

Investigation and Analysis of Multiple Subjects in Rural Governance

-- Taking the North of Jiangsu Countryside in China as An Example

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Abstract

It has been difficult to unify the classification standards of rural governance subjects in the academic field for a long time, leading to many controversies about rural governance models. This paper aims to define and classify rural governance subjects according to the reality and actual needs of rural governance in northern Jiangsu and analyze the relationship between subjects in different rural governance models made up of a combination of governance subjects to help the construction of a rural governance system with three governance systems and realize rural revitalization.

Keywords

Northern Jiangsu; Rural Governance; Multiple Subjects.

1. Introduction

Most of the villages in China are natural villages that have been inherited for generations, and there is a clear tendency of clannism in managing daily affairs in villages. Social ethics such as morality and etiquette also play an essential role. With economic development and social system changing in recent years, rural society has also undergone more and more apparent changes. The rural governance system has developed into a comprehensive governance system composed of multiple powers.

By combing the relevant literature and the reality of rural society, the article shows that villages' governance can be divided into three kinds: autonomy, moral governance, and law governance under the dual role of institutions and culture. While from the macro levels, medium levels, and micro levels, the subjects of rural authority can be divided into the following three groups, namely, the state level is represented by the township government, village party branch, villagers' committee, villagers' representative assembly, and villagers' supervisory committee, etc. the social level represented by the villagers' elite farmers and civil organizations. The individual level represented by the majority of farmers.

The article combines relevant rural governance data and selects some villages in the northern part of Jiangsu Province, which is relatively backward in economic development. By analyzing and investigating the situation of rural governance subjects in the north of Jiangsu Province through empirical research and other means, the article has summarized the role of positioning rural subjects, defining, and classifying them.

2. Overview of Rural Governance Environment in Northern Jiangsu

2.1. Introduction to the Basic Situation of the Selected Villages

The article investigates some villages in Ganyu District, Lianyungang City, JiangSu Province, China, which is of great representativeness.

2.1.1. Geographical Location and Population Distribution

Ganyu District, Lianyungang, Jiangsu Province, China, was abolished as a county and established as a district under the city's jurisdiction on July 9, 2014. The geographic coordinates of the center are 119° 18' East longitude and 34° 50' North latitude, located in East China, Yangtze River Delta region. It is also at the junction of Jiangsu and Shandong provinces, the eastern intersection of Jiangsu coastal economic belt and East Longhai industrial belt development. East of the Yellow Sea of Haizhou Bay, the coastline is 62.5 km long; north of Rizhao, Shandong Province; west of Linyi, Shandong Province, south to southwest of Jiangsu Province, Donghai and Lianyungang, Haizhou, Lianyungang. The mountains, plains, and coastal territory each accounted for 1/3 of the total 1514 square kilometers, the population of 1.19 million, under the jurisdiction of 15 towns, two local economic development zones, 427 administrative villages, 38 communities. According to the data of the seventh census, as of November 1, 2020, the resident population of Ganyu District is 1,003,844 people. The total registered population of the district is 1,198,100, with 352,000 households.

2.1.2. Economic Development

In 2020, Ganyu District achieved a gross regional product of 63.158 billion yuan, increasing 0.2% at comparable prices. Among them, the added value of the primary industry is 11.088 billion yuan, up 0.6%; the secondary industry's added value is 26.706 billion yuan, down 3.1%; the added value of the tertiary sector is 25.364 billion yuan, up 4.0%.

Ganyu is one of the first coastal open areas in China, one of the top 100 small and medium-sized cities with the most investment potential in China, and the new growth pole of Jiangsu coast in the State Council's consideration and adoption; of the "Jiangsu Coastal Region Development Plan." In 2013, it was ranked 93rd among the top 100 counties (cities) in the country. Ganyu District is the "Pearl of the Yellow Sea" and the "Hometown of Xu-Fu" with beautiful mountains and a pleasant climate.

