. 34-37.

⁴³English translation of this law, see FBIS-CHI, 27 November 1987, pp. 21-23,

⁴⁴Indeed, the basic contention of those who disagreed with the idea of villagers's committee is that it will endanger the authority of the township. "If they are organizations of self-management, who should be responsible for guaranteeing state interests in the countryside? .. Some deputies even said that if the peasants have more and more self-management power, they may refuse to accept the instructions of the township governments, and the tasks of grain purchase and conscription will not be easily fulfilled." Bao Xin, "Letter from Beijing. Concerning the Villagers' Committee Organization Law," in Liaowang (Overseas edition), 20 April 1987, No. 16, p. 1, in FBIS-CHI, 24 April 1987, K-11.

⁴⁵The idea of "Peasant community as a touchstone" is from Gavin Smith, "Reflections on the Social Relations of Simple Commodity Production," Journal of Peasant Studies, XIII (1), 1985, p. 101.

⁴⁶"Hun xi cong ren xin" (His spirit always stays in people's heart) Nongmin ribao, 10 March 1987, p. 3.

village: 'xiangqin' and 'chongjian jiayuan.' The term 'xiangqin' is used here instead of other impersonal words (e.g. tongzhi, comrade); it means that Party secretary Fang must take the whole village as the home of his own relatives. The word 'jiayuan' consists of two words 'ji' meaning home, and 'yuan' meaning an area of land for growing plants.⁴⁷ For peasants these two words can easily spark intense feeling ; it is more meaningful than the word 'state' (guojia). And to rebuild one's village is every peasants' responsibility.

It is apparent that, after the Reform of 1978, a village regained its original nature, namely little community. The direct implication of this is that villages in China generate a moral discourse characteristic to a moral community. The following section describes the moral discourse which shapes the behaviour of village party secretaries.

B. Moral discourse in a village

As the village becomes guxiang and fellow villagers xiangqin again, peasants demand that their leader (in our case the party secretary) also thinks and acts accordingly. He should, first of all, show more compassion to his own fellow villagers, than to other villages or even township. In Chinese, this means a village party secretary must show tiexin or guanxin, both words contain the character xin or heart. He must attach (tie) or connect (guan) his heart to those of the villagers.

An investigation of more than 5000 party members and peasants in three townships under Yichang County (Hubei Province) in 1992 shows this. Peasants were asked: What type of party secretary do you welcome? One of six peasants' views of an ideal party secretary was a party secretary "who cares for (guanxin) peasants, who

⁴⁷C.K. Yang writes that there are four words which are so dear to peasants: tian, yuan, lu, mo or field, garden, house and grave. They are classical expression to signify 'homeland' or the roots of life. "These were the primary elements in which the deep and continuous roots of the community life of Nanching were anchored. With these elements the community became a place where people were born, struggled for sustenance, and died, leaving behind descendants to carry on the recurring cycle. And the village became kuhsiang, 'the old home-land' with which the traditional Chinese identified the material interest and sentimental attachment of his entire existence." Yang, C.K. "A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition" in CK Yang, Chinese Communist Society: the Family and the Village, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1959, p. 10.

attaches his heart (tiexin) to that of the masses."⁴⁸ Another investigation, in the same year, was conducted in Yichang County (Hubei Province) of about ten thousands party members and peasants. There six qualities were demanded, one of them stressing the moral quality again. Peasants welcome a party secretary who pastes his heart to theirs (tiexin shuji). "The masses believe that the standing (weixin) of a cadre critically depends on whether or not he has good thinking, one who places his heart at the masses and the collective."⁴⁹

The term tiexin or guanxin actually are part of a larger discourse on an ideal official, namely fumuguan or "father-mother official". Like a father and a mother, so should an official treat the people. A rhyme on this ideal official describes its meaning:

Care about the plight of the people
Love the people as one loves oneself
Observe and learn by experience the feeling
of the people.⁵⁰

The father-mother official is, therefore, the type of official that villagers expect and hope to have. He is to be a benevolent official who does not abuse power or commit corruption. All of his power and position is dedicated to promote the happiness of the people. As a father and mother know how to make their children happy, so does a father-mother official. Indeed, he must have compassion for his people. If necessary, he may even have to sacrifice himself for the sake of his people. A father-mother

⁴⁸"Nongmin huanying shenmeyang de dangzhibu shuji" (What kind of Party branch secretaries do the peasants welcome?) Nongmin ribao, 20 March 1992, p. 3.

⁴⁹"Shenme yang de cunzhishu zui shou huanying" (What kind of party branch secretaries are welcome) Nongmin ribao, 8 February 1992, p. 5.

⁵⁰This rhyme is dictated to me by a peasant woman in Shejia Village (Xiangyin County, Hunan Province) where I conducted my field research.

Guanxin renmin jiku
Aihu renmin xiang aihu ziji yiyang
Ticha minqing

official must love and care for the people (ti tie renmin).⁵¹

The fact that the discourse on the father-mother official is still alive among Chinese peasants cannot be doubted. Each time an official performs a morally virtuous act, he will be designated as father-mother official. For instance, the reporter of Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily) describes Party secretary Wang Jiaozhong (Shimen County, Hunan Province) as a "father-mother official" simply because he helped a beggar from another village, Yuguan Village.⁵² In 1990, Ma Weilong, Township Party Committee Secretary of Huibu Township (Zhejiang Province), wrote an article in the journal Xiang-zhen luntan (Discussion Forum for Township) in which he made an appeal to village cadres that they play the role of father-mother official.⁵³ The first sentence opened with a statement: "Village cadres are often called by the masses 'father-mother official.'" Obviously, Mr. Ma takes it for granted that the idea of a 'father-mother official' exists in peasants' consciousness already.⁵⁴

For peasants in China today, when talking about the father-mother official, cannot fail to mention the name of Jiao Yulu, Party Secretary of Lankao County,

⁵¹The discourse on fumu guan can be traced back to the period of early Song Dynasty (960-1279). Fumu guan is an official who acts like a father (fu) and a mother (mu), or like one's parents. Obviously, the idea of fumu guan is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese concept of a good ruler. By saying that a ruler should rule like a father and a mother, Chinese people perceives the domain of a ruler as a family (jia). The people is children, and the ruler is father-mother. This "family" can be a village, a township, a county, even the whole country. Emperors of China, indeed, used to perceive the country as "jia tianxia" or "family country." See, Ci Hai, A reduced format, Shanghai: Cishu chubanshe, 1989, p. 1152.

⁵²"Shuji yu qigai" (Party secretary and a beggar) Nongmin ribao, 26 July, 1988, p. 3.

⁵³Ma Weilong, "Ruhe dang hao renmin qunzhong de 'fumuguan'" (How to become a good 'father-mother official' to the people) Xiang-zhen luntan, 1990, No. 9, p. 28.

⁵⁴The concept of 'father-mother official', according to him, can be broken up into three components: think about the masses, rely on the masses, and make things happen for the masses. In thinking about the masses, a cadre should get rid of the bureaucratism attitude. Instead, he/she must often meet the masses so as to understand what they are thinking. "He must become the intimate friend of the masses, help the masses in spelling out doubt and difficulty, and be with the masses through thick and thin." "Relying on the masses" means that cadres, in solving problems, should trust the masses, consult them, and together with the masses solve the problem. Finally, in making things happen for the masses cadres should "make the Party's policies become the masses' own behaviour" and "on the basis of local condition, set the regulations and link up economic development with the interest of the masses."

Henan Province.⁵⁵ He died thirty years ago yet his name is still in the mind of millions of peasants. Indeed, for an outsider, what he did was just extraordinary, not extremely heroic like that of Lei Feng.⁵⁶ However, to peasants, he is the contemporary living example of the father-mother official who cares for their lives. He, naturally, becomes the example which any village leader should imitate.⁵⁷

C. Compassion and protection

Peasants, living in a moral community, only demand compassion (guanxin and tiexin) from their leader. They know that they cannot escape from the obligation imposed by the state.⁵⁸ Peasants even think that it is part of their fate to accept the burdens from the state. The question is what type of compassion do the peasants prefer?

Apparently, all party secretaries know that one thing they should not do is to hurt or offend peasants' feeling. The word "to hurt" or dezui is a very strong word, the key word in the moral discourse of a good leader. Any village cadre, including

⁵⁵ He was born in 1922 in Shandong Province, but served in various leadership position in many different places in Shandong Province and Henan Province. He served as party secretary in Lankao County for two years, 1962-1964. He died in May 14, 1964, in a hospital in Zhengzhou (the capital of Henan Province) because of illness. At that time, he was only forty two years of age. During this short period, he had done innumerable virtuous and illustrious deeds. See, Lai Chaoguo, Zhongguo nongcun da xieyi (Vivid picture of villages in China), Changsha: Wenyi chubanshe, 1993, pp. 158-187.

⁵⁶ It is said, for example, when he came to Lankao in 1962, the whole county was suffering a long and harsh famine which caused the death of tens of thousands of people. The following day, Party secretary Jiao was reported as going to the villages and visiting the peasants. He took with him all his staff to go to the villages, braving rains and storms, crossing mountains, hills and rivers. Reportedly, he visited more than 120 villages (production brigade), and walked more than 5000 li. Along with the peasants, he planted trees, repaired ditches and canals in order to overcome "three disasters", namely drought, flood, and famine.

⁵⁷ See, for example, "Paotong shuji" (Party secretary of paotong tree) Zhongguo nongmin bao, 18 June 1981, p. 3; NN, Jiao Yulu jingsheng yongcun (The spirit of Jiao Yulu lives on) Xiang-zhen luntan, 1990, No. 5, pp. 25-26; "Ta xiang jiao yulu neiyang" (He's just like Jiao Yulu) Nongmin ribao, 29 May 1992, p. 3; "Zhengxin shi yi wei renmi qunzhong banshi" (Wholeheartedly work for the masses of the people) in Li Yicong, Zai dangzhibu shuji de gangwei shang (Under the post of the party secretaries), Shenyang: Baishan chubanshe, 1991, pp. 156-158; "Dian ling wanjia deng" (To light bright lamps for ten thousands families) in Ibid, pp. 364-368.

⁵⁸ Anthony Giddens writes: "Peasants cannot threaten to 'withdraw their labour', not just because they lack the organizational means to do so, but because they could not then survive, since they produce their own means of subsistence." Giddens, Anthony The Nation-State and Violence, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985, p. 65.

the party secretary, must not hurt peasants' feelings. Hurting people's feelings is not the right thing for a compassionate father-mother official to do. Compassion is to be demonstrated in not doing anything offensive or dezui and this, in turn, is to be expressed in leniency in implementing difficult policies.

Peasants take it as a serious offence if a party secretary hurts their feelings and they will take action if the party secretary does it. Dezui, in the context of our discussion, means pushing hard to implement birth control, to demand grain, and to collect taxes. The editorial introduction of an article in Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily) explicitly points out the fact that offending (dezui) fellow villagers is something that village cadres should avoid. Peasants feel extremely offended by cadres who are known to do "san yao" namely "yao qian" (money to pay tiliu), "yao liang" (grain for the state), "yao ming" (birth control).⁵⁹ Indeed, village cadres, including party secretaries, are afraid of offending their fellow villagers.⁶⁰

If the party secretaries insist on doing san yao, then their fellow villagers will take action. Reports in newspapers as well as journals abound with offended peasants retaliating against party secretaries who implemented policies without leniency. One party secretary Tang, on going home after promoting birth control, found all his pigs had died due to poisoning, and three days later, all his chicken suffered a similar fate. Or, Party secretary Yang, because he stuck to the written contract, found his fish had died in the field on the following day. Party secretary Liu and his family escaped death by sheer luck when he found just seconds before eating, that the rice had been poisoned.⁶¹

It must be noted that peasants, after the introduction of Reform, are becoming

⁵⁹"Daji baofu cun ganbu xianxiang pouxi" (The phenomenon of attacking to retaliate against village cadres is on the increase) Nongmin ribao, 18 December 1989, p. 4.

⁶⁰"Xuexi dang de zuzhi zhidu wenda" (Study the question-answer on the organization system of the Party) Zhongguo nongmin bao, 28 October 1982.

⁶¹"Daji baofu cun ganbu xianxiang pouxi" (The phenomenon of retaliating against village cadres is on the increase) Nongmin ribao, 18 December 1989, p. 4. Retaliation can also take place after a cadre steps down. A report from three villages in Linfen District (Shanxi Province) reveals that peasants who could not stand being offended by their party secretaries took revenge against them after they were no longer in the post. One cadre says: "We are now cadres. If while on the throne we offend people, then it would be very difficult to conduct ourselves in society after we step down." Guo Shijun, "Lu zao baofu yuanyin an zai?" (What is the reason of repeated retaliation) Xiang-zhen luntan, 1991, No. 1, p. 35.

more and more assertive. As cadres no longer control their day-to-day activities, especially that of production, peasants are freer to express their voice. For instance, writing in the Party journal, Qiushi, in 1991, the Deputy Party Secretary of Shaanxi Provincial Party Committee, Mo Lingsheng, lamented the fact that party branches were losing their role and peasants going their own way. He often heard peasants saying: "After the contract is given to the household, we no longer need the party branch. Everybody goes to make money, everybody goes their own way."⁶² Peasants even dare to question a policy from the state which is, according to them, strange. Peasants are reported to have said: "Why does the government ask us to do something which we don't like to do?" "We have made a production contract. Whether we harvest much or harvest little, it's our responsibility. Why should the government reward or punish us?"⁶³ This assertiveness, to a certain degree, has taken many village cadres by surprise. "Now peasants are no longer obedient!"⁶⁴

Retaliation against village cadres or party secretaries, however, happens only in the extreme cases, namely if peasants are extremely offended by the actions of cadres. Peasants, according to Scott, can stand any oppression under subsistence situation.⁶⁵ The statistics on retaliation against party secretaries, released by the Public Security Bureau, is not significantly large. Renmin gong'an (People's Security News), the official newspaper from the Public Security Bureau, in 1991, indicates that, according to an investigation conducted in Jiande County, Zhejiang Province, from 1988-1990, 49 cases out of 120 cases are those of revenge against party secretaries. Furthermore, the majority of revenge actions (55.83%) are directed to cadres' property such as harvest in the field or trees planted in their private plots.

⁶²Mou Lingsheng, "Gonggu nongcun shehuizhuyi zhendi de yi xiang zhongda zhanlue cuoshi" (Important strategy and measures of consolidating the position of socialism in the countryside) Qiushi, 1991, No. 24, pp. 30-48.

⁶³"Lai zi nongcun zhong bu rong huibi de huati" (A subject of conversation which comes from villages and which cannot be easily avoided) Nongmin ribao, 24 January 1989, p. 3.

⁶⁴"Nongmin yue lai yue bu tinghua le ma?" (Do peasants become less and less obedient) Jingji ribao, 22 December 1988.

⁶⁵Scott's thesis is that peasants do not go for revolution as long as their need of subsistence is not disturbed. Hardships have become part of their life, including oppression by landlords. Scott, James The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.

Peasants do not attack the party secretaries physically.⁶⁶

Peasants only demand that their leader show some compassion. They find it difficult to understand why member of their village should hurt his fellow villagers in the interest of the state. In peasants' reasoning, village leader should care more of his village (his guxiang) than the state. Indeed, the leader should take sides with them in opposition to the state. After all, "the Heaven is high and the Emperor is too far away."⁶⁷

The higher authorities who know little about this can just give orders to the party secretaries to implement policies. In fact, if something does not go well according to plan, they are quick to find fault either in cadres or in peasants. Village cadres are reported to have complained: "Township cadres come down to do some work, then go home. As to village cadres, we live every day with them."⁶⁸ A party secretary lives in a community, not in an anonymous unit or danwei. "A village is a place of one's folks, everybody can make mistakes. If we live every day together, why should I bother? If you unmask his defects, and he says that you are wrong, then we will feel sorry for each other. Everybody feels sorry. This will eventually influence our mutual relationships." This statement comes from a village cadre who disagrees with measures of checking financial village accounts.⁶⁹

The crux of the matter is how a village party secretary can reconcile (in Madsen's words) conflicting moral discourses.⁷⁰ In our case, there is the moral imperative from the Central Committee of the CCP; at the same time there is the

⁶⁶"Nongcun baofu jiceng ganbu anjian de tedian, yuanyin ji duice" (The characteristics, reason and policy to cases of revenge against cadres in the countryside) Renmin gong'an bao, 2 May 1991, p. 3. Similar result from a survey of two counties in Hebei Province, see Zheng Jian, "Nongcun jiceng ganbu zao baofu de wenti zhide zhongshi" (The problem of grass-root cadres in the countryside suffering from revenge needs a special attention) Xiang-zhen luntan, 1991, No. 1, p. 34.

⁶⁷Old Chinese proverb: tian gao, huangdi yuan.

⁶⁸"Jiu pin guan' you si da nan" ('Officials of nine products' facing big problems) Nongmin ribao, 26 April 1985, p. 3.

⁶⁹"Nongcun jiceng ganbu dui qingli cauwu you 'qi pa'" (In checking up financial affairs, village grass-root cadres have 'eight fears') Nongmin ribao, 20 April 1992, p. 3.

⁷⁰In his book, Madsen distinguishes, during the Maoist period, three moral discourses, Confucian, Liuist and Maoist, but each has its own paradigm which is irreconcilable to each other. Madsen, op.cit.

moral imperative from the village community. Every village party secretary is confronted by two moral discourses: to become "a good party secretary" and to become a father-mother official who show compassion to one's fellow villagers. Madsen is quite right in pointing out that, in a moral community, there is no easy way to reconcile the existing moral discourses.⁷¹ A village leader must chose which path he would like to follow.

The role of the moral middleman is one path which is chosen by numerous village party secretaries in China today, something which was impossible to do during the radical Mao's period. First of all, he will listen to the appeals made by the central leadership, then he will see the actual situation of his village. What is the reaction of his villagers with regard to birth control, grain delivery, tax collection? It is good if they can be carried out faithfully and quickly. Otherwise, he must wait patiently, like the father-mother official who is more eager to protect than to punish his people.⁷²

CONCLUSION

The role of the moral middleman that a village party secretary in contemporary China is playing consists of two elements: middlemanship and protection. He mediates in the state and his village by transmitting policies from the state and delivering the policy's results (in our case, grain, taxes, and birth control) to the state. At the same time, he accommodates to his fellow villagers who resist undesirable policies (birth control, grain delivery, and tax collection). This second element does not mean that a village party secretary can deliver complete protection; "protection" here only means protecting peasants who are carrying out foot-dragging and feigned ignorance.

Thus, party secretaries continue to go to the township and the county to receive policies, but at the same time, they implement them according to their own

⁷¹Ibid, p. 257. Here, Madsen proposes a synthesis of moral discourses which - in my view - is impossible to do.

⁷² Some party secretaries prefer not to do anything. One report says that many problems are sent by party secretaries to the higher authorities simply to avoid hurting peasants' feeling. "Because of fear of hurting people, of entering into troubles (mafan), they send the problems to the higher level authorities." See, "Xuexi dang de zuzhi zhidu wenda" (Study the question- answer on the organization system of the Party) Zhongguo nongmin bao, 28 October 1982.

discretion. The party secretary himself decides when and how the policies are implemented. For instance, he will try to be as kind as possible with the implementation of birth-control policy, and find every possible means to circumvent the policy; he will avoid pushing (cui) peasants to deliver grain or to collect taxes at a certain time limit.

