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Analysis on the Offside and Vacancy in the Administration of the Village Party Branch and the Villagers' Committee in Sichuan Province——Based on Villagers' Autonomy

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Abstract In the paper, the researches on the administration scope, the leadership style of the village party branch, the core status of village party branch and the autonomy of villagers' committee are expounded. On the basis of the empirical investigation of countryside in Sichuan Province, the offside and vacancy of the administration of the "two committees in village" in the villagers' autonomy are studied tentatively. The results show that the offside and vacancy of the "two committees in village" can be divided into three types, covering the village party branch-dominated, the villagers' committee-dominated type and the antagonism of the two village committees. The reasons for the offside and vacancy of administration of the "two committees in village" are analyzed, including the fragility of the two committees of the village; the imbalanced power sources of the two committees of the village; the imbalance of the competition for interests of the two committees and the negative effects of traditional politics and culture. The countermeasures are put forward, for example, reinforcing the system construction of rural grassroots organizations; expanding the democratic election modes such as "two-vote system" and "selecting one from the two recommended"; establishing the coordinative and supervisory mechanisms between the two committees in the village and introducing into college-graduate village officials to improve the quality of rural cadres.

Key words Two committees in village, Offside of administration, Vacancy of administration, Villagers' autonomy, China

The "two committees in village" refers to the village party branch and villagers' committee. The current laws and regulations have defined their characters and administration scope. The second article of the *Regulations on Rural Grassroots Organizations of Chinese Communist Party* says that "the village party branch is the grass-root organization of the Chinese Communist Party, the foundation of the whole work and battle effectiveness of Chinese Communist Party in rural areas, and the leading nucleus of the various organizations and works of villages." In addition, the second article of the *Organic Law of Villagers' Committees of the People's Republic of China* defines that "the villagers' committees are the grass-root autonomy organizations for realizing self-management, self-education and self-service of villagers; the villagers' committees carry out democratic election, democratic decision and democratic supervision". The villagers' committees deal with the matters concerning public affairs and public well-being of their villagers. Besides, they work for mediating family and neighborhood disputes; maintaining the social order, submitting the opinions and demands of the masses to the people's government and proposing suggestions. It can be seen that the interrelations between the two committees are as follows. The village party branch is the leading nucleus in the rural grass-root organizations and the villagers' committee is the organizer and executor of various kinds of works.

Since the reform and opening up, the movement of villagers' autonomy, which takes the grass-root democracy as

the core, has been expanded gradually in China, so as to push forward the democratic process and ensure the rights of the villagers. Sichuan Province has studied the reasonable arrangement for realizing the target positively and conducted favorable tentative reform on the rural grass-root political systems. In the process, rich experiences have been obtained, but there are still a lot of nasty problems. Among which, the offside and vacancy of the administration of the two committees are widespread, which have formed one of the vital barriers in the process of villagers' autonomy. Through the great efforts paid to the investigation of countryside in Sichuan Province, we found that in the relations of the "two committees", the offside of the village party branches and the vacancy of the villagers' committees are widespread in villages, which has caused the internal conflicts of rural grass-root organizations and the development of rural social democracy. Thus, the offside and vacancy of administration have become urgent problems currently. Therefore, we analyze the causes of the offside and vacancy of the administration of the two committees, and propose the countermeasures.

1 Review of the researches on the administration of the "two committees in village"

At present, relying on the surroundings of villagers' autonomy, scholars have conducted a large amount of beneficial researches on the administration and interrelations of the two committees in villages, which provides the relevant theoretical support for the rural political practice.

1.1 Administration scope of the "two committees in village" XU yong (2009) points out that if the party branch wants to become the real hub of the village-level organization,

it should avoid the bureaucracy, shake off the shackles of trivial affairs and put all his efforts to the aspects of the control of developmental directions, the coordination of the relations among various organizations and the self-construction^[1]. At present, the rights and obligations of the village party branch and villagers' committee have not been clearly defined and the power boundary of the two rights are vague. In addition, what is the specific content of the rights the village-level party branch on earth is the most complex and difficult point in the current regulations. Many scholars hold that, the right of the village party branch should be regarded as the right of supervision and let the villagers' committees to carry out the administration. As thus, the leadership of the party can be fully reflected, as well as the villagers' autonomy.