3. Multi-subject Level Division

By analyzing the questionnaire results, we can refine the positioning for the three levels of subjects again. Clarify the role of subjects in rural governance.

3.1. National Level

Township governments, village party branches, village committees, village representative assemblies, and village supervisory committees, mainly at the national level, are the main forces of the rule of law in villages.

The township government is the basic administrative unit of the village and plays the role of the "leader" in rural governance. The rural governance system plays a crucial role in guiding and directing:

1. Maintaining social order
2. Keeping the harmony and stability of agrarian society
3. Regulating conflicts of interest among village people
4. Ensuring the effective implementation of laws and regulations

In the process of village governance, the township government and the village committee are the relationships of guidance. The township government does not directly interfere with village affairs. The village party branch, the villagers' representative assembly, and the villagers' supervisory committee are the "agents" in village governance to ensure effective village governance. The three councils are self-governin organizations democratically elected by villagers, and the relationship is that the village representative assembly elects the village committee. The village committee decides on village affairs and grants governance rights, and

the village representative assembly and the village supervisory committee jointly supervise the use of the exercise of rights. Playing a good role of the three councils, giving villagers the right to direct democracy, can make more villagers take the initiative to participate in rural governance.

3.2. Social Level

From the traditional "village gentry rule" to the contemporary "village sage rule," various civic organizations and village sage elites emerge in the countryside to represent the social level and act as the leaders of village moral governance. They can grasp the dilemma of precise village governance and stimulate the masses' enthusiasm through their appeal in the villagers or organizations. They can also guide the villagers to obey by village rules, regulation, and setting an excellent moral at the same time. The social level of governance subject targeted the rural governance model. Subtitling stimulation of the village endogenous power for the modernization of rural governance in the new socialist era has a decisive role in promoting.

Village sages a culture born and rooted in the countryside, have continued their traditional culture in the rural society for many years and played an essential role in the long history. "Imperial power does not go down to the county, the mountains are high and the emperor is far away," so the village sages come a bridge between the government and the locals. A group of villagers who are rooted in the local community, have culture, status, talent, and respect have become the essential maintainers of rural society in all dynasties. In the countryside, people want to complete their daily farming tasks and crave the continuation of good moral character. Villagers enhance the influence of public authority through their charisma and the quality of sincerity for the people. The presence of the village sages makes decision-making in the collective much less costly, and people observe the rituals inherited from tradition and obey these distinguished villagers. Such an approach has been effective in overcoming the dilemma of collective action. The sage system allows resources to be better pooled, thus making it easier for higher levels of government to connect with villages and promote rural governance.

In recent years, the concept of "New Village sages" which is different from traditional village sages has been put forward. This concept refers to rural elites with certain innovative consciousness, values, cultural cultivation, and corresponding moral connotations. These elites return to their hometowns make selfless contributions to their villages, actively participate in rural governance, and play an essential role in agrarian society's economic, political, and cultural development. The state has begun to guide new villagers to participate in the governance of rural communities. The Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on the Implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy proposed in 2018 to "give play to the role of new rural sages." By now, the Party and the State have started dialectically and discard the traditional village sages based on the "rural revitalization strategy" and vigorously strengthened the efforts to guide the new village sages to participate in rural governance. The new village sages are not only in cultural construction, which is limited by the traditional villages, but also in the broad field of social structure. The Chinese rural elites have entered a transitional period of pluralistic elite governance, and numerous political, economic, and cultural capable people have appeared in the rural communities.

3.3. Personal Level

Villagers, as the participating subjects of rural governance, are the main force of self-governance. The core of rural revitalization is the revitalization of people, and pastoral authority needs to adhere to the center of people and respect the leading position of farmers.

As the essential individuals in the countryside, ordinary villagers are the core elements of rural governance. They are scattered and independent. They seems to play a small role in the

construction of the countryside. However, the villagers are prominent in number and know the country's situation best, so they have a significant role in the implementation and development of rural governance strategies. The power of organizing villagers is primarily spontaneous. It is indispensable to strengthen the capacity of the group, to hold the rights to defend for their rights in rural governance, and to enjoy the influence of prestige and obedience among villagers.