In this way, he does not hurt the feelings of his fellow villagers, and accordingly, fulfil their expectation of having a fumuguan or father-mother official who shows compassion to them. The fact that a village is a moral community plays a crucial factor here. As a member of a moral community (who was born and grew up there) a village party secretary cannot ignore the pressure generated by the community. He is under moral obligation to care for all fellow members of the same community.⁷³

Here, we are witnessing peasants who are carrying out resistance against the state and a village party secretary who is squeezed in between the two. The party secretary clearly takes side with the peasants.

⁷³Madsen, op.cit., p. 1-2.

CHAPTER SIX
THE PARTY SECRETARY AND HIS FELLOW VILLAGERS (2):
THE ROLE OF LINEAGE PATRON

If one becomes an official,
even fowls and dogs are elevated.
(Chinese proverb)

Like the previous chapter, the focus of this chapter is the interaction between a village party secretary and his fellow villagers, but unlike in Chapter Three, this chapter will concentrate on the role of lineage patron. I will explain that this is the role that a village party secretary should play in his relations with his lineage. As the State,¹ in its dealing with villages, adopts the strategy of nominal encapsulation, lineages in the countryside reinvent the old discourses. A village party secretary, being the number one man in the village, is put under moral obligation by members of his lineage to provide special favour.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will describe what a village party secretary does as lineage patron: how he operates, and to what extent. The following section will discuss the internal dynamics of a lineage which generate such a role.

I. PARTY SECRETARY AS LINEAGE PATRON

A. The definition of "patron"

The term "patron" is invariably defined in connection with another term, "client." But, in itself, the word "patron" is rooted in the Latin word "pater" which means

¹The state is defined as all institutions which are differentiated from the rest of its society as to create identifiable public and private spheres; see Patrick Dunleavy and Brendan O'Leary, Theories of the State. The Politics of Liberal Democracy, London: Macmillan, 1987, p. 2.

"father." A patron is one who acts like a father, while the client his child. In this sense, patron-client relationship is a highly unbalanced relationship. A patron is usually a person equipped with greater access to power, wealth and status whereas the client is without power, not wealthy, and not respected. Both the patron and the clients are bound by a principle of reciprocity albeit in an unbalanced relation.

In our case, the term "patron" is to be understood differently. Someone playing the patron role is simply one who distributes favour and benefit generously. The dimension of reciprocity is very minimal. It is not so much that the clients are negligent as the patron himself is obliged not to expect any returns. A village party secretary, therefore, plays the patron role because he must express his renqing² It is, then, to be understood not in terms of sheer take-and-give calculation.

This is not to suggest that members of a lineage totally ignore the importance of giving a return. My argument is that the reciprocal dimension which is present in a normal patron-client relationship is a defining feature in the relationship between a party secretary and the members of his lineage. Thus, the patron role used here is a role of providing favour and benefit for nothing. It is really like a father who distributes favours and benefit from his bounty.³

The role of lineage patron is, thus, defined as a role to provide special favour to one's lineage members who do not necessarily have to reciprocate.

B. The practice of patronage

1. The precondition for the role of lineage patron

How can a village party secretary become a patron? What condition leads him to play the role of patron? A village party secretary is always considered as "the top man"

²See, section two below.

³For a systematic discussion on patronage, see Paine, Robert. "A Theory of Patronage and Brokerage." in Robert Paine (ed.), Patrons and Brokers in the East Arctic. Newfoundland: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1971, pp. 8-19. Cf. Mayer, Adrian C. "Patrons and Brokers: Rural Leadership in Four Overseas Indian Communities." in Maurice Freedman (ed.) Social Organization. Essays Presented to Raymond Firth. Raymond: Frank Cass, 1967, pp. 167-188; Silverman, Sydel F. "Patronage and Community-Nation, Relationships in Central Italy." Ethnology, IV (2), April 1965, pp. 172-189.

(di yi bashou). It has been suggested that, after Reform, rural cadres have lost their power over the peasants. Unlike the period of collectivization, it is argued, they can no longer give order to peasants.⁴ This argument, however, is very general. Although rural cadres have lost their power, it does not follow that all cadres, without exception, are losing their power. While the team leaders, the brigade cashiers, the brigade military officers, and other cadres of minor posts have lost their power, it is not the case with the party secretaries. This group of people still enjoy a high degree of power, wealth, and prestige.

A party secretary indeed no longer has the enormous administrative power to the degree of that in the period of collectivization when peasants had to obtain many different sorts of permission and remuneration from him. After Reform, however, a party secretary still occupies the highest position in the village and maintain almost absolute power. A report based on an investigation of 100 party branches from 66 counties in Guangdong Province in 1989 reveals that party secretaries are wrapped with such power. It says that there are 26 bad party branches which operate under "fengjian touzi" (feudal chief).⁵ Specifically, it mentions Hukang village in Lufeng County. As a feudal chief, the party secretary could wantonly order about the Party branch committee, about wantonly changing the decision of the Party branch. The Party branch simply loses its fighting ability."⁶

Nongmin ribao (Farmer's Daily), 16 May 1986, published a national survey on the situation of the Party in the villages by the Research Office for Village Policies of the Central Party Secretary and Research Centre for the Development of Villages of the State Council.⁷ One of the findings suggests that party secretaries in the villages continued to exercise domination. "There are three boards on one door, but

⁴Nee, Victor, "Social Inequalities in Reforming State Socialism: Between Redistribution and Markets in China," in American Sociological Review, LVI, June 1991, pp. 267-282.

⁵Lai Daoming and Hou Wailin, "Guangdong nongcun 100 ge dangzhibu de diaocha (An investigation on 100 village Party branches in Guangdong Province) Kexue shehui zhuyi yanjiu, 1989, No. 9, pp. 56-59 & 18.

⁶Op.cit., p. 58.

⁷"Nongcun gaige de xianzhuang yu qushi" (The current condition and trend of village reform) Nongmin ribao, 16 May 1986, p. 2.

when speaking, there is only one person." The three boards refer to three jobs: party secretary, chairman of villagers' committee, and director of a village enterprise. In doing this, the power of a village party secretary is greatly enhanced.

Power opens the way to a wider access to other scarce resources. Two scarce resources in high demand in villages are personal connection (guanxi) to higher officials and local businessmen, and information on new policies and business opportunities.⁸ A typical example is the story of the Party Secretary of Beiguan Village (Jimo County, Shandong Province), Ge Chengyu. He was trying to mobilise his villagers to develop their economy but the villagers had no capital at all. Here is the conversation between peasants and the party secretary: "Party secretary Ge, I want to set up a cigarette-wine shop, but I don't have my money." "Borrow some money from the bank, and I will act as guarantor (baoren)." Another peasant said: "Party secretary Ge, I want to set up a clothing processing factory, can I borrow money from the bank?" "Do it, and I will act as guarantor."⁹ The party secretary can act as guarantor because he is known by people in the bank in the county who recognise his power in his village.

Power and easy access to resources, thus, are the main capital of a party secretary to become a patron.

2. The practice of patronage

A lineage whose member becomes a party secretary is surely fortunate and blessed. The lineage members can enjoy benefits and favours; the most common one is a share in administrative position in the village. A case is reported in Dongjia Village (Gansu Province). Here, the Dongs constitute the majority of the village population. The party secretary, however, comes from the Shens, and two of the nine members of the villager's committee are from the Shens. Apparently, the party secretary, at that time, was not yet able to bring more of his men into the villagers' committee

⁸Rolf Wirsing, "Political Power and Information: A Cross-Cultural Study," American Anthropologist, No. 75, 1973, pp. 153-170.

⁹"Beiguan you ge shuji" (Beiguan Village has a party secretary) Nongmin ribao, 13 September 1988, p. 3.

where the Dongs still had five members.¹⁰

A typical case is from Changtang Village (Guangdong Village) where the Chens constitute the largest lineage in the village. The party secretary is from the Chens, then all other important positions are occupied by the Chens: village head, village secretary, cashier, chief of security department, and chief of the people's militia. Furthermore, 12 out of 25 staff members of village organizations are from the Chens. Other lineage such as the Dengs, the Lis, the Zhangs, the Zhous, the Huangs hold minor positions. The highest position held by non-Chens is chairman of the villagers' committee which is held by one of the Lis.¹¹

If there are not enough positions in the administration, party secretaries - the top men in a village - just create new positions. Nongmin ribao (Farmer's Daily) in 1993 reports what it calls "the swelling of staff" in village organizations where it can reach on average 30 people. The writers of this report argue that the lineage factor significantly contributes to it. They write: "In order to minimise conflict, the township authority must 'xi shi ning ren' (make concessions to avoid trouble) and adopt 'united front' strategy. This means that they must be fair to all major lineages, individually reinstate 'masses' leaders' with a hope this will be accepted by all parties." This report comes from Jiangsu Province.¹²

By taking his own members into the staff, a party secretary naturally creates tension in the leadership team. In some articles, this situation is often referred to as "leadership is not united." For example, Zhong Zhushan in his article argues that 60 per cent of 1358 village party branches who belong to the category of "quite good" show the sign where "the leadership squad is not united" because "it is plagued by lineage factions." The party secretary and the members of his lineage, evidently, clashed with members of other lineages in the leadership team. His investigation was conducted in provinces in both north and south China: Shaanxi, Hebei, Henan,

¹⁰Guo Jiaoyang, "Gansu: Dongjia zhuang" (Gansu: Dongjia Village), in Wang Huning, Dangdai zhongguo cunluo jiazhi wenhua (The village clan culture in contemporary China), Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1991, p. 493.

¹¹Chen Suoshi, "Guangdong: Changtang cun" (Guangdong: Changtang Village), in Ibid, p. 385.

¹²"Cun ganbu banzi ying 'xiao zhong'" (Cadre squad in the countryside must 'subside in swelling') Nongmin ribao, 11 October 1993, p. 3.

Liaoning, Heilongjiang, Hubei, Zhejiang, Anhui, Guangdong, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Qinghai.¹³ This study further demonstrates that lineage is not only strong in the south but also in the north.

The three studies mentioned above show how party secretaries deliver special favour to their relatives of their lineages to occupy administrative positions. For peasants, becoming a cadre is something which is desirable because he/she can draw salaries, gain respect, and more importantly, it could serve as a ladder to becoming state cadre in township or county.¹⁴ If the latter is not probable, at least, he/she can still enjoy a free salary in addition to their earnings from the field. For the party secretary himself, it is good that he is surrounded by people of his lineage. This is even truer if factionalism in the village is very acute where lineages are really jockeying for power.

In business, the party secretary will usually choose people from his own clan to become his staff. For instance, in the case of Fujian, four people managed a village enterprise, two of them came from Du lineage, and the boss was that of Du lineage.¹⁵ An observation made by Changping County party Committee Secretary (Hunan Province) in 1991 demonstrates a similar pattern. He said: "In one village, the father becomes the party secretary, his son becomes a driver, daughter the chairman, daughter-in-law a book-keeper."¹⁶

Patronage in business is a common practice in the whole of China. Normally, the party secretary will occupy the highest position, and his relatives will take up the number two to number four position in the enterprise. In some cases, distant relatives may also be given position and jobs.

Yet, patronage in business is larger than the giving of positions and jobs. It

¹³Zhong Zhushan "Zhengdun nongcun houjin dangzhibu de gongzuo ke bu ronghuan" (Do not slow down the work of rectifying backward party branches in the countryside) *Dang jian*, 1990, No. 2, p. 33.

¹⁴"To the peasants, the greatest demand is to become the state employee, that is 'zhuan zheng'" See, Zhong Zhushan, *op.cit.*

¹⁵Liu Guochen, Fujian: Hongjian cun (Fujian: Hongjian village), in Wang Huning, *op.cit.*, p. 399

¹⁶ Yang Chaoren, "Guanyu dangqian nongcun dang-qun guanxi wenti de diaocha yu yanjiu" (The investigation on current problem regarding the relationship between the Party and the masses), *Renmin ribao*, 16 October, 1991

can develop into a separate colony where the party secretary, as head, allows the members of his lineage to use the facility of the village. The regulation issued by the party committee secretary of Wuhe County (Jiangsu Province) in 1985 can give us a good look at the practice of a family business colony which is banned.¹⁷ It states: "Party cadres are not permitted to promote sales to one's family members (jiashu), to borrow money or use the money of the unit for one's family members, to use any means of transportation belonging to the state, collective, or individuals to transport the goods of the family members, to serve as shop assistant for family members." Clearly, a party secretary, by acting as patron, can do many things for the members of his lineage either to develop or facilitate their business.

Beyond these two areas (administrative position and business), members of a lineage can also benefit from the party secretary. The most sensitive issue of the village is birth control. The party secretary can grant extraordinary favours to the member of his lineage in this issue. He will not fine them if they violate the birth control regulation. An interview with 15 peasants in Jili District, Henan Province, in 1988, confirms this. Peasants are reported to have said: "Those who belong to the family of the village cadres can have two children and they are not fined. Whereas, if we, ordinary people, have two children, they will probably not impose a fine, but they will tear down our house."¹⁸

A similar case is reported in Xiangtan County, Hunan Province, from an interview with peasants in 1991. They said:

"Speaking about birth control, it is indeed difficult, but it is implemented anyway. Nevertheless, 'a bowl of water is never level' (yi wan shui meiyou duanping). If they fine, they only fine innocent people. If you have a patron (kaoshan), having more than one child, you only have to pay 400 yuan instead of 2000 yuan. There is someone who has five children, but only paid 300 yuan."¹⁹

¹⁷Wuhe jiuzheng dangzheng ganbu jingshang waifeng (Wuhe County check all Party cadres engaged in illegal activities in doing business) Nongmin ribao, 8 February, 1985, p. 1.

¹⁸NN, "Shenchen de huhuan" (A dark call), Nongmin ribao, 12 September, 1988, p. 1.

¹⁹Zhou Shaoguang, "Nongmin de xinlihua" (The innermost thoughts and feelings of peasants), Neibu wengao, No. 22, 1991, p 25

The delivery of grain is another area where a party secretary can pay his favour to his lineage. Peasants complained that cadres (including the party secretary) treat them unfairly.

"If the family members of cadres cannot fulfil the requirement, the higher authorities will turn a blind eye. Whereas, if we, ordinary people, are unable to fulfil the requirement, we will not get our contracted land back, or our children will not be allowed to go to school, or we will not get land to build a house.²⁰

As a lineage consists of a large number of people, the pattern of patronage must follow a more or less fixed rule. According to the investigation of Zhang Xinmei, it follows an order like this: xian fuxi hou muxi, xian diqin hou pangqin, xian nanxing hou nuxing.²¹ The paternal line takes priority over the maternal line. This principle is to be complemented with the other one: those who are directly related to one's life takes priority over those are not directly related. These two principles have to be carried out according to another rule, the male will be prioritised over the female.

This means that benefits are distributed according to the distance that someone actually has with the Party secretary who is invariably a male. The Party secretary is the measurement. He will, for instance, help his elder and little brother first and then his nephews. If he has a son, this son will certainly get the benefit first. After they are already looked after, he will pay his attention to the relatives of his wife. Last, he will take care of the distant relatives. There is no doubt that dissatisfaction may arise from this method because of the complicated relations existing within this network.

The role of lineage patron, however, is not performed with the same intensity everywhere; it is easy to perform in some villages, and difficult in other villages, depending on the character of the village. As it is known, villages in China can be divided into three main types: single surname villages, one-dominant surname

²⁰NN, "Shenchen de huhuan" (A dark call), *op.cit.*

²¹Zhang Xinmei, "Xianshi nongcun shequ zhong de shili renwu" (Powerful persons in the contemporary village community), Shehuixue yu shehui diaocha; 1992; No. 3: pp. 38

villages, multi-surname villages.²² In a single-surname village, a party secretary can perform the role much more easily than in the other two types of villages. The most difficult place is certainly the multi-surname village. While in single-surname and one-dominant-surname village, the strong lineage can give backing simply on the basis of their number, it is not the case in a multi-surname village. Here, a party secretary who wants to perform patronage to his lineage will face resistance and challenges from other lineages.

The report by the party committee secretary of Yishui County (Shandong Province) is not very clear about the struggle, but it may give us a hint.²³ The city party committee secretary, at that time, was trying to reform all village party branches under his jurisdiction. In the process, he encountered "factionalism along the line of lineage" or "zongfa paixing." It seems that this term refers to factionalism in those villages where there were a number of lineages of equal strength. None of them were willing to let the other lineage to dominate their village. A report of an investigation conducted in villages in Changping county (Beijing Municipality) may give another clue. The writer is the County Party Committee Secretary, Yang Chaoren; and he discovers that cadres in villages are involved in lineage contentions.²⁴ "They do not only seek wealth for their own but also for their relatives." He says that, as a result, the leadership team is not united. For an apparent reference to struggle between lineages, he then continued to say that "since 1984 one year has one party secretary." Many lineages mean many changes of party secretaries.²⁵

²²This classification is according to Wang Huning, op.cit., pp. 78-81.

²³"Jiuji qian jiuji wu, buru jian ge hao zhibu" (It is better to have a good party branch rather than relief fund or relief material) Nongmin ribao, 23 December 1986, p. 2.

²⁴"Guanyu dangqian nongcun dangqun guanxi wenti de diaocha yu yanjiu" (The investigation on current problem regarding the relationship between the Party and the masses) Renmin ribao, 16 October, 1991, p. 5.

²⁵Many party secretaries resigned because they simply could not stand the pressure from conflicts between lineages. See, Tang Yimin "Bufen cun dangzhibu shuji cizhi de yuanyin he jiejie de banfa" (Causes and solution to the resignation of village Party secretaries) Hunan gongchandang ren, 1989, No. 3, pp. 34-35. This article reports a result of an investigation conducted in 10 townships, over 171 Party branches in Hunan Province in October 1988. It was discovered that, out of 170 Party secretaries, 42 of them (24.7%) have asked for resignation. One of the reasons is that "they feel that there are a lot of complicated entanglements (masha)."²⁵ Party secretaries belonging to this category consist of 40.5%. According to Tang Yimin, "in villages where these Party secretaries stay, cadres do not want to unite, the

To avoid conflicts, lineages will then try to find compromise among them. This is reported in Qilihu Village (Huangmei County, Hubei Province) In this village, leaders are elected among the Lis, the Hus, and the Qius. "They create a situation of 'san xing dingli' (the three surname groups as tripartite balance of forces).²⁶ This kind of compromise certainly constrains the role of patronage held by village party secretary, something which will not happen in a single-surname or one-dominant-surname villages.

A village party secretary, although playing a patronage role, is not necessarily the senior member of the lineage simply because not all lineage members join the Party. As it is known, a lineage is structured according to iron law of seniority or beifen.²⁷ Members of a lineage always look to the most senior for guidance; in most cases, he has the final say on various major decisions.²⁸ This bears a serious consequence for the patronage performance. If the party secretary in question is of the younger generation in terms of seniority,²⁹ he will be severely under the control of the senior members. He may be forced to distribute favours not in accordance with his desires, or maybe even forced to serve the senior members.

