The Power Structure in Rural China after the Reform —
A Case Study of a Village in Guangdong

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Abstract

Since the Chinese Economic Reform started in the late 1970’s, the Chinese countryside has gone through tremendous changes, especially villages in coastal areas where a lot of farmlands have been changed to industrial use and are managed collectively. Collective management of the land property is not only a way to manage the village economy, but it has also affected the power distribution within the village. The aim of this study is to understand the impact of political and economic reform on the power of the village government, the cadres, and the ordinary villagers. The study was conducted in a village in Guangdong Province from 2002 to 2004. It is found that under the collective management, the village government plays the most important role in the economic development of the village. In executing their responsibilities, cadres have a great power over the decision making process both in terms of the administration and the economic development in the village. At the same time, ordinary villagers watch the cadres closely to ensure that they manage the collective property efficiently and successfully. Furthermore, like many villages in Guangdong Province, the village being studied has many “outsiders”. In fact, there are only 153 native villagers but 30,000 non-native workers living in the village. This group of non-natives is a powerless group in the village. They are not allowed to participate in the village decision making process at all. This distribution of power in the village today can be accounted for, to a great extent, by the entitlement to ownership of land in the village, which is one of the most important areas that has changed significantly in rural China under the political and economic reforms.
提要

自 1978 年经济改革以后，中国农村经历了大规模的社会变迁。特别是沿海农村，在经济变革之下，很多村庄把耕地改变为工业用地，并以集体的形式管理。集体管理除了是统筹村内经济资源的方法外，它亦影响着村内的权力分配。作者希望通过本文分析经济改革及村落自治对地方政府、村干及当地村民的权力带来什么样的影响。本文研究于二零零二年至二零零四年期间在广东省一个村庄进行。作者发现，在土地以集体形式管理下，村政府成为管理并发展村内集体经济的重要部门，而村干代表村政府管理村内的行政及经济，掌握很大的权力。同时，村民为了确保他们的集体资产得到最高的回报，他们往往扮演着监察村内集体经济及行政的重要角色。另外，如广东省其他村落一样，次研究的村庄居住着很多外来人口，现时村内本地人口只有 150 多人，但外来人口却有 30,000。尽管外来人口是村中的绝大多数，他们中的很多人长期工作并居住在村中，但他们并没有任何决定村内的行政及资源的执行及分配权，他们在村内是没有权力实体的一群。当今这种村落的权力分配很大程度上是取决于土地所有权的分配。
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