4. The Subjects of Rural Governance in Northern Jiangsu

4.1. Basic Information of the Selected Population

This questionnaire is a random survey on diversified subjects in rural governance; 500 questionnaires were distributed, involving 50 administrative villages in and around Ganyu.

Most of those selected were over 35 years old with some social experience. Regarding the occupation, 8.37% were village committee members and village workers, 21.63% were government/authority cadres/civil servants, 38.49% were self-employed, 5.56% were students, and 25.59% were other occupations. Regarding the education level, 33.13% were undergraduates, 39.09% were junior colleges, 26.39% were below the secondary school, and fewer were postgraduates or above; regarding years of living in the countryside, 37.9% were more than ten years, 31.15% were 5-10 years, 25.4% were 3-5 years, and 5.56% were less than two years.

4.2. Analysis of Questionnaire Results and Problems

1) In the questionnaire, "Do you think a single entity, the government should do rural governance, or should social organizations, voluntary groups, and rural residents outside the government become the main entities of rural governance?" In this question, 29.37% of the respondents think that the government should be a single entity. In comparison, 70.63% of the respondents believe that the government should be a pluralistic entity. Most respondents think that the government, social organizations, voluntary groups, and rural residents should be pluralistic.

2) Regarding the question "What are the pluralistic subjects in your area?" In this question, the two village committees and the village representative councils have the highest proportion in the surveyed area, 62.1%, 57.73%, and 60.71%, respectively. These three main subjects play a more significant role in the village governance of the site. It indicates that the two village committees have played the role of de facto subjects in the actual rural governance process, directly intervening in rural affairs. In contrast, the village representative councils, as voluntary groups organized by the masses, represent the villagers' self-will, and have expanded their strength in rural governance, playing a more prominent role in the pastoral governance process. However, in the question "What do you think about the role of civil organizations in rural governance?". Most of the respondents think that civil organizations play an average role, with a proportion of 57.94%, indicating that the participation of civil organizations in rural governance is increasing, but their prominent role is not apparent. In contrast, fewer survey respondents in the area believe that there are three kinds of multiple subjects: township government, civil organizations, and farmers' masses, 55.56%, 54.56%, and 40.67% respectively, indicating that the role of these three subjects in rural governance in the village is not apparent. The reason may be that the township government plays the role of "leader" in village governance but does not directly intervene in village affairs. As the main participants of rural control, the villagers do not directly interfere with pastoral authority, which also confirms most of the questionnaire that the township government, farmers, and village representatives play an average role in rural governance.

3) Regarding the question "Do you think that village governance should involve all people? The proportion of those who think it is the responsibility of the government is 6.94%, the

proportion of those who think it is the responsibility of the village committee is 24.4%, the proportion of those who think villagers must participate is 34.92%, and the proportion of those who think it should be jointly governed is 33.73%. It indicates that in the survey area, villagers are more active in participating in village governance. Still, in the actual handling of village affairs, all subjects were governed in cooperation. In addition, the question "Do you understand the affairs of this village?" In the survey, 23.61% of the respondents "don't know," 26.39% of them think they know "generally" about the affairs of their village, and 26.39% of them "know" and "know well." Indirectly, the survey respondents have incomplete knowledge of the main content of village governance.

4) In the questionnaire, "What do you think is the role of multiple subjects in the 'two-dimensional and three-parties rural governance?'" In this question, 19.25% of people think the role is great, 34.52% think the role is great, 34.54% think the role is average, 7.94% think the role is weak, and 5.75% think the role is not effective. Regarding "influence of village rules and customs in the handling of village affairs", 28.97% agreed that they were very influential, 59.15% agreed that they were sometimes influential in the handling of village affairs, but 12.9% still disagreed that they were influential in the handling of village affairs. When it comes to "the positive effect of village rules and customs on village management." Almost all respondents think that village rules and customs can restrain some behaviors of villagers, effectively reduce disputes and conflicts, and quickly solve problems. Especially for restraining some behaviors of villagers, reducing disputes and conflicts, accounting for 67.66%, 79.19%, and 75% respectively. As for the "positive role of villagers' culture in rural governance," except for the weaker role in promoting economic development and restraining some wrong behaviors of villagers, it plays an obvious role in promoting rural integration, the development of rural public utilities, and the development of rich cultural life, accounting for 67.66%, 81.35%, and 76.39%.