An investigation by Qian Hang and Xie Weiyang unveils this situation. They say that villagers often blindly obey a "strong man" within their lineage, and this man can control and drive people of his lineage to do many different sorts of activities, including illegal ones.³⁰ The party secretary is under the shadow of this strong man. The following article in Nongmin ribao (Farmer's Daily) reports a similar situation.

masses stick to the deep-rooted clan tradition." As a result, "there are numerous 'unsolved judicial cases, unsolved disputes, etc."

²⁶Zhong Zhushan, "Zhengdun nongcun houjin dangzhibu de gongzuo ke bu ronghuan" (Do not slow down the work of rectifying backward party branches in the countryside) Dang jian, 1990, No. 2, p. 33.

²⁷On beifen, see Wang Huning, op.cit., pp. 81-85

²⁸For example, in Dongjia Village (Gansu), see Guo Jiaoyang, op.cit.

²⁹High beifen does not necessarily mean high in age, although it is always the case.

³⁰Qian Hang and Xie Weiyang, Zongzhu wenti: dangdai zhongguo nongcun yanjiu de yi ge shijiao" (Clan problem: one point of view on the investigation of present day Chinese villages), Shehui kexue, 1990, No. 2, pp. 21-24 & 28.

A certain village under Fuqunmiao Township (Jianghai County, Tianjin) was in a disarray where the party branch did not function. Why? The reporter points his finger to the influence of lineage. "Selecting village leaders, making an important decision, doing a certain small thing, all are covered by the lineage."³¹ Evidently, the party secretary in this village does not dare to override his senior members.

If the senior members of a lineage continue to dominate the lineage, and the party secretary is from a junior member, then there is no way for the village party secretary to maintain his autonomy. He may just have to listen to the decisions of his senior members, and do what they want. One article published in 1980 aptly summarises this experience: "When the superstitious activities of a lineage run wild [...] the lineage headmen (touren) replaces the grass-root cadres, lineage authority replaces state authority, lineage regulations replace state laws."³²

What happens if the party secretary is the most senior member? There is no doubt that the party secretary can freely exercise his role as patron to his lineage, and that he will stay as long as possible in the position, supported by the lineage. The following case may illustrate this. This is an investigation done in Long County (Shaanxi Province) over 240 village party secretaries.³³ The authors discover a number of party secretaries who stay in power for many years, and find that this is something 'roly-poly' (budaoweng)." To explain this phenomenon, they argue that the most important factor is old age combined with high seniority. "Some of them entered the Party in the 50s or 60s." As they grow older, these party secretaries are never replaced because, in peasants' eyes, they are "laohaoren" (a benign and uncontentious person); the peasants like them. Apparently, this is not the only reason why they can stay in power. They further write: "Relying on the power of one's lineage within the ranks of the Party and the absolute number they command, and employing so many benefits of the representatives, they succeed in maintaining their

³¹"Sanluo de sha jucheng bao (The scattered sand is assembled together into a bastion) Nongmin ribao, 20 June, 1989, p. 3.

³²"Jianju zhizhi fengjian zongzu shili huodong" (Vigorously stop the activities of feudal clan) Zhongguo nongmin bao, 20 October 1983, p. 1.

³³Shi Tiecheng and Zhu Baiming, "Dui nongcun zhibu shuji sunzhi de diaocha," (An investigation to the quality of village Party branch secretaries. Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu, 1990, No. 9, pp. 63-66.

positions as village party branch secretaries."³⁴

This case reveals that a party secretary with a high level of seniority can play the patronage role more effectively. He can distribute favours to the relatives of his lineage without any challenge from other rival lineages. This, in turn, will satisfy the members of his lineage, and accordingly, they will continuously support him to stay in his position. In our case, apparently, the majority of the party branch members are from the party secretary's own lineage. The party secretary is elected again and again by the party branch which is dominated by members of his lineage. Here, there is a correlation between patronage and length of office term. The more a patronage is effective, the longer the patron will stay in power.

The higher authorities (both township and county) are, reportedly, rendered helpless to tackle this. For instance, a strong lineage of the party secretary can prevent any action being taken by them. A reporter from Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily), 1985, made an investigation in 35 villages under Guanli Township (Liaoshan County, Shandong Province) and gives his report on the selection of cadres in those villages. The party secretaries, apparently, could stop the intervention from the higher authorities. "The higher authorities had conducted a public opinion poll, they wanted to release them from their office. Nevertheless, because of their magical power, their lineage, and their physical prowess, they could block good cadres, secretly eliminating them, not letting them take their places."³⁵

To what extent has the influence of lineage spread across China's countryside? A survey conducted by a number of academicians confirm the growing influence of lineage in the countryside. For instance, in 1988, Song Jucheng and Qiao Runling conducted an investigation in Shanxi Province;³⁶ in 1989, Qian Hang and Xie Weiyang in Hunan Province and Jiangxi Province,³⁷ and in 1990, Chen Shuiping and

³⁴Ibid., p. 65.

³⁵"Wo de diaocha" (My investigation) Nongmin ribao, 3 May, 1985, p. 3.

³⁶Song Jucheng and Qiao Runling, "Jiazhu shili de bianhua ji qi dui nongcun shenghuo de yinxiang" (The transformation of the power of jiazhu and its influence on village life), in Shehuixue yu shehui diaocha, No. 3, 1988, pp. 17-19 & 35

³⁷Qian Hang and Xie Weiyang, op.cit.

Li Weisha in Hubei Province.³⁸ The largest investigation was made by a team led by Wang Huning; they conducted a survey over 12 provinces, south and north China: Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Anhui, Sichuan (south), Gansu, Shaanxi, Liaoning, Hubei (north).³⁹ These scholars discovered a widespread and growing influence of kinship in villages.

The issue of lineage came out in the national press from the early period of Reform. For instance, in 1983, a fight between lineages (zongzu) broke out in the Hong'an County, Hubei Province. The local Party Committee issued a sharp statement, saying:

In places where lineage power is strong ... social order declines, local headmen replace grass-root cadres, lineage authority replaces government authority, lineage laws replace legal statutes, Party leadership is harmed, and Party and national policies and regulations are undermined.⁴⁰

Five years later, presumably as lineages in the countryside became increasingly influential, Song Ping⁴¹ took up this issue at a seminar organised by the Research Bureau of the Central Committee and the State Council in June 1990. He forcefully asked the participants of the seminar "to help peasants to resist and cast off the phenomenon of clanism (zongzu sixiang)."⁴² In August of the same year, clanism was discussed at the National Seminar on the Construction of Village-Level Organizations (August 1990), and appeared in the document. The village party branches were asked to "educate the peasants to resist and cast off the phenomenon of clanism, feudal superstition, bourgeois class rotten thinking and other backward

³⁸Chen Shuiping and Li Weisha, "Zongzu shili: dangqian nongcun shequ shenghuo zhong yi gu qianzai de pohuai lilian" (The power of clans: a potential destructive force in the present village life and society), Shehuixue yanjiu, 1991, No. 5, pp. 31- 36

³⁹Wang Huning, op.cit.

⁴⁰"Jianjue zhizhi fengjian zongzu shili huodong" (Strictly ban all activities related to the power of feudal clan), Zhongguo nongmin bao, 20 October, 1984, p. 1

⁴¹Song Ping, at that time, was member of the Politburo who is in charge of the party organization.

⁴²Song Ping, "Jiaqiang nongcun gongzuo, shenhua nongcun gaige" (Strengthen the work in the countryside, and deepen reform in the countryside) in Xin shiqi nongye he nongcun gongzuo zhongyao wenxian xuanbian, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992, p. 623.

views."⁴³

These two statements are explicit admission by the central leadership of the resurgence of clan⁴⁴ in the countryside. It is so serious that they asked party branches in the countryside "to resist" and "to cast off." Indeed, what worries the central leadership is much deeper than clan influence in the work of party secretaries, namely the erosion of the Party in the countryside.⁴⁵ This is why the central leadership does not waste time in taking up the issue at various national seminars.

II. LINEAGE BOND

Why, then, is it that party secretaries perform the role of lineage patron? Why is it that this role emerges quite conspicuously during the period after Reform? This emergence of the role is, I will argue, the result of the resurgence of kinship network, especially that of lineage, and this is prompted by the introduction of Reform itself. As Reform in 1978 carries out the strategy of nominal encapsulation, the Party retreats from day-to-day control of peasants' life, which includes kinship network.

A. The emergence of lineage

Long before 1949 Mao Zedong made an investigation in villages in Hunan Province, and specified four main problems in China, "four thick ropes binding the Chinese people, particularly the peasants." Clan was singled out as one of those four thick ropes.⁴⁶ Clan destruction, therefore, was one of main targets of the Communist

⁴³"Quan guo cun ji zuhzi jianshe gongzuo zuotanhui jiyao" (Summary of minutes of national seminar on the construction of village-level organizations) Xin shiqi nongye he nongcun gongzuo zhongyao wenxian xuanbian, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992, p. 653.

⁴⁴Here, I am using the term "clan" because clan, according to anthropologists, is larger than lineage in terms of membership and has well structured organizations and activities.

⁴⁵"Clan Influence on Rural Politics Increases," Zhenli de zhuiqiu (Pursuit of truth), No. 6, 11 June 1995, pp. 31-33 in FBIS-CHI-95-180, 18 September 1995, p. 15.

⁴⁶Mao Zedong, "Hunan nongmin yundong kaocha baogao" (Report on an investigation of the peasant movement in Hunan), March 1927, in Mao Zedong xuanji, Vol. I, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1966, p. 33.

Party after it came to power. The first stage was carried out between 1947-1949 in the liberated area, and the second stage between 1950-1952 in the newly liberated area (Jiangnan, Xinan and Xibei).⁴⁷ This campaign, which was vigorously conducted in combination with Land Reform, confiscated not only lands owned by landlords but also lands belonging to clans, on which they set up temples, ancestral halls, schools, etc. In fact, many temples and ancestral halls were destroyed or burnt.

Since then, clans and lineages are put under strict control and made illegal (under the term "feudal superstition" or fengjian mixin). The resurgence of clans after 1978, especially lineages, are partly related to the fact that peasants continue to live on the basis of surname division. Peasants of a surname group together and live in a clearly demarcated area (in Chinese, it is called "juzu"). This residential settlement, which is crucial to group consolidation, has not altered for hundreds of years until today, even during the period of Mao.⁴⁸

Another factor which contributes to the resurgence of lineage is the household responsibility system itself. If, before Reform, peasants only thought in terms of their production team, it is no longer the case after Reform. Now, peasants only think in terms of their household; each individual thinks hard how to survive in a competitive situation. Negatively speaking, each household must also learn how to defend itself.

With residential settlement and external pressures to households, both factors converge to contribute to the resurgence of lineage. As peasants are desperate for help, and look around, what they find are their own relatives living next to each other. Song Jucheng and Qiao Runling conducted, in 1988, an investigation of eight villages under four townships in three counties (Linfen, Changzhi, Yanbei) in Shanxi

⁴⁷Tu Yangjie, Zhongguo jiazhu zhidu shi (The history of Chinese clan system), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1992, p. 466.

⁴⁸Chen Shuiping and Li Weisha, on the basis of an investigation conducted five natural villages under Xiantao city in Hubei Province, observe that "natural village grows out, slowly, of groups of people who live together connected by blood relations," and that this situation has not changed from 1949 to this day. See, Chen Shuiping and Li Weisha, Zongzhu shili: dangqian nongcun shequ shenghuo zhong yi gu qianzai de pohuai lilian (The power of clans: a potential destructive force in the present village life and society). Shehuixue yanjiu, 1991, No. 5, p. 31; further discussion on juzu, see Qian Hang, Zhongguo jiazhu zhidu xin tan (A new exploration on Chinese lineage system), Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1994, pp. 75-85. Parish and Whyte confirm this: "Though first deprived of arms and then, later, of corporate land, lineages were not dispersed but remained clustered in their home villages." Parish, William L. and Martin K. Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 28.

Province. They argue that, although the trend of the family is towards the nuclear family, due to the introduction of household responsibility system, all families have to ally to each other, to help each other, even to protect each other. "After the introduction of the household responsibility system, disputes among villagers are on the increase. Land allocation, fertilizer, irrigation water, electricity, land for houses, the arrangement of contract, etc. have become sources of disputes. In order to defend their interest, to fend off bullying by others, all various types of relatives who, previously, were distant, naturally ally together and become close again."⁴⁹

A large survey was conducted to find out peasants' attitude toward kin relations; peasants were asked to answer three questions: (1) Who would you look to when you are in difficulty? (2) From whom do you expect to obtain assistance? (3) In selecting a partner, whom do you prefer? The interviewees had to select five groups of people: relatives, neighbours, friends, village cadres, and functionaries of the economic organization. Table II below is a simplified form of three tables found in Wang Huning's book.⁵⁰

These statistics show that members of a lineage tend to ally among themselves. Peasants, in consistent pattern, selected their direct relatives as their first priority of choice to all three questions, 29%. They are parents, and brothers and sisters. To take all types of relatives, the number is higher, 54%.

B. The moral obligation of the party secretary

An individual in Chinese peasant society does not live for him/herself. First of all, he/she is only one small part of his/her own family, and secondly, this family is one small part of the lineage. Indeed, as Baker argues, Chinese individuals stand in what is called "Continuum of Descent," meaning that "Descent is a unity, a rope which began somewhere back in the remote past and which stretches on to the infinite

⁴⁹Song Jucheng and Qiao Runling "Jiazu shili de bianhua ji qi dui nongcun shenghuo de yinxiang" (Changes of the power of clans and its influence over village life) Shehuixue yu shehui diaocha, 1988, No. 3, p. 18.

⁵⁰Wang Huning, op.cit., pp. 113-115.

future."⁵¹ An individual, especially the male, is only a part of a big family, past, present, and future.

Table II - A Survey of peasant tendency of kinship solidarity

	Questions no.		
	1	2	3
A. Relatives			
1. direct relatives	29	27	29
2. collateral relatives	12	10	7
3. relatives by marriage	9	12	12
4. relatives of the same lineage	8	5	6
B. Geographical relatives			
1. neighbour	11	5	11
2. villagers	2	4	4
C. Party and village cadres			
1. township cadres	3	7	5
2. party cadres	5	4	1
D. Economic organization	3	8	3
E. Friends	17	19	21

The obligation of an individual is precisely to take care of and protect the big family in its three dimensions: past, present and future. Each individual is under obligation to take care of the big family. More specifically, he/she is to contribute to the glory of the lineage or clan, and this means that Chinese individuals are to help each other to attain that glory. It is within this perspective that money and titles matter much. More money and more titles are not only vital for people's living, but even more so for the glory of the lineage/clan. The more members of a lineage become rich or become officials, the more glory they add to the lineage.

The obligation imposed on someone who manages to become an official in the village (in our case, party secretary) is exactly how to help his lineage to attain that

⁵¹Baker, Hugh D.R Chinese Family and Kinship, London: Macmillan, 1979, p. 26.

goal. As this is a moral obligation, then, there is no reward for what he has done. A sense of satisfaction that he has done his duty is perhaps the only reward. A failure to deliver help, however, is to be punished.

How do peasants formulate this obligation? Peasants do not use abstract words but words which are concrete and effectual. The word renqing is such a word; it is readily available in Chinese society as a word to express different kinds of human relations. The word renqing has a very rich connotation in Chinese. The Pinyin Chinese-English Dictionary explains that it has four different meanings: (1) human feelings, human sympathy, sensibilities; (2) human relationships; (3) favour; (4) gift, present.⁵²

In peasant society in China, according to Madsen, the word renqing contains even richer nuances:⁵³

"To have 'humanity' means to be aware of one's roots in the past and to hope that one's life will be carried on in future generations of progeny. It means to respect, cherish, and be faithful to the ties that bind one to one's contemporaries by virtue of a common ancestry; to have sympathy for one's friends (who in rural context often consist of one's relatives), who kindness and courtesy toward them, exchange favors with them; to be able to relax and enjoy good food and comfortable lodging if one can and share such goods on occasion with one's humbler relatives and friends in return for favors in accordance with their means."

Party secretaries in the countryside are bound by this renqing. Three cases reported in Zhongguo nongmin ribao (China Farmer's Daily) may illustrate this point. Party secretary, Zhang Guangming from Yezhuangtou Brigade, (Ji county, Hebei Province) was trying to become a good party cadre, and was very eager to implement state policy faithfully. One day he saw the brother of his wife cutting down peanut

⁵² See, The Pinyin Chinese-English Dictionary, Hongkong: Commercial Press, 1992. A number of studies have been done on renqing, for example, Hsu, Francis L.K. "Eros, affect, and pao," in Francis Hsu L.K. (ed.) Kinship and Culture, Chicago: Aldine, 1971, pp. 439-475; King, Ambrose Y.C. "An Analysis of renqing in interpersonal relationships: a preliminary inquiry," (in Chinese) in Proceedings of the International Conference on Sinology, Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1980, pp. 413-428; Lin Yu-tang, My Country and My People, New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1935; Wilson Scott, "The Cash Nexus and Social Networks: Mutual Aids in Contemporary Shanghai Villages," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of AAS, Washington DC, 4-11 April, 1995.

⁵³Madsen, Richard Morality and Power in a Chinese Village, Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1984, p. 61.

trees. According to law, he had to pay 13.5 yuan. But the villagers said: "The brother in law penalised the little brother. It's really something new!" The mother intervened, and demanded leniency. In her view, Zhang Guangming should spare his feeling (liu qingmian). The party secretary stayed in his decision. "Good!," said the mother, "You really don't understand human feeling (renqing)."⁵⁴

The second case is from Fanjia Brigade (Zhoucun District, Shandong Province). Party secretary, Li Kongzhi, was named as a model of a party member by the district and by the city, and then nominated as a delegate to the Provincial People's Congress. The newspaper of that day reported his other exceptional deed. In 1972 the commune gave him a list of opening job for three people. His younger brother thought that he would give one of the positions to him, because he was qualified for the job, and moreover, he was Party secretary Li's younger brother. However, party secretary Li refused to give him the job considering that there were many more people in the village who were in difficulty. His wife was angry when he did that, reprimanding him for "liuqing buren".⁵⁵

The third case is from Licun Brigade (Huolu County, Hebei Province)⁵⁶ The party secretary who was a woman, Zhang Xinxiang, displayed much courage when she sacked three teachers who were not up to standard. One of them, however, was her own "tang di" (cousin on the paternal side). This aroused anger on the part of the father of the teacher who went to look for the father of the party secretary. Party secretary Zhang stuck to her decision, saying that she considered only ability. Her father couldn't stand this, and he yelled at her: "You, you ... how can you refuse to recognise to have anything to do with all your relatives (liuqing buren)?"

All the three party secretaries were criticised as ignoring renqing. Qingmian and liuqing both are rooted in the idea that people must show human feelings which can be manifested in showing mercy, sensibilities, forgiveness, etc. To the Chinese,

⁵⁴"Jiefu fa neidi" (The brother in law penalized the little brother) Zhongguo nongmin bao, 7 November 1980, p. 3.