1.2 Leadership style of the village party committee In 1985, China began to implement the People's commune system, which integrates the political, economic and social functions as a whole. The notable features of the system are the highly centralized leadership and the top-down allocation of public resources. However, the rural area follows the traditional centralized leadership. The main reason for the conflicts of the two committees is the patriarchal administration, which leads to the insufficient communication of the two committees and the opinions of the masses can not be adopted. Thus the leadership level will decrease. Therefore, the administration of villages should be conducted under rules and regulations. YAO Rui-min(2004) holds that in order to smooth the relations between the two committees, the basic solution is implementing democratic policy-making principle and establishing an scientific and effective democratic policy-making mechanism^[2]. For the moment, the further improvement of the system of the villagers' representatives is the root of "administrating villages by rules".

1.3 The central leadership status of village party branch and the problems of autonomy of villagers' committee

According to the regulations on rural grass-root organizations of Chinese communist party, the village party branch is the central leader of the village-level organizations (villagers' committee) and various kinds of works (villager' autonomy). The village party branch leads the villagers' committees, and backs and guarantees the fully display of its functions according to the relevant laws and regulations of China^[3]. That is to say, the village party branch is the leader of villagers' committee. So the problems of handling the relations of the central leadership of village party branch and the autonomy of villagers' committees. German scholar, Bjorn Alpermann holds that the research on villagers' self-governance legal system, the formal regulations define that the village party branch is the central leadership. At the same time, they stipulate that the villager' committee is the main body of practicing the villagers' autonomy, which lead to the tense relations in the organizations. Therefore, to resolve the conflicts in power operation, the current legal relations should be adjusted^[4]. However, the current laws have not clearly defined the administration scope of village party branch and villagers' committee.

2 The offside and vacancy in the administration of the village party branch and the villagers' committee in Sichuan Province

Sichuan Province ranks front raw in terms of democracy at grass-root level, but the inharmonious relations between the two committees have become a major factor which can not be ignored. ZHAO Shu-kai, from the Development Research Center of the State Council, thinks that in rural areas, the inharmonious and unsmooth relations between village party branch and villagers' committee are serious. Furthermore, the unsmooth relations of them have been regarded as the "top problem" in affecting the villagers' autonomy^[5]. During the investigation of 50 villages, HE Xue-feng finds that two committees of village which have achieved the close cooperation are less than 60%^[6], which has a grave impact on the healthy development of villagers' autonomy. Through providing questionnaires and conducting profound interview on many village party committees in Suining, Guangan and Dazhou in July, 2009, we found that the offside and vacancy of the two committees in village is presented by three types.

2.1 The village party branch-dominated type As for this type, the village party branch captures the economic rights, authority, rights to employ persons and other affairs, so the power is extremely expanded. However, the villagers' committee becomes the assistants and execution organs for the village party branch. Besides, the power provided by the villagers' meeting to villagers' committees can not be fully displayed. The village party branch often commands the villagers' committee, thus the villagers' autonomy is forfeited to a certain degree.

2.2 The villagers' committee-dominated type This type is caused by the weak and slack organization of village party branch. It lacks the cohesion and rallying point, as well as the competence for reigning and leading the villagers' committees. All the affairs of the village are handled by the villagers' committee, which should have been done by the village party branch, and the villagers' committee plays a dominant role in the affairs of village. Liuying Village of STownship belongs to this type. In Liuying Village, the village party branch never cares about the affairs of its village and it only opens several party meetings symbolically for catering to supervision from the upper government.