5) The question "Do you know other characteristic ways of rural governance?" In the survey, the respondents know more about the democratic mediation council and people's council, and the proportion of those who know is more balanced, as high as 82.34% and 80.16%. In contrast, the proportion of those who know about the "Villagers' Council" is 62.1%. The proportion of those who do not know about other rural governance methods is only 11.51%. It shows that the survey respondents have a high degree of concern about village governance. In the questionnaire, "What do you think is the main positive role of villagers' autonomy in rural development?" In the questionnaire, 74.21%, 68.65%, and 64.48% of the respondents think that villagers' autonomy has expanded grassroots democracy and helped farmers be the masters of their own house; strengthening cadres' awareness purpose and improved the relationship between cadres and the public; standardized village affairs and financial management and reduced the burden of farmers, respectively. In addition, 47.22% of people think that villagers' autonomy has also increased the transparency of decision-making in rural affairs, 40.87% of people believe that villagers' autonomy has promoted social stability and is conducive to rural harmony, and 21.83% of people feel that villagers' autonomy has announced the development of rural economy and increased farmers' income. In conclusion, in the current rural development, the role of villager autonomy can not be underestimated.

6) Regarding the question "What aspects do you think are important to promote the development of this village?" Those who think the support of the higher government, the leadership of village cadres, and the active participation of villagers are the most important, with the proportions of 64.48%, 81.55%, and 67.86%, respectively. It reflects that the survey respondent's recognition of the status of each subject in village governance, indicating that each subject plays an influential role in control. Combined with the survey results, the current difficulties in carrying out rural governance work still exist. 48.21% of people think that the superiors interfere too much in rustic things, 77.38% believe that village cadres are ineffective,

62.3% believe there are internal conflicts between committees of two villages, and 40.67% think that the cooperation of villagers is low. In essence, the problem of rural governance subjects is mainly manifested as the contradiction between rural politics and village governance, village party branch committee and village committee, social organizations, and grassroots government. It is crucial to speed up the coordination of the contradiction between subjects and realize the cooperative governance of multiple subjects of rural things in rural administration.

7) Regarding the question of development, "How do you think the participation of multiple actors in the governance of your community planning is? What are the areas that need to be optimized and improved?" In this question, several answers mentioned the hope that villagers can actively participate and cooperate. They hope to strengthen the contact between the higher-level government, village committee, and villagers, the yearning to standardize village affairs and financial management, and effectively restrain villagers. It shows that while villagers hope for a certain degree of participation, they also hope that the higher-level group of governments and organizations will play a more significant role.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of these findings shows that the pattern of rural governance subjects in China is a combination of the state level and the social level as the dominant force, assisted by the individual level. The state promotes China as the dominant force in the modernization process at all levels. Therefore, the choice of governance model construction will also give priority to state domination. In the rural governance system, the state level plays two prominent roles: on the one hand, regulating the conflicts between people's benefits; on the other hand, assuming the responsibility of regulating social order and maintaining social development and stability. Although the national level can play a central leadership role of the Party and ensure the accuracy of the general policy of rural construction, however, since many township leaders lack knowledge of the townships they manage, they have inevitable conflicts of benefit with villagers in some decisions, which require the cooperation of social organizations that can represent the views of villagers. The state's role in rural governance has changed from direct and all-around intervention to indirect and selective intervention. The legal form of control and regulation of rural society is strengthened as administrative power is weakened.

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