⁵⁵"Zhang quan shi ba nian, si li bu zhanbian" (To hold power for 18 years, but never touch personal gain) Zhongguo nongmin bao, 24 January, 1984, p. 3.

⁵⁶"Yige you yuanjian de nu zhishu" (A female Party secretary who has a vision) Zhongguo nongmin bao, 8 March, 1983.

those criticisms are very harsh, tantamount to saying "immoral." In Chinese there are numerous criticisms which use the word renqing such as "bu jin renqing" (not amenable to reason) or "bu dong renqing shigu" (not know the ways of the world), etc. All of these criticisms are so harsh that no Chinese would want to hear them.

Village cadres, including party secretaries, admit that they could not stand being criticised to ignore renqing. Lineage members abide by renqing. One article published in journal Dang jian (Party construction) in 1989 reports that "at present, the majority of Party secretaries are elected out of their own village, 95% are local people and local leaders. These people have little contact with the outside world, and suffer many different sorts of limitations related to 'worldly wisdom' (renqing shigu), traditional customs, etc."⁵⁷ Apparently, party secretaries in the countryside, according to the author of this article, provide favours to their relatives of their lineage out of renqing. To know renqing shigu basically means to know how to help one's relatives, and give special treatment to them.

A study conducted in eight villages under four townships in three counties (Linfen, Changzhi, Yanbei) in Shanxi Province in 1988 reveals a similar result.⁵⁸ "No matter how big or small, a village always comes across with clan networks at its back door which are very complicated. [...] Village cadres themselves admit it to us that in carrying out a job, one is 'half doing renqing, and half doing the job' (yi ban renqing, yi ban gongshi)"⁵⁹ In real terms, this means that many party secretaries must bow to the pressure of their lineage members.

Here again we are also witnessing a clash - in Madsen's words - between two moral discourses.⁶⁰ There is the moral imperative from Central Committee of the CCP; at the same time there is the moral imperative from the lineage. Every village

⁵⁷This report is based on an investigation carried out by the Research Centre of Dongtai City Party Committee, Jiangsu Province; it investigated 745 Party secretaries. NN. "Nongcun dangzhibu shuiji houji fan ren xianxiangchu tan" (A preliminary investigation on the phenomenon of the dearth of successors to the post village party branch secretary) Dang jian (Beijing), 1989, No. 6, pp. 12 & 47.

⁵⁸Song Jucheng and Qiao Runling, "Jiazou shili de bianhua ji qi dui nongcun shenghuo de yinxiang" (Changes of the power of clans and its influence over village life) Shehuixue yu shehui diaocha, 1988, No. 3, pp. 17-19 + 35.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 19.

⁶⁰Madsen, op.cit.

party secretary is confronted by two moral discourses: to become "fighting bastion"⁶¹ and to know renqing.⁶² But, as Madsen points out, in a moral community, there is no easy way to reconcile the conflicting moral discourses.⁶³ A village leader eventually must choose which path he would like to follow.

At this juncture, a village party secretary chooses the peasant way by allowing himself to play the patron for the members of his lineage. This role places a party secretary at the side of his lineage vis-a-vis the state. As the lineage exerts greater pressure for him, he will opt to take advantage of his position and provide favours and benefits to members of his lineage. The role of lineage patron, here, is distinctly different to that of in a patron-client relationship. This is not a dyadic relationship, but one person with the whole lineage; neither is it instrumental in nature. More importantly, it is not friendship or any variant of it.⁶⁴ The patron must accept it as moral obligation, with or without reward.

CONCLUSION

The role of lineage patron that a village party secretary is performing encompasses a wide range of activities. He could provide formal favours such as positions in the village administration, positions in business (xiangzhen qiye), to informal favours such as grain delivery, and birth control. The latter can even go as far as petty activities such as using cars belonging to the village to transport the goods of his family or relatives.

⁶¹This is already discussed in Chapter V.

⁶²Indeed, when speaking about renqing, Madsen speaks about a specific moral discourse, namely moral discourse according to Confucian paradigm where lineage is put at the centre of it.

⁶³Ibid, p. 257. Here, Madsen proposes a synthesis of moral discourses which - in my view - is impossible to do.

⁶⁴Patron-client relationship is "a special case of dyadic (two persons) involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron." Scott, James C. "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," American Political Science Review, March 1972, No. 66, p. 92.

The precondition of becoming a patron is that a village party secretary is invariably the most powerful leader in the village, and that he is well connected to the "outside world." This power and control of connection serves as the most important capital. However, their performances vary from village to village, depending on the type of village (single surname, one-dominant-surname, multi surname). The role of lineage patron is relatively more easy to perform in single-surname village and one-dominant-surname village than that in a multi-surname village. Here, a party secretary may have to face fierce challenge from other lineages.

The status of seniority in the lineage is also an important factor. If the party secretary is the most senior member of the lineage, then he will be much freer in carrying out his role as patron. Conversely, if the party secretary is only a junior member in the lineage, then he may have to consult his senior members, or he may just have to listen to their instructions. These two variants can be found in the three types of villages.

To play the patron, for a village party secretary, is not something he does out of his generosity but out of obligation. This obligation is also not an ordinary obligation but a moral obligation from which he could not escape. As such, the party secretary should not expect a reward for performing the role. In fact, he could be punished for failing to do so.

The policy of Reform in 1978 is responsible for the resurgence of lineage. The household responsibility system drives the peasants to produce more, but it also increases the feeling of insecurity among peasants which originates from competition or various disputes. The only possible option is to ally oneself with people of the same lineage who are around them. As a matter of fact, it is better to ally with one's own kin rather than with those who are not. In her discussion of clientilism in the countryside, the lineage perspective is entirely absent in Oi's book.⁶⁵ She contends that patron-client relations existing in Chinese village is between cadres and peasants, and that this relationship can take place with any member of the village, regardless of his or her lineage. Given the intensity of relations within a lineage, it is more probable that patron-client relations occur within lineage than outside lineage.

⁶⁵Oi, Jean C State and Peasant in Contemporary China, Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press, 1989

CHAPTER SEVEN THE RURALISATION OF AUTHORITY

But one who, in opposition to the people, becomes a prince by the favour of the nobles, ought, above everything, to seek to win the people over to himself, and this he may easily do if he takes them under his protection." (Machiavelli)

In the preceding chapters, chapters three to six, we have identified four roles which a village party secretary should play. He must play two roles which derive from his relationship to the state,¹ namely the role of state agent and the role entrepreneurial agent. On the other end, he also must play two roles which originate from society,² the role of moral middleman and the role of lineage patron.

One intriguing question which arises from this dichotomy is: Why is it that village party secretaries play the two roles which come from society? Why is it that they are unable ignore the role of moral middleman and the role of lineage patron, and concentrate on playing the role of state agent and the role of entrepreneurial agent? The answer derived from data presented Chapters Five and Six is that village party secretaries are subjected to the internal moral pressure, both by their fellow villagers and their lineage.

The answer needs further elaboration. Certainly, party secretaries are under severe pressure to accept the two roles from society. Yet, they are in a legitimate position to ignore it, and stick to the job assigned by the state. In this chapter, I will argue that party secretaries, despite the legitimate position, are unable to disregard playing the role of moral middleman and the role of lineage patron, because,

¹The state is defined as all institutions which are differentiated from the rest of its society as to create identifiable public and private spheres; see Patrick Dunleavy and Brendan O'Leary, Theories of the State. The Politics of Liberal Democracy, London: Macmillan, 1987, p. 2.

²"Society" here refers to the rural sector.

crucially, doing so they will lose their authority to rule the village. Villagers will ignore them, disobey them, and on occasions bring pressure to bear for their dismissal.

Thus, in order to maintain his authority, it is important for village party secretaries to play the additional roles assigned to them by their fellow villagers. I identify this as the "ruralisation of authority." The authority of village party secretaries are "ruralised" in order to be able to rule and draw obedience from their fellow villagers.

To elaborate this argument, this chapter will be divided into four major sections. The section on Max Weber, the first section, is to serve as a background to the discussion of authority. Weber, indeed, intends that his typology is taken as -an ideal-type. The second section forms the core of this chapter in which I describe and discuss the nature of the thesis of ruralisation of authority. The following section is to understand further the ruralisation of authority within the perspective of Chinese peasants in their relations with authorities. The fourth section is to explain the incidence of ruralisation by using the theory of structuration.³

I. AUTHORITY ACCORDING TO MAX WEBER

In his short article, "Politics as Vocation," Max Weber asked one simple question: When and why do men obey?⁴ If men or women obey, after all, Weber, then, argues

³There is a vast literature on the theory of structuration, see, for example, Colin Hay, "Structure and Agency," in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker, Theory and Methods in Political Science, London: Macmillan, 1995, pp. 189-206. This dissertation is following the theory of structuration as developed by Anthony Giddens, the main proponent of the theory of structuration. On Anthony Giddens, see Ian Craib, Anthony Giddens, London: Routledge, 1992. See also: Archer, Margaret S. "Morphogenesis versus Structuration, on Combining Structure and Action," The British Journal of Sociology, 1982, XXXIII(4), pp. 455-483; Cohen, Ira J. "Structuration Theory and Social Praxis," Anthony Giddens and J. Turner, eds. Social Theory Today, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987, pp. 273-309; Herry Priyono, Bernardino, "Anthony Giddens's Theory of Structuration," 22 November 1994, Unpublished manuscript; Thompson, John. "The Theory of Structuration," Held, David & J. Thompson, eds. Social Theory of Modern Societies, Anthony Giddens and His Critics, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 56-76.

⁴Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation," in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, A new preface by Bryan S. Turner, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 78. For further discussion, see Bendix, Reinhard Max Weber, An Intellectual Portrait, London: Methuen, 1959; Giddens, Anthony Politics and Sociology in the Thought of Max Weber, London: Macmillan, 1972; Lukes, Stephen "Perspectives on Authority," in Joseph Raz (ed.), Authority, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp. 203-217; Parkin, F. Max Weber, London: Methuen, 1982.

that such an act of obedience is to be explained by what he calls "legitimation." Legitimation is a method to justify someone's act of asking obedience in accordance to law. Without legitimation, one is forbidden to demand obedience. According to Weber, there are three types of legitimation.

The first legitimation is by **tradition** or - in generation; they simply followed the "mores sanctified through unimaginably ancient recognition and habitual Weber's words - "of the eternal yesterday." Men obeyed an authority because it is handed down from generation to orientation to conform," according to Weber.⁵ Evidently, obedience to authority is a matter of fact. Weber writes: "This is 'traditional' domination exercised by patriarch and the patrimonial prince of yore."⁶

The second is legitimation by one's personal "gift of grace" or **charisma**. Men obey because they are fascinated by something extraordinary in the person such as "revelation, heroism, or other qualities of individual leadership." Here, Weber talks about "devotion." Obedience, in this case, is given and acquired for free, without any further explanation, simply out of devotion. According to Weber, this type of legitimation is usually used by prophets, but also by "elected war lord, the plebiscitarian ruler, the great demagogue, or the political leader."⁷

The third is legitimation through **rational-legal** procedure. Men or women obey someone due to the sanctity of the social contract and perceived legitimacy in the state via the accountable rule of law. Thus, in contrast to the first ideal-type, they do not obey the person but the rules. Weber, indeed, shifts his argument from obeying persons to obeying rules. Yet, this is exactly what rationality demands. Men and women obey "by virtue of the belief in the validity of legal statute and 'functional' competence based on rationally created rules."⁸ In Weber's view, this kind of legitimation is what is used by the "modern 'servant of the state' and by all those bearers of power who in this respect resemble him."

⁵Ibid., pp. 78-79.

⁶Ibid., p. 79.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

What is the relation between legitimation and authority? Authority essentially means the right to rule. Therefore, authority comes after legitimation. One cannot claim to have an authority before he/she is legitimised to do so. Thus, there is a direct relation between legitimation and authority. As a consequence, there are also three types of authority: traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational.

The legal-rational authority is key to Weber's conceptualization of authority in a modern state. This is to answer the question on the authority of state officials: On what basis can they draw obedience from the population? In his view, state officials or "servant of state" can demand obedience from the population merely because the law of the state confer him the right to do so. In other words, the authority of state officials is legal-rational authority. If one obeys a state official, he/she does not obey the person but obeys the law which is created by the state.

Thus, what ultimately matters most is the state. Weber defines the state as "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."⁹ Clearly, at the core of this definition lies the sovereignty in the state's claimed territory and the fact that the state can expect voluntary compliance with their rule or need to resort to coercion. In other words, the state is the legitimate basis for authority. Because it enjoys political legitimacy, the state creates laws, and on the basis of the laws, the state expects compliance. In Weber's view, apparently, this is sufficient to explain the source of the authority of state officials over the population.

The fundamental question which is not sufficiently addressed by Weber, however, is the legitimacy of the state itself. What legitimises the state that it can confer authority on its officials? Why does the state have such power? Should the citizens obey the authority conferred by the state if the state itself is not legitimate (for instance, a state which is created through coup d'etat). Weber evidently does not delve into this matter which is, as a matter of fact, a philosophical problem for philosophers.¹⁰

⁹Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁰See, for instance, Anscombe, G.E.M. "On the Source of the Authority of the State," in Joseph Raz (ed.) Authority, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp. 142-171.

The contribution of Weber, however, is that he provides us with an ideal-type which is useful to make analysis of the phenomenon of authority in a modern state. In our case, Weber demonstrates that, in a modern state, citizens do not obey traditional or charismatic authority but to a legal-rational authority which is sanctioned by the state. Citizens must obey all state officials who are conferred with authority by the state. This sovereign principle is to be held in the state's territory, in the cities as well as in the countryside.

II. THE THESIS OF RURALISATION OF AUTHORITY

After the introduction of Reform (1978), as we have seen in Chapters Three and Four, party secretaries are assigned with the job as agents, first they have to implement policies on agriculture and secondly, they have to lead villagers toward xiaokang. Party secretaries are - as I term it - to play the role of the state agent and the role of entrepreneurial agent. Their exact job is to mobilise their fellow villagers toward the goal set by the central leadership. They do not have to do anything more than that.

If party secretaries stick to this job description, there would have been no question of the ruralisation of authority. Party secretaries, however, must pay attention to the demands of their fellow villagers. The strategy of nominal encapsulation not only transforms the role of cadres but also peasants' behaviour. Liberated from different sorts of constraints and limitation, peasants become more assertive to pursue their interests. They want their party secretary to become a middleman who does not pressure them with demands from the state but who shows benevolence and mercy by lessening the demands. The members of his lineage also want the party secretary to provide them with special favouritism.

Party secretaries, actually, are demanded to play the role of moral middleman and the role of lineage patron. From the state point of view, these are roles which subvert the interest of the state. By playing the role of moral middleman, party secretaries do not fully implement the policies from the state on agriculture. By playing the role of lineage patron, they even further undermine the state's policies. The two roles from society are considered by the state as illegal.

Thus, we have a situation where party secretaries who are pulled in two directions simultaneously. Village party secretaries embody precisely the interface between the state and society. Being at the interface of two conflicting structures, they are squeezed from two sides. On the one hand, they must satisfy the demand "from above" (the state) which has conferred power on them; yet, on the other hand, they also must satisfy the demands "from below" (the village community) with whom they shared a community life. They must simultaneously perform the two roles which come "from above" (state agent and entrepreneurial agent) faithfully, and at the same time, the two roles "from below" (moral middleman and lineage patron) satisfactorily.

Caught in the middle, a party secretary has two possible options: he may either lean toward the state or toward society. Both options bring different consequences. If he leans heavily toward the state, he will be praised as "model secretary" but ostracised by his fellow villagers. If he lean toward society, his fellow villagers will love him but the state will punish him. These two options are not ideal for any party secretary who would like to stay in his power. The incentive to become party secretary is quite strong as the position provides wealth, power, and status.¹¹

The best strategy for village party secretaries is to adopt a middle ground position: to try and play all the four roles without harming oneself. This will make them continue to play the roles "from above," the role of state agent and the role of entrepreneurial agent and yet they will also agree to play the roles "from below," the role of moral middleman and the role of lineage patron. Obviously, party secretaries concede to the pressure from their fellow villagers, or the pressure "from below." Yet, this is perfectly in line with the advice given by Machiavelli:¹²

"But one who, in opposition to the people, becomes a prince by the favour of the nobles, ought, above everything, to seek to win the people over to

¹¹See, Yunxiang Yan, "The Impact of Rural Reform on Economic and Social Stratification in a Chinese Village," in *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 27, January 1992, pp. 1-24; Odgaard, Ole "Entrepreneurs and Elite Formation in Rural China," in *Ibid.*, No. 28, July 1992, pp. 89-108. Both authors demonstrate that, invariably, rural cadres and the party secretaries, occupy the highest place in the social stratification in the villages in China since Reform. It is logical, therefore, if this becomes a strong incentive to stay in power as long as possible.

¹²Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1993, Ninth Chapter, pp. 75-76.

himself, and this he may easily do if he takes them under his protection."

The acceptance of the two roles "from below" greatly helps strengthen their authority in their villages. Villagers more readily listen to them, and carry out their instructions. The key to understand this is the fact that party secretaries are usually local peasants. Peasants tend not to obey to one of their fellow peasants, despite the fact that he is granted authority by the state. If a village party secretary would like to induce obedience from his fellow villagers, then he must establish his authority by agreeing to meet their demands. (See Section III below for further elaboration)

In this dissertation I describe this process as the "ruralisation of authority." It is a situation where a party secretary agrees to take up the roles demanded by his fellow villagers in order to enhance their authority. The "ruralisation of authority" does not undermine or diminish authority. The image of ruralisation of authority is like one map superimposed on another. The first map does not disappear by the superimposition, yet the outcome is a new map having an entirely novel appearance. The same is true with ruralisation of authority; the authority granted by the state is not totally undermined, only ruralised.

Currently, there exist party branches which are categorised by the central leadership as "middle ground" (zhongjian zhuangtai). These are party secretaries who do their job - according to CCP's central leadership - neither excellently nor poorly. The Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee (1994) states as follows:¹³

"The building of leading bodies of middle-ground villages should be strengthened, their economic development should be speeded up and greater efforts should be made to build spiritual civilization in these villages to attain the objective of enabling their residents to live a more comfortable life." (emphasis added)

What does "middle-ground villages" refer to? Zhong Zhushan in his article published in the journal Liaowang described party branches under middle-ground

¹³"CCP Circular on Strengthening Rural Primary and Grass-Roots Organizations," in SWB, 2 December 1994, FE/2168 G/4. This translation uses the term "average village"; I deliberately alter the translation.

category as follows:¹⁴

"Party branches under the middle ground situation, in general, can implement Party's line and policies, their leaders are quite sound, and the party branches work quite hard. Nevertheless, for various different reasons, their works are ordinary (yi ban hua), their coagulation ability and appeal ability are not strong."

Compare this description with that given by Wang Guangqian. Party branches at the "middle ground," according to him, displayed five characteristics:¹⁵

(1) the structure of the leadership team is not excellent, (2) party activities are not quite effective, (3) activities within the party are limited, (4) the members of the leadership have little enthusiasm, (5) no breakthrough in developing "commodity economy."