2.3 The antagonism of the "two committees in village" In this type, the two committees are opposite to each other in the management of the village's affairs, and both of them want to outshine their counterpart to capture the decision-making rights. In order to fight for more rights, the villagers' committee and village party branch launches long-term infighting. Hence, they not only can not finish the tasks but also damage the harmony between them, which further sharpen the conflicts of the two committees in village. Sometimes, the village is in the state of anarchy, for both of the villagers' committees and village party branch try to dodge their responsibilities. For example, in Nanzhang village of Q Town, the dyke should be repaired after the rainy season according to the practices. But the secretary of the village party branch says that "repairing the dyke belongs to the public construction, so it is the responsibility of villagers' com-

mittee". But the dean of the villagers' committee says that "the party is the hub of the leadership and repairing the dyke is a big deal, so it deserves to be managed by the village party branch naturally". The buck-passing behaviors of village party branch and villagers' committee gravely affects the villagers' autonomy.

3 The causes of the offside and vacancy in the administration of the villagers' committee and the village party branch

Many reasons may account for the unbalanced relations between the village party branch and villagers' committee, including political reasons, economic reasons, cultural reasons, historical reasons, people's quality and the laws and regulations. Through investigation, we conclude the following reasons.

3.1 The fragility of the "two committees in village" The fragility of the "two committees in village" is the most direct and essential reason for the backward "two committees in village" in Sichuan Province. Firstly, the age of staff in the "two committees in village" is relatively older. The aging trend of the cadres and party members is serious. Through sample survey and analysis of rural areas in Sichuan Province, we know that the average age of the cadres in villagers' committees is 51.4 years old and that of the party members is 53.8 years old. 28.13% of the secretaries of village party branch and deans of villagers' committees are older than 55. In rural areas of Sichuan Province, there are even deans who are older than 78 years old. Secondly, the cultural quality of members from the "two committees in village" is low generally. Most of the cadres and party members have only accepted junior high school or primary school education. The cultural structure of the members of the committees can be seen on Fig. 1 and the cultural structure of the members of party branch can be seen on pie chart 2. It can be seen that among the secretary of party branch and dean of village committee, only 36.72% of them have accepted higher school education or above. Thirdly, the thought of the "two committees in village" is relatively outdated. Members of "two committees in village" are slow in accepting new emerged things, new thoughts and new concepts. Their paces in leading the masses still have long way to go. Besides, many cadres and party members are even inferior to common masses and the leading role played by the cadres is not so obvious.

3.2 The power sources of the "two committees in village" are imbalance After implementing the villagers' autonomy, the power sources of the village party branch and the villagers' committees decouple from each other. The power of village party branch comes from the appointment of the higher party committees and the party selection, but the power of villagers' committee comes from the selection of the whole village. According to the "who is authorized and who is responsible", the village party branch is responsible for towns and villages and the villagers' committee is responsible for the villagers. The village party branch is the grass-root organizations of Chinese Communist party, so the strong authority has been formed under the effects of traditional thoughts. But being se-

