

Governance, Social Organisation and Reform in Rural China



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Xiaogang village, located in Anhui Province, was reputedly the first village in China to decollectivise, in 1978, paving the way for agricultural reform and a new rural economy in China. This study explores how farmers in Xiaogang have engaged in various forms of cooperation in the decades since decollectivisation and the extent to which changing political and social contexts of the rural China are likely to impact upon the way in which farmers cooperate and collaborate with each other. In an attempt to understand the relationship between farmers and the state in a rapidly changing China, the text focuses upon governance and social organisation within the village and explores the extent to which farmers have autonomy in both their economic and political activities.

While decollectivisation is often interpreted as the second 'liberation' of Chinese farmers, it is clear that new power structures have emerged to replace those of the collective and the commune. While many studies have explored this question in terms of a so-called binary opposition between the state and the community, they have tended to neglect the subtleties behind this opposition. Utilising Foucault's concept of 'governmentality', this study develops new ways of understanding micro-level power relations that enable and constrain certain forms of political and economic activity within the village.

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Hongguang He is Jiangsu Specially Appointed Professor at Nanjing Audit University, China and Consultant for the World Bank. With two PhDs, from Nanjing University (2005–2008) and the University of Sydney (2008–2012), Dr He is presently working on a study of the spatialisation of the Chinese Communist Party-led government and the integration of China's urban and rural development.

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