These middle-ground party branches clearly demonstrate a mixture of willingness to implement policies from the state and also a readiness to compromise it. In Zhong Zhushan's words, "their coagulation ability" is low, or in Wang Guangqian's words, "the members of the leadership have little enthusiasm." I take this as an official admission of the prevalence of party secretaries compromising their authority. This admission is significant in that it underlines the thesis of ruralisation of authority.

III. RURALISATION OF AUTHORITY AND PEASANTS

The argument of ruralisation of authority is that the authority of village party secretaries is strengthened as soon as he agrees to play the two roles "from below." This immediately begs the question: why should the authority be strengthened?

¹⁴This description is the result of an investigation of 1358 village party branches in 12 provinces (Hebei, Liaoning, Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, Anhui, Henan, Hubei, Guangdong, Sichuan, Guizhou, Shaanxi, and Qinghai) where 32.6 per cent belong to category "good," 59.5 per cent "fair," and 7.9 per cent "not good." See, Zhong Zhushan "Nongcun jiceng dang zuzhi xianzhuang tanxi," (Analysis of current situation of village grass-root party organization) Liaowang (Jing), 1990, No. 1, pp. 12-14 in Zhongguo renmin daxue shubao ziliao zhongxin, 1990, No. 3, pp. 133-134.

¹⁵ This article is based on his investigation over 519 village party branches under Fengcheng City (Jiangxi Province). He found, in 1986, 51 % per cent of 519 village party branches were under the category of "middle ground." Wang Guangqian, "Dui nongcun zhongjian zhuangtai dang zuzhi de diaocha yu sikao" (An investigation and reflection on village party organizations at the middle ground) Lilun daobao (Nanchang), 1992, No. 6, pp. 41-42. in Zhongguo renmin daxue shubao ziliao zhongxin, 1992, No. 7, pp. 159-160.

Authority, in Weber's view, is to be accepted, and not to be strengthened or compromised. To him, authority in a modern state is conferred by the state as an institution with the highest authority in a territory. There are other possibilities for legitimating an authority: by "tradition" and by "charisma." But, the authority of state officials are not to be legitimated in that manner. As a modern institution, the state is to operate according to rational-legal procedure. Thus, state officials can only have authority which is legitimated through rational-legal procedure.

This kind of legitimation is rejected by peasants because peasants do not want to obey a peasant who is legitimated by an "outsider." Indeed, the state is a very far outsider as peasants used to say that "the Heaven is high and the emperor is far away." State-legitimated officials, in peasants' eyes, are considered to be an imposition from outside. This is even truer when the official concerned is someone whom peasants dislike. To the peasants, a piece of paper does not prove someone's authority.

Peasants, however, will readily obey anyone who can deliver material benefit for them, irrespective of the source of authority. "Material benefit" may range from health to riches, from having sons to having good harvests. As Geertz reports it in a village in Java (Indonesia): a religious leader, *kijaji*, gains more respect and authority because he can deliver a promise of heaven to the villagers.¹⁶ Bailey also shows that peasants in a village in Orissa (India) followed a "chief" because he can provide them with protection and largesse. They leave him without "an agony of heart searching," if he fails to do so.¹⁷

Thus, a peasant with an authority from the state must also convince his fellow peasants with the same strategy. In other words, he must be able to deliver "material benefit" from the source of his authority, the state. As made clear in Chapters Five and Six, peasants in contemporary China have three unnegotiable demands - namely grain, money and male babies. By delivering benefits in this three areas, the party secretaries can enhance their authority in their village. Villagers, in turn, are more

¹⁶Clifford Geertz, "The changing role of the cultural broker: the Javanese *kijaji*," Comparative Studies in History and Society, 1960; No. 2: pp. 228-249.

¹⁷Bailey, F.G. "The Peasant View of Bad Life," in Teodor Shanin (ed.) Peasants and Peasant Society, Fourth Edition, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971, p. 306.

ready to cooperate with them, and more willing to obey them.

To understand this phenomenon we must take Weber's theory of authority critically. By taking a Weberian approach, some scholars tend to hold the view that as long as it runs against the state's legitimate policies, it is an act of corruption.¹⁸ This Weberian perspective of authority is too one-sided, or as Stephen Lukes has argued, "only taking account of perspective A," namely the perspective of the ruler.¹⁹ Weber's theory of authority, apparently, grows out of his preoccupation about domination (Herrschaft). That is why - as Parkin contends - Weber never asks "whether the legitimation put out by traditional, charismatic and legal-rational authorities differed in the degree to which they were actually endorsed by the masses."²⁰

The endorsement by the masses is particularly stressed in the thesis of ruralisation of authority. Richard Friedman systematically elaborates this argument in his article. He argues that the authority implies "some mutually recognised relationship giving the one the right to command or speak and the other the duty to obey." He continues: "Authority thus involves a form of influence that can only be exercised from within a certain kind of normative arrangement accepted by both parties."²¹ Friedman clearly emphasises the mutual aspect in the authority relation, and by doing so, fundamentally corrects Weber's theory that authority is a one-way traffic.

As this approach emphasises the notion of mutual recognition, Friedman adds that recognition may be based on a very wide range of possible "marks" or credentials of authority - "office, social station, property, 'great' power, pedigree, religious claims, 'miracles' (Augustine), etc."²² In other words, the ruled do not

¹⁸The clearest example, see Oi, Jean C. "Partial Market Reform and Corruption in Rural China," Richard Baum, (ed.) Reform and Reaction in Post-Mao China, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 143-161.

¹⁹Lukes, op.cit., p. 207.

²⁰Parkin, F Max Weber, London: Methuen, 1982, p. 78.

²¹Friedman, Richard B. "On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy," in R. Flathman (ed.), Concepts in Social and Political Philosophy, New York: Macmillan, 1973, p. 134.

²²Ibid. p. 133.

obey a ruler if he is not able to demonstrate any mark of authority. This is exactly a point which is missing in Weber's theory of authority.

What are the criteria by which these "marks" are recognised as marks of authority? Friedman is silent about this. "Is it just up to the parties in an authority relationship to fix on anyone they wish to recognise as authoritative?" thus criticises Lukes.²³

This question is taken up by Richard Flathman who argues that the authority relation has to be placed within a wider "practice" of authority. Here, Flathman introduces a new element in the argument on authority. The authority relation does not hang in the blue sky, but is "grounded in shared values and beliefs to which we are referring as the authoritative."²⁴ Obviously, Flathman emphasises the importance of values and beliefs which differ from one community to another. The marks of authority are not universal as Weber thought; they are determined by the community.

Thus, from Friedman and Flathman, we learn two new components of authority: first, authority is a mutual recognition; and secondly, this recognition is grounded on values and beliefs characteristic to the community. In this new conceptualization, authority is understood neither as something imposed nor ahistorical. As a consequence, any analysis of authority should take into account of the perspective of the ruled and their values and beliefs. In our case, to understand authority in a village, it is imperative to find out how peasants accept the authority and with what criteria.

We are now in a better position to understand why authority from the state is not readily accepted by peasants. As authority is a mutual recognition, not one-way traffic as Weber conceived it, peasants have the right to determine the "marks of authority" that their village party secretary should have. As mentioned earlier, to peasants, the mark of authority of a village party secretary is the ability to defend grain, to reduce taxes, and to have sons. Peasants find it difficult to obey a party secretary who is unable to do so. Although a party secretary is conferred with

²³Lukes, *op.cit.*, p. 209.

²⁴Flathman, Richard E. *The Practice of Political Authority*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 124.

authority by the state, it does not necessarily mean that he will be able to incur obedience from peasants.

At this juncture, it is appropriate to emphasise that peasants are not "a sack of potatoes,"²⁵ who just sit passively and take whatever given to them. Peasants scrutinise their leader, and see what he is able to do for them. They may approve him, yet may also not approve him. On the dynamic nature of peasants, Scott aptly describes it:²⁶

"The inevitability of the weather has not prevented every group of traditional cultivators from personifying this natural force or from developing rituals to influence its course or, when their efforts have failed, from cursing their fate. Thus, far from removing it to the realm of the inevitable, the peasantry has historically considered even the weather to be amenable to human manipulation. If there is any 'mystification' of natural laws in traditional societies, it is in the direction of bringing them under human control, not the reverse."

If this assertion is correct, why is it that peasants in China only recently can ruralise the authority of their party secretaries? The answer to this question cannot be separated from the strategy of nominal encapsulation adopted by the central leadership. The dissolution of the three-tier commune structure liberated peasants from the control by party secretaries. Secondly, the removal of class labels further freed peasants' mind from psychological constraints. These two factors combine to make peasants more assertive in demanding their rights. This newly found assertiveness is, indeed, instrumental in shaping the authority of the village party secretaries.

IV. TOWARD AN EXPLANATION OF RURALISATION OF AUTHORITY

Why is it that ruralisation of authority is possible in Chinese villages after Reform (1978)? Why is it possible that village party secretaries opt to play both the roles

²⁵According to Marx, peasants are "barbarians in civilizations," or "anachronism in history," or "potatoes in a sack that form a sack of potatoes." Marx, Karl "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in Selected Works, Vol. I, pp. 302-308.

²⁶Scott, James C. Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, p. 324.

"from above" and those "from below" notwithstanding controls from both parties? To explain the ruralisation of authority, the theory of structuration offers an important insight. I will start by briefly outlining Giddens' theory of structuration.²⁷

At the heart of the theory structuration lies the notion of the human agency or actor. In Giddens' view, human actors' intrinsic feature is that they can act otherwise.²⁸ This is directly linked to what he calls "the power to intervene in a course of events,"²⁹ or to "make a difference." Giddens writes that "an agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to 'make a difference,' that is, to exercise some sort of power."³⁰ Where does this power come from? To clarify point, Cohen writes that "power in this generic sense is logically prior to all matters regarding subjectivity or the reflexive monitoring of conduct."³¹

Giddens uses one term to describe this power: "transformative capacity,"³² which, simply put, means that human actor has the capacity to transform some aspect of a process or event. A case in point is the behaviour of subordinates in an administrative system. Although the superior possess the ability to control and discipline, his subordinate can evades it, even within a highly repressive form of organization. "The more tightly-knit and inflexible the formal relations of authority within an organization, in fact, the more the possible openings for circumventing them."³³ Giddens calls it "the dialectic of control."

At this juncture, some commentators say that this capacity implies that all

²⁷For useful summary of Giddens' thought, see Cohen, Ira J. Structuration Theory. Anthony Giddens and the Constitution of Social Life, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989; Craib, Ian Anthony Giddens London: Routledge, 1992.

²⁸Giddens, Anthony The Constitution of Society. Cambridge: Polity, 1984, p. 14.

²⁹Ibid, pp. 14-16. See also, Giddens' other books: Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis, London: Macmillan, 1979, p. 88; New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretive Sociologies, London: Hutchinson, 1976, pp. 110-111)

³⁰The Constitution of Society, p. 14.

³¹Cohen, op.cit., p. 24.

³²The Constitution of Society, p. 15.

³³Central Problem of Social Theory, p. 147.

actors exploit a generous degree of freedom in their conduct.³⁴ It seems that this freedom is linked to what Giddens calls a "stratified" conception of the actor, or agent. There are, he argues, three levels involved: the level of motivation, the level of rationalisation of action, and the level of the reflexive monitoring of action, each of which are grounded in unconscious, "discursive consciousness" and "practical consciousness," respectively.³⁵ The level of the reflexive monitoring of action is central in day-to-day social encounter. "Actors not only monitor continuously the flow of their activities and expect others to do the same for their own; they also routinely monitor aspects, social and physical, of the contexts in which they move."³⁶

The discussion so far seems to indicate that structure does not exist at all. To what extent structure plays any role? By re-defining the term "structure,"³⁷ the answer is both "constraining and enabling."³⁸ While human agency is subjugated to structure, structure also empowers human agency. To explain this, Giddens uses the analogy of language:³⁹

Language exists as a 'structure,' syntactical and semantic, only insofar as there are some kind of traceable consistencies in what people say, in the speech acts which they perform. From this aspect, to refer to rules of syntax, for example, is to refer to the reproduction of 'like elements'; on the other hand, such rules also generate the totality of speech-acts which is the spoken language. It is this dual aspect of structure, as both inferred from observation of human doings, yet as also operating as a medium whereby those doings are made possible, that has to be grasped through the notions of structuration and reproduction.

Giddens, evidently, is not of the opinion that "structure" and "agency" are two different things for one reason, namely structure is never external to subject, or that

³⁴Archer, Margaret loc.cit, p. 459.

³⁵Giddens modifies Freud's model of the psyche: id, ego, and super-ego.

³⁶The Constitution of Society, p. 5

³⁷In Giddens' vocabulary, "structure" is defined as "rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems." See, Ibid., p. 377.

³⁸Central Problems in Social Theory, p. 69.

³⁹New Rules of Sociological Method, pp. 121-122.

there is a dualism of structure and agent.⁴⁰ The comments made by Cohen can, perhaps, further elucidate this: "The first thing that must be understood with regard to all concepts pertaining to structure in structuration theory is that structure qua structure does not produce patterns, nor does it actively coordinate and control social systems."⁴¹ When Giddens speaks about structure, however, it is always about "the duality of structure" where structure is both produced by human action and the medium of human action.

It is very difficult to sum up the theory of structuration. The attempt made by Craib is as follows: The theory of structuration, in the end, is the process of production, reproduction and transformation of structure.⁴² The position of human actor is at the centre of this process.

Theory of structuration, as such, helps to explain the acceptance of four roles. Party secretaries, being human agents, are perfectly aware of the existence of the structure. Firstly, they certainly know the two roles "from above" that they must perform in their villages. Nevertheless, one cannot expect a party secretary to solely do the jobs prescribed by the Party. Party secretaries, as actors, are definitely controlled by their superior, but this control does not always produce the desired outcome.

The same is true with moral obligation imposed "from below." Party secretaries are fully aware of the demands made by their fellow villagers. They fulfil the demands, yet they cannot always do it because such an action will harm them. Like in the above case, party secretaries often have to defy the demands of their fellow villagers.

The issue here, therefore, is not that the superior of those party secretaries (or the elders in the village) is not strict enough, but dialectic of control. As human actors having the transformative capacity, they indeed can "make a difference." Party secretaries themselves, following their "reflexive monitoring of action," decide when and how they will play the roles "from above" or those "from below."

⁴⁰The Constitution of Society, p. 25.

⁴¹Cohen, op.cit., p. 199.

⁴²See, Craib, op.cit., p. 44.

Thus, it does not make sense to say that party secretaries always obey the Party, neither does it to say that they capitulate to the pressure of fellow villagers all the time. Party secretaries can agree to the state as well as to their fellow villagers. Although the four roles appear to be conflicting to each other, village party secretary can play them.

Giddens, as part of the theory of structuration, also speaks about "the unintended consequences." Contrary to Robert Merton's view, unintended consequences are as much the result of action as intended consequences because they would not occur if the action did not take place. "The unintended consequences are regularly 'distributed' as a by-product of regularized behaviour reflexively sustained as such by its participants."⁴³ The clearest example given by Giddens is one about an individual who, in his intention, only wants to illuminate the room. As a result of this action, not only that the room is illuminated but also a prowler who flees down the road, is caught by a policeman.⁴⁴ Within this perspective, ruralisation of authority is just the unintended consequences. Party secretaries may never intend to ruralise the authority, but as soon as they agree to play the four roles, they bring about the ruralisation of authority.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have tried to answer one question: why a village party secretary must play four roles? I argue that, although it is the right thing to do, a village party secretary cannot afford to play only the roles assigned by the state, but also the other roles demanded by society. A village party secretary, being located at the interface of the state and society, is squeezed from both sides. To overcome this, he has little option but to allow his authority to be "ruralised."

The key to understand this situation is the fact that he is a local peasant. Peasants will not obey one of them if he does not bring real material benefit and

⁴³The Constitution of Society, p. 14.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 10.

prevent harm caused by the state. Not to meet this demand will lead to ostracism or even retaliation, and this will eventually lead to the loss of authority. Thus, if they want to stay in power, it is imperative on the part of party secretaries to agree to take up the roles demanded by their fellow villagers.

Authority in a modern state, according to Weber, is something to be accepted, and not to be negotiated or "strengthened." In the light of this ideal-type, I term what is happening in Chinese villages after Reform (1978) as "ruralisation of authority." It is authority granted by the state, yet to be effective it has to be "ruralised" or adapted to the peasants' demand. Here, I acknowledge the strength of peasants of pursuing their interests, who, under the situation of nominal encapsulation, become increasingly assertive.

To explain the phenomenon of ruralisation of authority, I rely on the theory of structuration. The behaviour of village party secretaries is one which shows both the dependency and independency of the human agency from structure. A party secretary uses his authority according to the state, and yet he also accepts the demands of his fellow villagers.

The ruralisation of authority is only possible after the adoption of the strategy of nominal encapsulation after 1978. As peasants are freed from radical encapsulation, they become more assertive, and therefore, manage to "ruralise" the authority of their leader. Before Reform, there was only clientilism (as argued by Jean Oi) which was effective to mitigate the power of rural cadres but not to ruralise the authority of their authorities.

CONCLUSION

Our study on the roles of village party secretaries will conclude with the discussion of three issues. The first one is the review of major findings in terms of the roles that a village party secretary plays. The second one concerns theoretical implication of the finding of this research. In the last section, I will discuss the political implication of the ruralisation of authority.

I. THE FOUR ROLES

The four roles of a village party secretary derive from two sources: "from above" and "from below." With respect to that "from above," a village party secretary has to play the role of state agent and the role of entrepreneurial agent. The role of state agent refers to a role of implementing policies to develop agriculture and develop "modern" society. Or, in CCP's terminology, a role for developing "agriculture work." The role of entrepreneurial agent refers to a role of accelerating the economy of the village towards xiaokang by becoming an entrepreneur himself. The CCP's terminology for this task is "to take a lead towards prosperity" or daitou zhifu.

The two roles "from above" have developed gradually, in response to the evolving situation in China. The role of state agent, in the beginning of Reform, begins with a role which refers to leadership in ideology and politics, but develops into primus inter pares where the party secretary is posited as the "core" with other leaders of mass organizations surrounding him. Here, the Leninist propensity of the central leadership, especially Song Ping, is crucial in re-orienting the role of state agent. The role of entrepreneurial agent was initially designed to allow party secretaries to set up enterprises by which the villagers would be expected to follow suit; it was eventually integrated into a wider scheme of developing the economy of villages to the level of xiaokang. In this case, the spectacular development of village enterprises and their economic potential have become the main drive towards the assignment of the role of the entrepreneurial agent.

With regard to the roles "from below," a village party secretary has to play the role of moral middleman and the role of lineage patron. In playing the role of moral middleman, he must accommodate himself to the demands of his fellow villagers who are not willing or resistant to the state policies, especially policies on grain, taxes, and birth-control. In playing the role of lineage patron, he must accommodate himself to the demands of his lineage who also resist similar state policies, by giving them special preferences over those who do not belong to the lineage.

These two roles also do not come into being suddenly, but develop over time. As peasants are liberated by the strategy of nominal encapsulation, they become increasingly independent and assertive. Peasants, slowly but surely, make their party secretaries listen to their demands, something unheard of before Reform.