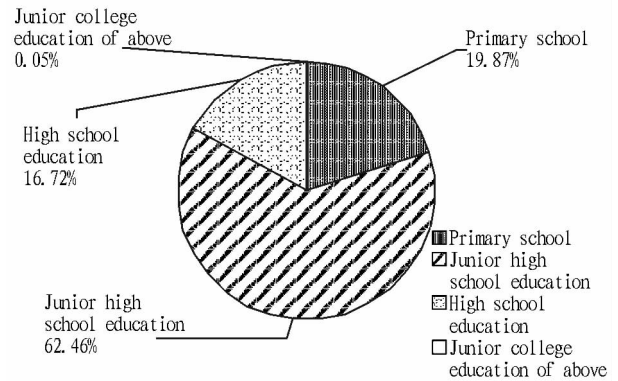


Fig. 1 The cultural structure of cadres

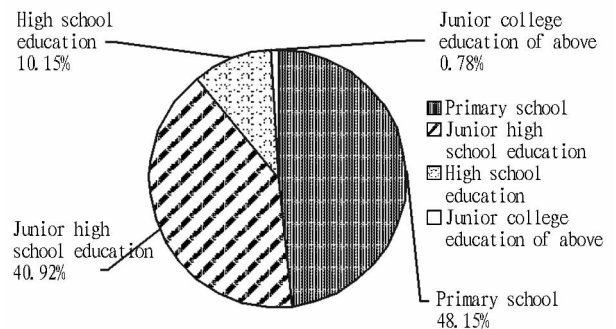


Fig. 2 The cultural structure of cadres

lected by the masses, villagers' committee is the administration organization of the village, so they are equal in law. That is to say, there are two public administration organizations in one village. The varied sources of power and the indistinct boundary of power lead to the uncertainty of rights and duties. Therefore, the offside and vacancy of the "two committees in village" are easy to understand under such circumstance.

3.3 The interest competition of the "two committees in village" is imbalance With the formal release and implementation of the *Organic Law of Villagers' Committee*, the "two committees in village" shows the down-up trend of power (village party branch) and the up-down trend of power, which sharpen the conflicts between the secretary of village party branch and the dean of village to a certain degree. The two complete with each other for the distribution of power and interests. The dean of the village wants to get more decision-making rights from the *Organic Law of Villagers' Committee*; but the secretary of village party branch tries to keep the dominance by the *Party Constitution and Regulations on Rural Grassroots Organizations of Chinese Communist Party*, which lead to the sharp conflicts of "two committees in village" in fighting for the power and interests. The sample villages are mainly the villages, which far away from towns and counties, with the farthest one is more than 20 km away. Besides, many of the sample villages lack of natural resources, as well as entity economy, so working out is the main income source of the villagers. Some of the sample villages confront with tough survival environment, scant farmland and short land resources, and some villages of them are often hit by landslide and some other geo-

logic disasters. Any aggravating of conflicts can not decouple from the driving of interests, so the conflicts between the "two committees in village" will inevitably lead to the fight over village-administration resources, which are concentrated in appointment and dismissal of cadres, financial rights, management rights and some other aspects. The village party branch and the villagers' committee always fight with each others circling the internal right resources and the control on interest.

3.4 The negative influences of traditional culture concerning politics Gabriel A. Almond points out that: "Political culture is a set of political attitudes, beliefs and feelings in a fixed period of a nation.....the attitudes formed in the past have an important positive function in the future political behaviors. And the political culture affects the behaviors, political demands and legal reactions of the political roles in the society"^[7]. The traditional culture concerning politics has profound impact on the rural cadres and farmers. Affected by several thousands of traditional culture, the feudal patriarchal thought has deeply rooted in the cultural structure of Sichuan Province. The feudal thought gravely restrains the healthy development of villagers' autonomy and the masses lack the competence of constructing the cultural structure. Undoubtedly, the influences of traditional culture concerning politics are imperceptible, widespread, objective and long-lasting. The sample survey of villages in Sichuan Province shows that the cultural level of the cadres is varied; the strong ancestral idea is prevalently existed and the legal awareness is weak. Besides, they can not fully understand the essence of the village-level management, which does great harm to the harmonious development of "two committees in village".

4 Countermeasures and suggestions

4.1 The system construction of reinforcing the rural grass-root organization Under the background of implementing the villagers' autonomy, there are conflicts in the political leading rights of the Party and the villagers' autonomy. The root of it is that during the constant adjustment of rural grass-root political system, the functions of organizations at each level is not so clear and the legal norms and restrictions of are absent, which lead to the low degree of systemization. Huntington thinks that "the political developmental degree of a nation determines the systemization level of the political system of the nation, as well as the realization of political modernization". Therefore, in the practice of villagers' autonomy, the key is to "quantify the system", that is quantifying the power boundary of the political leading right of the Party and the villagers' autonomy. In such a manner, the solution of the offside and vacancy of "two committees in village" can have the laws to rely on; the multiple politics can be avoided and the system construction of the rural grass-root organizations can be enforced gradually.

4.2 Promoting the democratic selection of "two-vote system" and "selecting one from the two recommended" The "two-vote system" is a grass-root democratic selection mode, first created by Hequ County of Shanxi Province in 1991 during the practice of selecting secretary of village party branch^[8].