There are two different types of control mechanism. The two roles "from above" are carried out under administrative control, using a reward and punishment system, by the township or the county authorities. From time to time, the central leadership conducts a rectification campaign. The two roles "from below" are carried out under the moral obligation rooted in the very nature of the village as a moral community. The discourses on renqing and fumuguan informs the party secretary that he must play the role of moral middleman, whereas the discourse on lineage solidarity informs him of the role of lineage patron. Villagers, in extreme cases, will use threats and violence to pressurise their party secretary.

The thesis on "ruralisation of authority" is a term to capture the phenomenon where a village leader, given the pressures, is to play both roles, those which come "from above" and those "from below." This may deviate from the ideal-type of Max Weber, yet it adds a new perspective to our understanding of authority in villages in China after Reform (1978).

II. THEORETICAL IMPLICATION

This study on the roles of village party secretaries has several important theoretical implications. First of all, this demonstrated that party secretaries behave according to both the state directives and society's demand. The thesis of the ruralisation of

authority helps us to understand the centrality of human agency in the face of structure.

Secondly, the relations between the state and society should be conceived as one which is connected with myriads of "knots" which are occupied by party secretaries. This dissertation shows the crucial position of party secretaries who connects the state and society. The state cannot reach society without going through the party secretaries, and society cannot permeate the state without passing through the party secretaries. These party secretaries interweave both structures.

Thus, it is not that the state is "fragmented" or that society is "weak" which cause problems to arise in Chinese politics, nor is it that the concept of "state-society" being too Western-oriented that causes our failure to understand the dynamics of the interaction between the state and society in China. As the relations between the state and society are linked by knots (there are about 730.00 party secretaries in the whole of China), the focus of attention should be directed on these knots, and not on the working of xitong or organizational systems.

Thirdly, the concept of "Leninist party" characterised by the spirit of revolution and high-discipline is no longer tenable in China after Reform. Party branches and their party secretaries, as this study demonstrates, are neither dedicated to revolution nor highly disciplined. The CCP is more and more concerned about "modernization" by giving more emphasis on political stability and economic development. Perhaps it is more fitting to label the CCP as the "development Party" similar to those found in many developing countries, especially in single-party countries. Fourthly, the concept of "peasant resistance" as proposed by James Scott should be amended. Peasants do resist the state's attempt to extract agricultural surpluses, yet peasants can also accept some policies of the state if they are implemented by paying attention to their feelings. This study shows that party secretaries are crucial in mitigating the peasant resistance. Indeed, the concept of "peasant resistance" itself is too large.

III. THE POLITICAL IMPLICATION OF RURALISATION OF AUTHORITY

These points raise the following issues: any attempt by local leaders to alter the

operation of their authority, will inevitably influence the operation of the state. More specifically, it will bring an impact on the relations between the state and society. This section considers the political implications of the ruralisation of authority in the countryside in China. I will argue that there is one important political implication: as ruralisation of authority is an attempt to reconcile the roles "from above" and the roles "from below," it ultimately also functions as "shock absorber" between the state and the peasantry. It absorbs the shocks which may come upon the society from the state or which may come upon the state from society. In this way, I am assuming the clash between the state and the peasantry, each with its own interests to protect.

A. The clash between the state and the peasantry

Peasants' resentment against the state is directed toward state's policies which, in their view, make their lives intolerable. As we have seen in Chapter Five, peasants resent what they call "san yao" or three demands: the demand of grain, the demand of life (birth control), and the demand for money. These are three things which are vital to the peasants. Grain, to the peasants, is vital for three needs (according to Eric Wolf): a caloric minimum, a replacement fund and a ceremonial fund.¹ Thus, peasants must produce grain more than they need for food which they use for seed for next crops and to maintain social relations. These needs "are both functionally and logically prior to the demands of the outsider, whether lord or merchant," thus says Wolf.² An old-age Chinese proverb, indeed, says: "The peasants take their grain as heaven."³ Peasants, so anxious to protect the grain surplus, used every strategy to defuse state's action.⁴

¹Wolf, Eric Peasants, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-hall, 1966.

²Ibid., p. 13.

³In Chinese: min yi shi wei tian

⁴According to Wolf, peasants used two groups of strategies to protect their grain: singlestranded (which consists of dyadic and horizontal, dyadic and vertical, polyadic and vertical, polyadic and horizontal) and multistranded (dyadic and horizontal, polyadic and horizontal, dyadic and vertical, polyadic and vertical). See, Ibid., pp. 60-95.

Birth-control in Chinese language is jihua shengyu meaning "planned giving birth." If that is the case, it may not cause so much anger among peasants as they may plan as they like. "Planned giving birth" is actually birth-control where peasants are controlled to have only one child if the first child is a boy, or two children if the first child is a girl. To have a son, to the peasants, is a traditionally instilled belief (zhong nan qing nu). This belief, however, is actually rooted in real economic calculation. To have a son means additional labour force, and in the long term, he also serves as old-age insurance.⁵

Money is becoming more and more important for peasants as there are more and more goods which are essential for their life but they themselves cannot make. These are industrial products such as radio, television, bicycle, kitchen utensils, and certainly, fertilisers and plastic sheet. The phenomenon of "price scissors," however, puts peasants in the disadvantaged position as the term of trade of grain and the industrial products is biased toward the industrial products. One commentator argues that "agricultural terms of trade had deteriorated so badly in recent years that from 1989 onwards an inverse relationship was observed to exist between the gross agricultural value of output (GAVO) and farm income."⁶

To the state, it is impossible not to impose those demands on peasants, namely grain, birth control, and taxes. Surplus of grain, for example, is essential to feed the urbanites who form as crucial factor in the maintenance of political stability in China. Riots or demonstrations in big cities (such as in the Spring 1989) will seriously undermine the authority of the state, and worse, will cause its collapse.⁷

⁵This is documented in White, Tyrene "The Population Factor: China's Family Planning Policy in the 1990s," in William A. Joseph (ed.), China Briefing, 1991, Boulder: Westview Press, 1992, pp. 103-106.

⁶He also gives an example: "In Hunan province, for instance, GAVO rose by 4.4% in 1992 over the previous year, but peasant income only recorded a negligible 0.7% real growth." See, James K. Kung, "Peasants in a 'Hot Pot': Pushing the Limits of a Biased Strategy against Agriculture," in Maurice Brosseau and Lo Chi Kin (eds.), China Review 1994, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1995, p. 11.6.

⁷On the centrality of cities in the politics in developing countries, see Huntington, Samuel P. Political Order in Changing Societies, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968, p. 73-74.

Economically, the increase of grain procurement will reduce import of grain, and eventually alleviate the state budget.

Birth-control is not less essential than surplus of grain to the state's maintenance of power. Unchecked growth of population has a very wide repercussion for China, economically, politically, and socially. Economically, the rapid growth of population⁸ will certainly undermine the economic growth which so far, has developed rapidly (9 per cent a year). Socially, the increase of rural population will lead to a flood of rural migration to cities, and put severe pressure on social services in the cities such as health, education, transportation, etc. Politically, as a consequence from social impact, there will grow dissatisfaction among the urbanites as they see their well-being is threatened by the coming of the rural migrants.⁹ This dissatisfaction will add more oil to the fire of dissatisfaction which have arisen due to economic reason.¹⁰

Taxes are undoubtedly linked to the survival of the state. In China, peasants pay two types of taxes, in kind (grain) and money. These taxes are to be delivered to the State, the township and the collective.¹¹ The demand for taxes is not only vital to the coffer of the national state, but also to the survival of the local state (township and village). Robert Ash points out that recently "departments and regions"

⁸According to James Kung, between 1978-1984 rural population grew at 0.28% but shot up during 1985-1992 to 0.92%. See his article, op.cit., p. 11.12

⁹Yan Yunxiang "Dislocation, Reposition and Restratification: Structural Changes in Chinese Society," in Maurice Brosseau and Lo Chi Kin (eds.), China Review 1994, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1995, p. 15.8.

¹⁰For further elaboration on the problem of population in China, see Lester Brown, Who Will Feed China, London: Earthscan, 1995, pp. 35-43.

¹¹Editor "Shenme shi heli fudan? Shenme shi luan tanpai?," (What is reasonable burden? What is arbitrary fee?) Nongmin ribao, 26 January 1991, p. 1. This editorial distinguishes three types of taxes: to the State, to the collective, and to the township which are to be considered as "reasonable burden." Taxes to the State: agricultural taxes (nongye shui), village special production tax (nongcun techan shui), tax on slaughtering animals (tuzai shui). Those are engaged in commerce, have to pay product tax (chanpin shui), business tax (yinye shui), and income tax (suode shui). Tax delivered to the collective are used for accumulation fund (gonjijin), public welfare fund (gongyijin), and costs of administration (guanlifei) from which cadres draw their salary. Tax delivered to the township is used to finance schools managed by both village and township, birth control, provision for servicemen's families, provision for households of old persons with no child or infirm to enjoy five guarantees (wubaohu), and training for the people's militia.

also impose different kinds of levies upon peasants.¹²

Thus, the state and peasants are locked in continual battle. Peasants try to protect their surplus, and the state struggles to extract surplus as much as possible from peasants.

B. The ruralisation of authority as "shock absorber"

Party secretaries who agree to play the role of moral middleman, help to reduce anger and outrage of the peasants toward the state. In playing the role, party secretaries avoid using pressure, and use persuasion instead. This certainly takes a lot of time. A survey in six villages under Hengyang City (Hunan Province), for instance,¹³ shows that birth control and disputes among villagers consume most of cadres' time, 44.7% for birth control, and 16.8% for handling disputes. There are three other sensitive areas in which rural cadres also must spend a lot of time, namely collecting grain (12%), collecting fees (10.5%), agriculture (10.3%).

The techniques of persuasion helps to cool down peasants' anger. Yet this does not necessarily mean that party secretaries simply give in to peasants' demand. Although they allow peasants to delay the delivery of grain and the payment of taxes, they do not release peasants from the obligation. They, eventually, must pay; this is evidenced by the steady flow of grain and taxes.

Party secretaries also use indirect methods to implement birth-control program. As put forward in Chapter Five, they allow babies born with "black card". From what I heard during my stay in the village, the party secretary could manipulate the quota given to the village. The quota of Shijia Village per year is 8-9 babies a year (five thousandth). Thus, if this year there are more pregnant women than the permitted quota, the above quota can be allocated to the following year. Of course, the party secretary must work hard to make sure that in the following year there will

¹²Ash, Robert "The Peasant and the State," in China Quarterly, No. 127, September 1991, p. 510.

¹³"'Chun feng' wei he nandu 'yu men guan'?" (Why does the "spring wind" cannot pass through the 'gate of heaven'?) Nongmin ribao, 13 January, 1987, p. 3.

no pregnant women.¹⁴

These various techniques and methods help to keep the anger and resentment of peasants under control. The evidence for this is the relative quiet situation in the countryside despite the fact that there is widespread dissatisfaction among the peasantry on the falling of their income in the last five years.¹⁵

This is not to negate the various reports on "peasant revolts" in various places. For instance, in 1993, it was reported that such incidents broke out in various parts of China, Sichuan, Anhui, Hunan, Hubei, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Guizhou, Guangxi.¹⁶ In the same year, in Renshou County (Sichuan Province) there happened the worst peasant revolt since the CCP took power in 1949.¹⁷ Yet there has been nothing happen to seriously threaten the local government, or the national government. This fact should correct the assessment made by Vivienne Shue when she said that after Reform, peasants are left unprotected and the state can penetrate the countryside more deeply than before.¹⁸

"What we may find ourselves witnessing over the next several decades, therefore, under the rubric of liberalization and reform of the excessively dictatorial state-socialist bureaucracy, may not in fact be the retreat of the state from stringent rule over the peasantry, but the rerooting of a relegitimized and reinvigorated state power in new social groups, and the reorganization, restaffing, and reconsolidation of the state apparatus itself in new, more effective forms."

The state, accordingly, can extract agricultural surplus more efficiently. Shue, in her

¹⁴Interview with Huang Jingshen, 12 November 1993.

¹⁵Hua Min, "Nongmin wenti, zaidu qiandong guoren xin" (The peasant problem: once again affects the hearts of the fellow countrymen), Xin shiji, No. 5, 1994, p. 4.

¹⁶"Jinnian yilai guanyu nongcun wenti de ji jian da shi," (Several big incidents related to village problem since beginning this year) Ming bao, 26 July 1993, p. 8.

¹⁷"China's season of discontent" South China Morning Post, 16 June 1993, p. 21; Liu-si shijian keneng zai sichuan renshou xian chong yan (The June Fourth incidence is probably repeated in Renshou County, Sichuan Province) Xinbao, 10 June 1993, p. 20; "Renshou xian qiehi jianqing nongmin fudan" (Renshou County implement the policy of alleviating peasant burden) Sichuan ribao, 27 May 1993, p. 1; "Sichuan renshou da-za-qiang shijian xiangqing" (The details of smashing-looting case in Renshou, Sichuan) Wenhui bao, 13 June 1993, p. 2. See, "The Social Unrest in the Countryside," China News Analysis, No. 1492, 1 September 1993.

¹⁸Shue, Vivienne op.cit., p. 152.

analysis, overly emphasises the structural factor of Chinese villages. It is true that, after the introduction of Reform in 1978, villages no longer form - what she calls - "honeycomb pattern" as commune system which created it were abolished in the early 1980s. The disappearance of the structure of honeycomb pattern, evidently, does not make the state penetration easier. As I have argued above, peasants, after Reform (1978), are more assertive, and because of that party secretaries, despite their status as state agents, will accommodate to their demands.

The higher authorities may go down and put pressure on party secretaries to carry out their duty well. They may even go as far as threatening the party secretaries with dismissal. The party secretaries, using their skill of negotiation, however, will tell the higher authorities that there would only be delay. Or, party secretaries may just use their savings to fill the gap while waiting for the villagers to deliver. In this way, the party secretaries avert the state's merciless pressure on their fellow villagers.

The ruralisation of authority should also disprove Joel Migdal's thesis that, in developing countries, society is so strong that society can permeate the state.¹⁹ In his opinion, the Third World societies "are not mere putty to be moulded by states with sufficient technical resources, managerial abilities, and committed personnel."²⁰ He compares Third World societies with "intricate spider's web" which "host a melange of fairly autonomous social organizations."²¹ The state is simply rendered helpless.

Migdal's generalisation about Third World societies is probably limited by the data that are available to him. As evidenced in this study, a village as community and lineages in it can indeed exert influence the operation of the village governments, but village governments are not totally incapacitated to the extent that not a single state's policies can be implemented. Village party secretaries do not totally let themselves be trapped by the spider's web; they can keep a distance from a it.

¹⁹Joel S. Migdal Strong Societies and Weak States. State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.

²⁰Ibid., p. 35.

²¹Ibid., p. 37.

Villagers may apply heavy pressure, and party secretaries may give in. But they can never be completely overcome. On occasions, villagers may threaten their party secretary. If the party secretary is skilful enough, he might be able to persuade his fellow villagers to back down. He will negotiate and bargain with them; he will eventually get their agreement not to cancel, only to delay the grain delivery. In doing so, he has cooled down the anger of the peasants to flare up. Thus, party secretaries can absorb the shock that may come from society upon the state.

The ruralisation of authority is not favoured by the central leadership. This is because it jeopardises the full implementation of the program. As we have seen, the central leadership in 1994 decided "to strengthen" it. By this action, they expect that party secretaries will return to their original mission as state agents. Ruralisation of authority is disliked by peasants as well because party secretaries, sooner or later, will come to visit them and demand their grain and their money. This partly explains why peasants, from time to time, rise up and rebel against their party secretaries.

Despite all this tension, it is now becoming apparent that by embracing the ruralisation of authority, village party secretaries can perfectly serve as a "shock absorber." When the state tries to penetrate too deeply into society, they reduce the force as minimally as possible, and cause little shock upon society. When society struggles hard to permeate the state, they minimise it in such a way that it does not cause shock to the state.

Being a "shock absorber" is not an easy job. The press report complaints made by party secretaries on the difficulty of their job. Cheng Baoheng and Qiang Yushan, in 1991, conducted a large survey on village cadres, including their complaints, in Rudong County (Jiangsu Province).²² Two hundred and ninety four (294) Party branches and 9642 Party members were surveyed, and 1504 peasants of 126 villages were interviewed on their opinion about Party branches, about joining the Party, etc. The most important finding were the statistics on the opinion of the Party secretaries over "their attitude toward working in the Party branch." Out of 294 Party secretaries, 245 (83%) party secretaries complained. They complained that the work to be done was very difficult whereas the salary was quite low.

²²Cheng Baoheng and Qiang Yushan "Nongcun gaige yu xingzheng cun de jianshe" (Village reform and the construction of administrative village) Nantong xuekan, 1991, No. 4, pp. 9-15.

The degree of difficulty varies from place to place but also varies from individual to individual. To some party secretaries, the job as party secretary is too heavy that they decide to resign. A survey in 28 villages in Jing Prefecture (Hubei Province) reports that party secretaries resigned because they found that the job of party secretaries is too difficult (gongzuo nandu da).²³ "Now, 'the living have to be castrated (birth control), the dead have to be burnt (cremation), the irrigation task have to be shouldered, every sorts of money has to be delivered.' All of these work are really tormenting. [...] If I carry out the task heartlessly, then the masses will insult my father."²⁴

Resignations of village party secretaries are reported somewhere else. There were 47 village party secretaries under Jingmen City (Hubei Province) submitted their resignations, they were part of 120 other village cadres who resigned plus 513 cadres at village groups.²⁵ Out of 170 Party secretaries, 42 of them (24.7%) had asked for resignation. This was the finding of Tang Yiming in ten townships in Hunan Province.²⁶ In all these cases, the main reason given for resignation is that the job of party secretaries are difficult.

Given this enormous burden, one last intriguing question arises: why are there so many rural cadres willing to take the job as party secretaries? I have asked similar question to the party secretary of the village where I stayed. He said: "As a party member, I should be prepared to take a job which the Party wants me to do." This kind of answer sounds a cliché of Party propaganda. But, upon reflecting further, I can see a grain of truth in it.

Lindblom, for instance, argues that in communist countries (China and Cuba, in particular), "moral incentives" play identical role as do material incentives in capitalist countries. Peasants and workers are asked to work simply out of ideological

²³Bao Houcheng "Cun zhishu liao tiaozhi gei women qiao xiang le jingzhong," (Village party secretaries throwing up their job, it strikes an alarm bell for us) Xiang-zhen luntan, 1990, No. 4, pp. 12-13.

²⁴Ibid., p. 12.

²⁵"Wei shenme daliang cunzhu ganbu yaoqiu cizhi," (Why do so any village cadres want to resign?) Renmin ribao, 11 May 1993, p. 5.

²⁶Tang Yimin, "Bufen cun dangzhibu shuiji cizhi de yuanyin he jieju de banfa," (Causes and solution to the resignation of village Party secretaries) Hunan gongchandang ren, 1989, No. 3, pp. 34-35.

correctness such as "Serve the People," or "Plain Living, Hard Work." If they compete, they do not compete for material gains but moral recognition. They compete, in Lindblom's words, "for a badge, banner or title of rank, like the Soviet 'Hero of Labor, the Cuban May Day banner or Heroic Guerrilla award, and the Chinese Labor Hero award.'" He adds: "Workers also compete for travel opportunities, expensive consumer goods, attendance at prestigious meetings, even an interview with Premier Castro or Chairman Mao."²⁷

Lindblom, surely, wrote when China was universally under moral incentives. As such, his arguments are not applicable in China after Reform (1978) when material incentives are also utilized. I do believe, however, that moral incentives do not evaporate entirely. This is especially true among peasants. This is not because peasants are stupid, but because they still highly regard any type of appreciation from the State. In any office of party secretaries one cannot fail to see banners or certificates appreciating their achievements which they proudly show to their visitors.

The central leadership, knowing this tendency, continues to utilize moral incentives as a tool to encourage village party secretaries to do their jobs. Thus, in Chapter Four, I mentioned two names of party secretaries, Shi Laihe and Li Yuzong. Mr Shi is party secretary of Lizhuang Village (Henan Province), who has been awarded the medal of "national model" four times, and has, reportedly, met in person national dignitaries such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian, etc. Mr Li is party secretary of Hechengli Village (Longjing City, Jilin Province); he has been elected as "national model of worker" (quan guo laodong mofan).

Moral incentives can surely inject an extra endurance to cadres who volunteer themselves to become party secretaries. They will take up the burden notwithstanding the pressures which come from their superiors or from their fellow villagers.²⁸ If that is the case, then we can expect that village party secretaries will continue to function as shock-absorber between the state and society.

²⁷Lindblom, Charles Politics and Markets, New York: Basic Books, 1977, pp. 286-287.

²⁸One of the characteristics of moral incentives, according to Lindblom, is that "they owe something to austerity which calls for incentives that are less costly than real income." Ibid., p. 286.

APPENDIX A

VARIOUS POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS EXISTING IN A VILLAGE IN CHINA

I. PARTY BRANCH (DANGZHIBU)

A party branch or "village party branch" (cun dangzhibu) is the lowest unit in the CCP structure of organization. It is to be established at every locale where there are more than three Communist Party members.¹ In a village where there are more than 50 members, a general party branch (zong zhibu) may be established.² The governing structure of a Party branch is composed of two main bodies: the Party branch congress and the Party branch committee. The party secretary is responsible to the party branch committee which elects him; he must write regular reports both to the party branch committee and the party branch congress, also to the township party committee.³

II. VILLAGERS' COMMITTEE (CUNMIN WEIYUANHUI)

A villagers' committee is designated as "mass organization" and not part of the state administration. It is to be established by villagers, and consists of three to seven members including a chairman and vice chairman who are elected by villagers.⁴ In its operation, it enjoys autonomy which is defined as "self-management, self-education, and self-service." This committee is responsible to the "villagers' council" (cunmin daibiao) which consists of representatives of each household, enterprises,

¹Ibid., Art. 30; cf. Art. 8

²"Dangzhibu sheli de yuanze" (The principle of the establishment of a Party branch), Jing Bin (ed.), Zhongguo gongchandang da cidian (Grand dictionary of the Communist Party of China), Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 1991, p. 347.

³Further discussion, see Appendix C.

⁴"The Organic Law Governing Villagers' Committee of the People's Republic of China (Trial), 1987, Art. 8. English translation see, FBIS-CHI, 27 November 1987, pp. 21-23.

institutions or mass organizations.⁵ This council has the power to dismiss and elect members of the villagers' committee.⁶ The committee is both under the leadership of the party branch and the township. The job of the villagers' committee is defined in Art. 2, 4 and 5 of the "The Organic Law."

Art. 2 [...] They are responsible for handling the public affairs and utilities of the village, mediating disputes among villagers, assisting in maintaining public order, and reporting villagers' opinions, demands, and suggestions to the people's government.

Art. 4 The villagers' committees should support and organise villagers in promoting production, supply and marketing, credit, consumption, and other forms of the cooperative economy. The committees should also coordinate and provide services to production in the village for developing socialist production and construction and the socialist commodity economy in rural areas.

The villagers' committee should respect the decisionmaking power of the collective units in their legal economic activities, and protect the legal assets and other rights and interests of the collective units, villagers, contract-business households, and joint-business households.

The villagers' committees should manage the land and other assets owned collectively by the villagers according to the law, and teach them the rational utilization of natural resources and protection and improvement of the ecological environment.

Art. 5 The villagers' committee should publicise the Constitution, laws, regulations, and government policies; teach and urge the villagers to fulfil

⁵Art. 10.

⁶Art. 11.

their legal responsibilities; protect public property; safeguard the villagers' lawful rights and interests; promote the unity and mutual assistance between villages; and unfold all kinds of activities for building socialist spiritual civilizations.

III. WOMEN'S FEDERATION (FUNU LIANHEHUI, ABBREVIATED AS FULIAN)

The Women's Federation at village level is the lowest unit in the structure of the organization of the Chinese Women's Federation. It has a Women's Representative Conference (fu daihui) and Women's Committee (fu weihui) which run the daily affairs. Each has its own chairwoman and vice chairwoman who are elected by their members once every five years.

The objective of the Women's Federation is "to strengthen the relationship between the CCP and women."⁷ In a more specific way, it takes care of women's life, from birth to maturity. For instance, the Women's Federation is "to guide women to use the ethics and thought of socialism to solve problems in love, marriage, and family."⁸ Birth-control, indeed, is one of the important tasks.

IV. COMMUNIST YOUTH LEAGUE (GONGQINGTUAN)

The Communist Youth League (CYL) at village level is the lowest unit in the structure of the National Communist Youth League. Like the structure of CCP, CYL at village level is called the CYL Branch which is headed by a CYL branch secretary. Membership is open to people between 14-28 years of age.⁹ In its activities, it is

⁷"Zhonghua quanguo funu lianhe hui" (Chinese National Women's Federation), in Jing Bin, op.cit., p.179.

⁸"Fulian zuzhi de renwu" (the job of the organization of the Women's Federation), Ibid., p. 180.

⁹"Shenqing ru tuan de tiaojian" (The conditions for application to enter CYL) in Jing Bin, Ibid., pp. 174-175.

supposed to use methods which "are suitable to the characteristics of youth."¹⁰

CYL is actually an organization directly under the Chinese Communist Party; in a sense, it is communist party by youths. In the Party Charter (1982) it is stated that CYL is "a school where large numbers of young people will learn about communism through practice," and in addition to that, "it is the Party's assistant and reserve force." (Art. 49)

Within this perspective, CYL is not yet part of the system of CCP. Members of CYL are not Party members; they must apply for Party membership. Leaders of CYL, however, are considered as cadres. It is necessary, therefore, for the party branch should lead and supervise them. "Party committees at all levels must strengthen their leadership over the CYL organizations." (Art. 50)

V. PEOPLE'S MILITIA (MINBIN)

People's militia (minbin) is not part of the regular army, but it plays a highly prominent role in the villages. Before Reform, the company leader was considered one of the three most powerful actors beside the Party secretary and the village headman. Villagers used to say: "yi dang, er zheng, san wuzhuang" (the first is the Party, the second is the government, and the third is the weapon).

Currently, people's militia no longer enjoys high prestige as before, but its presence is still felt in the villages.¹¹ As the possibility of wars become more and more remote, it is then entrusted with various tasks: to help the public security (e.g. in fighting against counter-revolutionaries, criminals, and smugglers); to participate in the economic development of the village (e.g. to build roads, to instal irrigation, to build electric plants, etc.); and to participate in social and cultural change (e.g. to set a good example, to fight against superstition, to promote birth control, etc.)¹² The numbers of people's militia, due to the policy of streamlining, are becoming

¹⁰"Gongqingtuan de duli huodong" (The independent activities of CYL), Ibid., p. 173.

¹¹The material of this part is from Han Huaizhi (ed.), Dangdai zhongguo minbin (Contemporary Chinese People's Militia), Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1989.

¹²Ibid., pp. 342-464.

small, and there is no more fixed quota.¹³

¹³Ibid., p. 105.

APPENDIX B

THE LEADERSHIP TASK OF VILLAGE PARTY BRANCH SECRETARIES OVER THE POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VILLAGES

I. IN GENERAL, A VILLAGE PARTY BRANCH SECRETARY IS ASKED TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN AREAS AS FOLLOWS:¹

- a. to convene meetings of the party branch committee and the Party branch congress according to schedule;
- b. to implement the Party's line, policies, and principles;
- c. to investigate and arrange the work of the Party branch, report major problems immediately to the Party branch committee and Party branch congress;
- d. to understand and grasp what the Party members think, do, and learn;
- e. to examine how the Party branch fulfils the plan; and implements decisions;
- f. to develop a close relationship with the members of the Party branch committee and other village functionaries, to give support to their work, coordinate their working relations, and arouse their enthusiasm to work;
- g. to encourage the Party branch committee to study, and to develop their role of leadership;

II. THE LEADERSHIP TASK OVER THE VILLAGERS' COMMITTEE.

The Fourth Plenum of the Fourteenth Congress (1994) clearly states: "Party branches should provide stronger leadership over villagers' committees and should support them in carrying out work in accordance with the law. Villagers' committees must place themselves under the leadership of party branches and actively take the initiative

¹"Dang zhibu shuij" (The Party branch secretary), Jing Bin (ed.), Zhongguo gongchandang da cidian (Grand dictionary of the Communist Party of China), Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 1991, p. 349.

in carrying out work that is within the scope of their duties."²

III. THE LEADERSHIP TASK OVER THE WOMEN'S FEDERATION

The task of the Party is "to exercise leadership over the Women's Federation in major decisions and in the area of political principle and political direction."³ Party branches in the villages, specifically, are to do the following jobs:⁴

- (i) to disseminate Party line and policies as well as the party branch's own decision;
- (ii) to help Women's Federation in solving its difficulties in performing its duty such as birth control, family, social welfare;
- (iii) to include the work of the Women's Federation on the agenda of the party branch;
- (iv) to pay serious attention to as well as train young female cadres to enter the Party;
- (v) to solve the problem of remuneration for female cadres.

IV. THE LEADERSHIP TASK OVER THE COMMUNIST YOUTH LEAGUE

Village party secretaries are advised that "in strengthening the leadership over the CYL Branch, village party branches should support the independent activities of the CYL which are suitable to the characteristics of the young." In addition, they must also "include the work of the CYL in the important work schedule of the party branch" which, in practice, means: "once every three months hear reports of the work of the CYL branch; often investigate the work of the CYL branch and solve problems which arise during the work; party branch meetings should invite the CYL branch

²"CCP Circular on strengthening rural primary and grass-roots organizations," in SWB FE/2168 G/6.

³"Dang dui fulian zuzhi de lingdao" (The leadership of the Party over the Women's Federation), in Jing Bin (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 180.

⁴Zhang Dianzhong, Nongcun dangzhibu shuji de shouce (A handbook for a village party branch secretary), Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1990, p. 97. This handbook has a foreword by Song Ping, member of the Standing Committee of Politburo and in charge of organization.

secretary." Village party branch secretaries also have to help CYL branches to select their leaders, train their cadres, and solve their activity funds.⁵

V. THE LEADERSHIP TASK OVER THE PEOPLE'S MILITIA

The Party secretary exercises his leadership by taking up the post of "company political instructor" (lian zhidao yuan). In general, a village party branch and its secretary is to pay attention to the people's militia: to educate them both in military and political matters, to maintain frequent meetings with them, to give full support to the company head, to help them to carry out their duty.⁶

⁵Ibid., p. 96.

⁶Ibid., p. 98.

APPENDIX C

THE STRUCTURE OF A VILLAGE PARTY BRANCH

Most part of the materials, however, are taken from The Grand Dictionary of the Communist Party of China (1991).¹

I. THE PLACE OF A PARTY BRANCH WITHIN THE STRUCTURE OF THE CCP

The Communist Party of China, according to the Party Charter (1982), is an organization which is partitioned into three major sub-organizations (Art. 10, sub. 4; Art. 17).² The highest is the central Party organization (zhongyang zuzhi), and the intermediate level is the local Party organization (difang zuzhi). While there is only one central Party organization which has its headquarters in Beijing, there are myriads of hierarchically structured local Party organizations, spreading across the country. They are territorially based, existing at the provincial level (and its equivalent) down to the xian level (and its equivalent).³

At the third level is the "grass-root organization" (jiceng zuzhi), which consists of a grass-root committee and a branch committee (Art. 31). A Party branch (dangzhibu) is located at this level. It is to be established at every locale where there are more than three Communist Party members.⁴ A village is one of those places where a Party branch should be set up if the condition is met; it is called "village Party branch" or cun dangzhibu.

The diagram below illustrates this structure:

¹Jing Bin (ed.), Zhongguo gongchandang da cidian (Grand dictionary of the Communist Party of China), Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 1991. Thereafter, I will refer to this dictionary as ZGDDC.

²"Zuzhi tizhi" (Organizational system), ZGDDC, p.212.

³See, Party Charter, 1982, art. 14

⁴Ibid., Art. 30; cf. Art. 8

Figure I The general organizational structure of the CCP
(special reference to village context)

I. Central Party Organization

II. Local Party Organization
Provinces
County

III. Grass-root Organization
Township
Village

It must be noted that the "general Party branch" (zong zhibu) is also part of the grass-root organizations. The difference between the general Party branch and the Party branch lies in the number of Party members. If the grass-root Party committee has to have at least 100 Party members, the general Party branch must have at least 50 Party members.⁵ If there are more than 50 or 100 Party members but no grass-root Party committee, then general Party branch can be set up; the necessity of work can dictate this.⁶

In the village context, this means that a Party branch is at cun while a grass-root Party committee at xiang (township). A general Party branch is usually located at a cun, and is very few in number because Party members in a village rarely reach

⁵"Dangzhibu sheli de yuanze" (The principle of the establishment of a Party branch), in ZGDDC, p. 347.

⁶*Ibid.*

more than fifty. From my field work, however, general Party branches are found in all cun in Yangguang township, Yunnan Province.⁷

II. THE PARTY BRANCH CONGRESS

The governing structure of a Party branch is composed of two main bodies: the Party branch congress and the Party branch committee. This section will first discuss the Party branch congress.

The Party branch congress (zhibu dangyuan dahui) is technically the highest governing body of a Party branch. It is a forum for all Party members, regardless of their position in the organization. Everybody is free to express their own opinion over all matters, even if it may lead to a disagreement. The Party branch congress is convened by its committee once every three months. The agenda should be made known in advance to all Party cells and the entire members.

The main agenda of the meeting is usually to discuss major problems within the Party branch, and find a solution. This includes a set of activities:⁸

- (1) to explore decisions and instructions given by the higher authorities;
- (2) to discuss and approve the work report by the Party branch committee;
- (3) to admit new Party members, to confer awards to good Party members, to decide the punishment given to guilty Party members;
- (4) to select or dismiss representatives for the Party congress at the higher level;
- (5) to recall incompetent members of the Party branch committee, and select new ones.

All decisions should be approved by absolute majority. In case there are sharp differences over a problem, the congress is advised not to make any decision, and to postpone it until the next congress. It is also possible to invite the higher level Party

⁷Yunnan Province and Guangdong Province, in fact, are special cases in administrative division. Most communes, in early 1980-s, were converted into xiang and production brigades into cun. This is not the case in Yunnan and Guangdong; villages in those two provinces have a comparatively large number of population, some can reach 10,000. This partly explains why a village in Yunnan has so many Party members.

⁸"Zhibu dangyuan dahui de zhaokai" (To convene a Party branch congress), in ZGDDC, p. 230

committee to make decisions.⁹ In the case where a decision contravenes the Party's line, principles, and policies, including the decision of the higher Party committee, there are two possibilities of solution. Firstly, the higher Party committee is invited to judge; or, secondly, a Party branch congress is reconvened to solve it.

III. THE PARTY BRANCH COMMITTEE

The Party branch committee (dang zhibu weiyuanhui) is the highest governing organ of the Party branch while the Party congress is not in session. It has to convene at least once a month, but if the situation demands, it could hold a meeting at any time.¹⁰ This section will discuss the structure of a Party branch committee, and the job of the department of organization which occupies a central position within a Party branch.

A. The structure of a Party branch committee

Members of the committee are elected by the Party branch congress; ideally it is composed of three to five members, and not more than is seven. There are always, as a standard, one Party secretary, one representative of othr rganization department and one representative of the propaganda department. In addition, if situation permits, other departments can be established, such as a department of discipline, a department of secret protection, a department of youth, a department of united front, a department of relation with the masses.¹¹ The term of office is two years.¹²

A Party branch having less than ten members should not set up a Party branch committee. In this case, the Party members directly elect a Party secretary, and a

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰"Dang zhibu weiyuanhui de zhaokai" (To convene a Party branch committee), in ZGDDC, p. 231

¹¹"Dang zhibu sheli de yuanze" (The principle of establishing a Party branch), ZGDDC, p. 347.

¹²"Zhibu weiyuan hui" (The Party branch committee), in ZGDDC, p. 348

Deputy Party secretary if the situation needs it.¹³ The Party branch, then, is run by the Party secretary and all the existing Party members.

Since a Party branch committee is created by the Party branch congress, it must be responsible to the Party branch congress. A Party branch committee has to make a report to the Party branch congress each time it is in session.

B. The job of a Party branch committee

The job of a Party branch committee is: "to implement the Party's line, policies, and directives, as well as the decision by the higher Party organization, and the decision by the Party branch congress; to take care of the education of Party members; to do well in the construction of the Party's ideology, organization, and work style; and to do well in ideology and politics and the work with the masses."¹⁴ These jobs are distributed to the departments.

In connection with the internal operation of a Party branch, the department of organization plays a key role. It has five main jobs:¹⁵

1. to monitor the activities of Party members in Party cells, including inspection and supervision;
2. to maintain a high degree of Party members' knowledge on the Party's ideology;
3. to organise programs for recruiting new Party members;
4. to do administrative tasks, including collecting organization fees, and keeping records on transfer of Party members;
5. to keep statistics on Party members and Party activities.

IV. SCHEME

Schematically, the governing structure of a Party branch can be described as follows:

¹³"Dang zhibu sheli de yuanze" (The principle of establishing a Party branch), ZGDDC, p. 347

¹⁴"Zhibu weiyuanhui" (Party branch committee), in ZGDDC, p. 348

¹⁵"Dang zhibu zuzhi weiyuan" (Committee member in charge of organization), in ZGDDC, p. 349; I have reformulated the contents to make it more succinct.