The concrete operating process of "two-vote system" is as follows: in the first place, the whole villagers give the vote of confidence to determine the candidates. Then the Party committees will formally nominate the candidates for the village party branch, according to the results of the vote of confidence. In the last place, the party branch will be selected according to the votes of the whole party members. Since 1990s, the "two-vote system" has been promoted gradually in many provinces of China. According to the statistics, there are altogether more than 20 provinces in China have carried out "two-vote system". In Sichuan Province and Chongqing the aggregate area which has carried out the system, achieved over 95%^[9]. "Selecting one from the two recommended" is the advancement and development of "two-vote system", the specific processes are as follows. In the first place, the villager's meeting and Party member meeting to discuss and produce the new candidates of party branch. Then the Party Meeting will select the new member from the candidates^[10]. The ultimate purpose of the "two-vote system" and "selecting one from the two recommended" is to set up the credit channel of power from the leaders to the masses without changing the rural dual structure. The modes are helpful for solving the power intersection of the "two committees in village", as well as avoiding the power friction of the "two committees in village". "Selecting one from the two recommended" has improved the quality of the secretaries of party branch and the public recognition of party members and masses; stimulated the enthusiasm of cadres at the village-level; ensured the democratic rights of the members of the Party and intensified the legitimacy of party organization.

4.3 Establishing the coordination and supervision mechanism among the "two committees in village" In order to solve the offside and vacancy of the "two committees in village", the relevant communication mechanism badly needs to be established to coordinate the administration scope and supervise mutually in specific affairs. From the practice, the joint conference system for two committees, the system of the villagers' committee to report the work to the village party branch, democratic life system and the regular auditing system of rural finance and so on, all have displayed the functions of intensifying the mutual coordination and supervision of the two committees^[11]. The power of the leaders of the village party branch should be restricted by the villagers' autonomy institutions, covering the villagers' council and supervisory board. The chef of the villagers' council should be served by the secretary of the village party branch and the members of it are served by the other committee members. The rest members of the villagers' council should be selected by the vote of the whole villagers. The system represents equality to a certain degree, guarantees the public opinion and limited the arbitrariness of the secretary of the village party branch. From the inside, the vice-secretary of village party branch does not only serve as the chef of the villagers' supervisory council, but also be led by dual leadership of the village party branch and the discipline inspection committee of the town and village. The structure is good for the supervision on village party branch and it has effectively

strengthened the supervision in the village party branch.

4.4 Introducing into "college-graduate village officials" to improve the quality of rural cadres

In rural political activities, an important factor that leads to the offside and vacancy of the "two committees in village" is the universally low quality of rural cadres and the possibly non-standard behaviors in performing their functions. Therefore, if we introduce into the college-graduate village officials, the whole quality of the rural cadres will be improved and the talents for the future construction of rural areas will be reserved. At present, there are many problems in rural cadres of China, including aging trend, inadequate reserves, and backward management and so on, so cultivating a group of cadres with real high quality has become the emergency in rural development. Villagers with high education background and strong competence have migrated to cities, the rest are old people who can only do the ordinary work, women and child. Obviously, the villagers left can not bear the burden of the new village construction. In comparison, the whole quality of college graduates is high. After being trained into the cadres, they would strengthen the construction of grass-root organization and change the management methods. The new knowledge and information obtained through communicating with the cadres in villages will push the transformation of college graduate officials from the knowledge-based team to the competence-based team, which plays an irreplaceable role in adjusting the age structure, knowledge structure, cultural structure and optimizing the whole quality of rural cadres. The college graduates are knowledgeable and energetic, and they can fully display their talents in the practice of serving as rural cadres. Although the college graduates still have far to go in dealing with practical affairs and solving the practical problems, the whole quality of them is high and they are open-minded, democratic and resourceful. They are obviously complementary to the rural cadres. The introduction of college-graduate village officials is beneficial to improving the administration ability of rural grass-root organizations.

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