Party Branch Congress

Party Branch Committee

Party Secretary

Organization department [Deputy Party Secretary]

Propaganda department

[Department of disciplinary inspection

Department of secret protection

Department of youth

Department of united front

Department of relation with the masses]

Party cells

Party cells

Party cells

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AA : American Anthropologist
AJCA : The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs
APSR : American Political Science Review
BJOS : The British Journal of Sociology
DXWX: Deng Xiaoping wenxuan, 1975-1982 (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping) Hubei: Renmin chubanshe; 1983.
CNA : China News Analysis
CQ : The China Quarterly
DJ : Dang jian (Party construction)
FBIS : Foreign Broadcasts Information Service
GCDY: Gongchandang yuan (Communist party's member)
HQ : Hong qi (Red Flag)
JOPS : Journal of Peasant Studies
KSYJ : Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu (Scientific socialist investigation)
NBWG: Neibu wen'gao (Classified draft)
NMRB: Nongmin ribao (Peasants' Daily)
PA : Pacific Affairs
QS : Qiu shi (Seek truth)
RMRB: Renmin ribao (People's Daily)
SED : Shi er da yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (Selected important documents since the Twelfth Party Congress) Beijing: Renmin chubanshe; 1988.
SSD : Shi san da yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (Selected important documents since the Thirteenth Party Congress), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe; 1991.
SWB : Summary of World Broadcasts
SYJ : Shi yi jie san zhongquanhui yilai zhongyao wenxian (Important documents since the Eleventh Party Congress) Beijing: Renmin chubanshe; 1987.
SXSD : Shehuixue yu shehui diaocha (Sociology and social investigation)
WP : World Politics
XSNY: Xin shiqi nongye he nongcun gongzuo zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (Selection of important documents on agriculture and agriculture work in the new era), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992.
XZLT : Xiang-zhen luntan (Discussion forum on township)
ZBJS : Zhibu jianshe (Party branch construction)
ZBSH : Zhibu shenghuo (Party branch life)
ZNMB: Zhongguo nongmin bao (Chinese peasants' daily)
ZNYNJ: Zhongguo nongye nianjian (China Agriculture Yearbook)
ZRZD : Zhongguo renmin daxue shubao ziliao zhongxin (Chinese People's University Centre of materials from books and newspapers)

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_____. "Yao you yi ge hao zhibu, yao you yi tao hao fuwu" (There should be a good party branch, and a series of services) NMRB; 7 September 1990: p. 1.

"Fangshan xian bufen nongcun zhibu shuji tichu nongcun jiceng ganbu liu buzhun" (A group of village party branch secretaries from Fangshan County proposed six prohibitions) NMRB; 7 January, 1986: p. 3.

"Fuyucun dangzhibu zenyang fahui zhandou baolei zuoyong" (How is it to bring into play the role of fighting bastion of the party branches in rich villages?) NMRB; 6 November, 1985: p. 2.

"Gaibian mianmao guanjian zai banzi" (In order to change the appearance, the critical thing is the leaders.) NMRB; 10 March 1987: p. 3.

"Guanyu dangqian nongcun dangqun guanxi wenti de diaocha yu yanjiu" (The investigation on current problem regarding the relationship between the Party and the masses) RMRB; 16 October, 1991: p. 5.

"Guowuyuan fu shi xi sheng-qu de jiancha zu huibao jiancha nongcun zhengce guanqie qingkuang" (Inspection teams sent by the State Council to fourteen provinces and autonomous regions make a report of their inspection on the situation of the implementation of policies in the countryside.) RMRB; 10 April 1993: p. 1.

"Hui duo cheng zai, ganbu nan dang" (Numerous meetings mean disaster, it's very difficult to be a cadre.) ZNMB; 20 April, 1980: p. 3.

"Huifu xiang zhengquan, shixing zhengshe fenshe" (To restore the political power of

the township, and implement the separation of commune and government) ZNMB; 18 January, 1983: p. 3.

"Hun xi cong ren xin" NMRB; 10 March 1987: p. 3.

"'Jian bu liao' 'guan bu liao', ruhe 'jian de le'?" ('Irreducible' 'unmanageable', how should 'alleviate'?) NMRB; 22 January 1992: p. 4.

"Jianjue zhizhi fengjian zongzu shili huodong" (Strictly ban all activities related to the power of feudal clan) ZNMB. 20 October 1983: p. 1.

"Jinnian yilai guanyu nongcun wenti de ji jian da shi" (Several big incidents related to village problem since beginning this year) Ming bao; 26 July 1993: p. 8.

"Jiaqiang cun ji zuzhi jianshe de ji ge wenti" (Some problems on strengthening the construction of village-level organization) NMRB; 24 October 1990: p. 3.

"Jiaqiang jicheng zuzhi jianshe yao minque zhidao sixiang" (It is necessary to have clear guiding principles for enhancing the construction of basic organizations). NMRB; 28 January, 1991.

"Jiaqiang nongcun jiceng zhengquan jianshe, gonggu he fazhan anding tuanjie jumian" (Strengthen the construction of village grass-root power, consolidate and develop a peaceful and united situation). NMRB; 13 July 1989: p. 1.

"Jiefu fa neidi" (The brother in law penalised the little brother) ZNMB; 7 November 1980: p. 3.

"Jiji fazhan nongcun qingnian rudang" (Actively recruit young peasants to join the Party). NMRB; 9 April, 1985: p. 3.

"Jing jiao dang zuzhi dailing nongmin kuai bu ben xiaokang" (Party organizations of Beijing suburb lead the peasants to rush to comfortable life) RMRB; 25 April 1993: p. 3.

"Jiuji qian jiuji wu, buru jian ge hao zhibu" (It is better to have a good party branch rather than relief fund or relief material) NMRB; 23 December 1986: p. 2.

"'Jiu pin guan' 'you si da nan'" ('Officials of ninth grade' facing big problems) NMRB; 26 April 1985: p. 3.

"Kaichuang nongcun dang de jiceng zuzhi jianshe gongzuo de xin jumian" (Make a breakthrough in the work of constructing the village party grass-root organization) NMRB; 4 December 1985: p. 1.

"Kaiping qu wei xiang houjin cun dangzhibu zhuru xinxian xueye" (Kaiping District Party Committee injected fresh blood into backward village party branches) NMRB;

25 December 1990: p. 3.

"Lai zi nongcun zhong bu rong huibi de huati" (A subject of conversation which comes from villages and which cannot be easily avoided) NMRB; 24 January 1989: p. 3.

Ling Zhijun. "Wei shenme hai yao fukua?" (Why should be boastful?) RMRB; 11 April 1994: p. 2.

Liu Siyang and Chen Weiwei. "Luoshi si zhong quanhui jingshen de zhongda buju" (Make a big stride in implementing the spirit of the Fourth Plenum) RMRB; 31 October 1994: p. 4.

"Liu zhong xiang-cun ganbu shou huanying" (Six types of township- village cadres are welcome) RMRB; 13 June 1993: p. 1.

"Liulihe xiang dangwei he cun ganbu duihua" (A dialogue between Liulihe Township Party Committee and village cadres) NMRB; 1 December 1987: p. 3.

"Liuzhuang cun dangzhibu jiaqiang xin xingshi xia de sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo" (The work on ideology and politics as newly implemented by Liuzhuang village Party branch) NMRB; 22 November, 1985: p. 1.

"Luotian nongcun dangzhibu kaizhan 'chuangjian xiaokang cun' jingsai" (Luotian launches a competition for village party branches 'creating village with comfortable life') RMRB; 15 August 1993: p. 3.

Ma Hai et al. "Dangqian nongmin dui xiangcun ganbu you ba dian xiwang" (Eight peasants' expectations over township and village cadres) NMRB; 7 November 1988: p. 4.

"Manyi yu bu manyi: leshan shi nongmin dui zhixing dang de nongcun zhengce de fanying" (Satisfied or unsatisfied -- response of peasants from Leshan City to the implementation of the Party's policies in the countryside) NMRB; 4 September 1991: p. 1.

"Meiyou jiu yi nongmin de xiaokang, jiu tanbushang quan guo de xiaokang" (Without comfortable life for 900 million peasant, it is impossible to talk about comfortable life for the whole nation) RMRB; 13 April 1993: p. 1.

"Minzhu xuanju cun zhishu shi gaohao dangzhibu banzi de guanjian" (Democratically electing village party secretaries is critical for the success of village party branches) NMRB; 20 December 1988: p. 3.

"Muqian mianhua zhiliang wenti yanzhong" (At present, the problem of cotton quality is very serious) RMRB. 15 March 1984: p. 2.

"Ningjuli cong na li lai?" (Where does the coagulation ability come from?) NMRB; 8 August 1992: p. 5.

"Nongcun baofu jiceng ganbu anjian de tedian, yuanyin ji duice" (The characteristics, reason and policy to cases of revenge against cadres in the countryside) Renmin gong'an bao; 2 May 1991: p. 3.

"Nongcun chaosheng xianxiang yanzhong jidai jiejie" (Violation of birth control in the countryside is serious, it needs urgent solution) NMRB; 4 January 1991: p. 4.

"Nongcun dang zuzhi de xin keti" (New courses for village party organization) RMRB; 14 November 1984: p. 1.

"Nongcun dang zuzhi yao kaituo chuangxin" (Village party branches must open and bring forth new ideas) NMRB; 1 January 1985: p. 3.

"Nongcun dangzhibu shuji gai bu gai daitou zhifu?" (Is a village Party branch secretary allowed to take a lead in becoming rich?) NMRB; 18 June 1985: p. 3.

"Nongcun dangzhibu shuji de zhuyao zhize" (The main responsibility of a party branch secretary in the countryside) NMRB; 18 February, 1986: p. 3.

"Nongcun dangzhibu shuji weihe nanxuan?" (Why is it so difficult to select village Party branch secretaries?) RMRB; 15 May, 1989: p. 5.

"Nongcun gaige de xianzhuang yu qushi" (The current condition and trend of village reform) NMRB; 16 May 1986: p. 2.

"Nongcun ganbu xiang cizhi bu shi gebie xianxiang, cong daibiao fenxi pengxiang cizhi shenceng yuanyin" (Not a separate phenomenon that village cadres resign, analyse the deepest reason of resignation of Peng Xiang from the people's representatives.) NMRB; 29 March, 1989: p. 1.

"Nongcun gan-qun guanxi jinzhang de yuanyin shi duo fangmian de" (There are many reasons why the relationship between village cadres and the masses is tense) NMRB; 26 September 1988: p. 1.

"Nongcun jiceng ganbu dui qingli caiwu you 'qi pa'" (In checking up financial affairs, village grass-root cadres have 'eight fears') NMRB; 20 April 1992: p. 3.

"Nongcun zhong shei de weixin gao" (Whose standing is high in a village?) NMRB; 5 July 1988: p. 3.

"Nongmin daibiao zai guanxin shenme" (What is the concern of peasant representatives) NMRB; 19 March 1990: p. 1.

"Nongmin dui xiangcun ganbu tichu xin yaoqiu" (The new demands to township and village cadres by the peasants) NMRB; 10 June, 1986: p. 2.

"Nongmin huanying shengmo yang de dangzhibu shuji" (What kind of Party branch secretaries do the peasants welcome?) NMRB; 20 March 1992: p. 3.

"Nongmin jiegu bu jiao tiliukuan zenmeban?" (How to deal with peasants who find excuse not to pay tiliu?) NMRB; 14 December 1987: p. 4.

"Nongmin yue lai yue bu tinghua le ma?" (Do peasants become less and less obedient) Jingji ribao; 22 December 1988.

"Ouda cun ganbu ying shou zhizhai" (The act of beating village cadres has to be punished) NMRB; 27 April 1985.

"Pochu 'jinqin zhuhe' luoxi, jianli xinxing reji guanxi" (Eliminate corrupt customs of 'close-relative realignment,' establish new type of human relations) NMRB; 2 December 1986: p. 3.

"Qieshi jiaqiang nongcun dang zhibu de ningjuli" (Earnestly strengthen the coagulating ability of village party branches) NMRB; 28 February 1989: p. 2.

"Qing ting nongmin de 'laosao hua'" (Please listen to the complaints of peasants) NMRB; 20 January 1988: p. 1.

"Quan sheng nongcun jiceng dang zuzhi jianshe jingyan jiaoliuhui zhaokai" (Open: conference for exchange of experience on constructing village grass-root organizations in the whole province) Henan ribao; 27 June 1991: p. 1.

"Qunzhong baofu cun ganbu de san ge yuanyin" (Three reasons why the masses take revenge against village cadres) NMRB; 5 September 1988: p. 1.

"Renshou xian qiehi jianqing nongmin fudan" (Renshou County implement the policy of alleviating peasant burden) Sichuan ribao; 27 May 1993: p. 1.

Rong Zhaolu. "Wenti zai yu zenyang zhifu" (The problem is how to become rich) NMRB; 26 April, 1985: p. 3.

"Ruhe fahui dangyuan xianfeng mofan zuoyong? Dangyuan lianxihu zhidu shi youxiao fangshi" (How do we bring into full play the role of vanguard model of party members? The system of party members linked up with households is a good method) NMRB; 26 December, 1989: p. 3.

"Ruhe miqie nongcun ganqun guanxi" (How to make the relationship between cadres and peasants more intimate) RMRB; 7 August 1993: p. 5.

"Sanluo de sha jucheng bao" (The scattered sand is assembled together into a bastion) NMRB; 20 June, 1989: p. 3.

"Shaodong xian wei dui 55 ge houjin zhibu chushi huangpai" (Shaodong County Party Committee gives warning to 55 backward party branches) NMRB. 12 June 1990: p.

2.

"Shenchen de huhuan" (A dark call) NMRB; 12 September 1988: p. 1.

"Shengchandu zhang ye yao guo hao qinshu guan" (The head of the production team also wants to pass the test of his relatives successfully) ZNMB; 7 August, 1980: p. 3.

"Shenme yang de cunzhishu zui shou huanying" (What kind of party branch secretaries are welcome) NMRB; 8 February 1992: p. 5.

Shi Laihe. "Zenyang dang hao nongcun dangzhibu shuji?" (How to become a good village Party branch secretary?) RMRB; 22 October 1990: p. 1.

"Shi quan zhifu, nongmin fan gan" (Becoming rich by relying on power, peasants expressed their feeling) NMRB; 3 May 1985: p. 3.

"Shiying xin xingshi, zuohao nongcun dangzhibu gongzuo" (Adapt to the new situation, do well the work of village party branch) ZNMB; 18 June 1981: p. 1.

"Shuji ye neng daitou fu" (The party secretary may also take a lead in becoming rich) ZNMB; 7 July, 1980: p. 5.

"Shuji yu qigai" (A party secretary and a beggar) NMRB; 26 July, 1988: p. 3.

"Si tongzhi de kanfa" (The opinions of four comrades) NMRB; 21 May 1985: p. 3.

"Sichuan renshou da-za-qiang shijian xiangqing" (The details of smashing-looting case in Renshou, Sichuan) Wenhui bao; 13 June 1993: p. 2.

Song Ping. "Yi dangzhibu wei hexin jianshe cunji zuzhi, dailing nongmin jiangding zou shehuizhuyi daolu" (Take party branch as core in building village level organizations, and in leading the peasants firmly to walk on the path of socialism). RMRB; 8 August 1990: p. 1.

"Song Ping zai Anhui kaocha shi zhichu: yao qieshi jiaqiang nongcun jiceng dang zhuzhi jianshe" (During his investigation in Anhui, Song Ping points out: we must carry out the construction of village grass-root party organizations) NMRB; 27 October 1989: p. 1.

Sun Zhi and Song Lin. "Qiantan cun dangzhibu shuji yin jubei de suzhi" (A simple discussion on the qualities that village party secretaries should have) Zhonggong changcun shiwei dangxiao xuebao; 1987; No. 3: pp. 41-42.

"Ta xiang jiao yulu neiyang" (He's just like Jiao Yulu) NMRB; 29 May 1992: p. 3.

Tang Jiahou. "Huigu guoqu, sikao weilai" (Looking back the past, reflect the future) NMRB; 6 March 1990: p. 3.

"Tiezhe minxin zhuan, bu sui feng xiang piao" (Nestle closely to people's heart, but don't follow the breeze) NMRB; 8 January 1991: p. 2.

"Tou yan gao fei" (The leading goose flies high) NMRB; 26 February, 1987: p. 1.

"Waisheng tou shu, shuji tang hu, ling dan you" (Nephew stole trees, Party secretary defended him, this made people worry) NMRB; 18 May, 1985: p. 3.

Wang Baodong. "Zhi wei ge ren zhifu, fu de you gui" (To enrich only oneself, is to become rich in a shameful way) NMRB; 3 May 1985: p. 3.

Wang Shihong. "Zhengque kandai dangzhibu shuji zhi fu" (Correctly treat party secretaries who become rich) NMRB; 4 June 1985: p. 3.

"Wei shenme daliang cunzhu ganbu yaoqiu cizhi" (Why do so any village cadres want to resign?) RMRB; 11 May 1993: p. 5.

"Wenming de 'ling tou yan'" (A civilised 'leading wild goose') NMRB; 12 March 1991: p. 3.

"Wo de diaocha" (My investigation) NMRB; 3 May, 1985: p. 3.

"'Women zhi le fu, quan kao dangzhibu'" ('We have reached prosperity, it is entirely relying on party branches') RMRB; 24 July 1993: p. 3.

"Wuhe jiuzheng dangzheng ganbu jingshang waifeng" (Wuhe County check all Party cadres engaged in illegal activities in doing business) NMRB; 8 February, 1985: p. 1.

"Xian zhuang yu yuanyin" (The current situation and its reason) NMRB; 17 July 1990: p. 3.

"Xiang cun ganbu de jingli ying fang zai nali?" (Where should township and village cadres put their energy?) NMRB; 17 June, 1987: p. 2.

"Xuexi dang de zuzhi zhidu wenda" (Study the question-answer on the organization system of the Party) ZNMB; 28 October 1982.

"Yancheng gongkai jingxuan cun dangzhibu shuji" (Yancheng openly select village party secretaries) Baokan wenzhai; 14 August 1995: p. 1.

Yang Chaoren. "Guanyu dangqian nongcun dang-qun guanxi wenti de diaocha yu yanjiu" (The investigation on the current problem regarding the relationship between the Party and the masses) RMRB; 16 October 1991.

Yang Lin. "Buyi tichang dangzhibu daitou zhifu" (Party secretaries should not take a lead in achieving prosperity) NMRB; 21 May 1985: p. 3.

Yao Dazheng. "Daitou zhifu, yao zou zhenglu" (To lead towards prosperity means to walk the correct path) NMRB; 3 May 1985: p. 3.

"Ye tan xian fu, hou fu, gongtongu" (Speaking about before, after, or at the same time become rich) NMRB; 4 June 1985: p. 3.

"Yi wei xiang dangwei shuji de kunao" (The anxiety of a township party committee secretary) NMRB; 15 April 1987: p. 1.

"You le kunnan zhao dangyuan" (If you have difficulties, go and find a party member) NMRB; 13 May, 1986: p. 3.

"Youhua waibu huanjing, qidong neibu huoli" (Ameliorate external environment, arouse internal vitality) NMRB; 2 April 1991: p. 3.

"Zen yang dang nongcun dangzhibu shuji" (How to become a village party branch secretary) NMRB; 28 June 1991: p. 3.

"Zenyang dang hao xinshiqi de nongcun dangzhishu" (How to be a good Party branch secretary of the countryside during the new era?) NMRB; 24 November 1987: p. 3.

"Zhang quan shi ba nian, si li bu zhanbian" (Holding power for 18 years, yet private gain was irrelevant) ZNMB; 24 January, 1984: p. 3.

"Zhei yang ge zhibu shuji yang ma?" (Is he a typical party branch secretary?) ZNMB; 7 November 1980: p. 5.

"Zhishu de yao ban ting zhi le" (The back of the party secretary is really straightened) ZNMB; 11 December, 1980: p. 1.

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