

China and Volunteering—Logic of Politics and Logic of Culture

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Chapter 1 Introduction

A large ratio of the people (18 years old and above) are engaged in volunteering in China. This ratio can be as high as 85% according to a survey conducted in 2001 by the Institute of Social Development, State Development Planning Commission. The conclusions of our study show that the factors in such a high percentage seem not surprisingly to lie in the reality that political power has enormous leverage over volunteering and, more than anything else, the fact that informal volunteering, based on an ethical code of ‘courtesy’(礼), is deeply rooted in the Chinese cultural tradition and frequently practiced in rural communities where the majority of people are living and where it plays a prominent role.

Before getting down to specifics, we will sketch key characteristics of the above mentioned two factors, namely ‘politics-led volunteering’ and ‘informal volunteering.’

Percentage of volunteers and average hours in 2001.

Characteristic of volunteers		% of population volunteering	Average hours
18-24	17.5%	90.6	80
25-34	28.0	86.4	82
35-44	24.8	85.2	66
45-54	17.5	82.3	70
55-64	8.3	82.5	99
65 and older	3.9	73.2	80
Male	49.8	85.2	94
Female	50.2	85.4	61
Elementary school	14.5	76.9	58
Junior school	32.5	78.7	55
Senior school	27.2	83.7	82
Undergraduate	24.5	91.1	107
Postgraduate	1.3	86.5	123

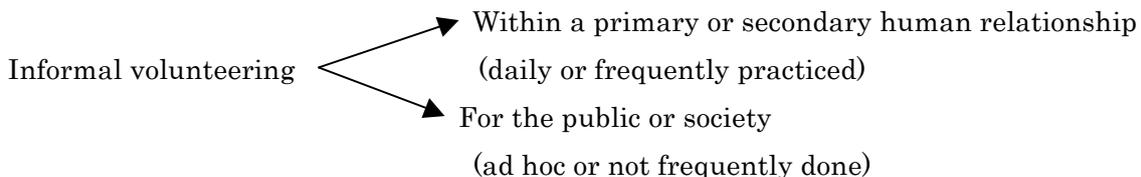
2001 survey, Institute of Social Development, State Development Planning Committee.

<Politics-led volunteering>

In China volunteering is considered by the political authorities to be an indicator of the degree of attainment of civilized community, so they prescribe goals for volunteer participation rates in urban communities. The goal is passed down from the top to the bottom. For the most part, volunteering in urban communities is not based on the initiative of residents. Instead volunteering is regarded as useful way to promote ‘community service’(社区服务) policies and it is deliberately worked out by the government. For example, the Shanghai Municipality calls for specific targets to be met by at least 80% of residents through voluntary services initiation programs and at least 20% through residents’ participation in voluntary services. A survey conducted in Shanghai shows that 60% of people who do voluntary work within community service volunteer organizations in one of its districts were solicited for voluntary work directly by sub-district offices or by resident committees.

<Informal volunteering>

Political power is significantly strong in China, as referred to above, but this does not explain the extraordinarily high participation rate to the degree of 85% of the nation engages in voluntary work. It is reasonable to consider that the data include people who involve themselves in informal volunteer activities. Jiang Xhunqing (江汛清) , Associate Professor, China Youth University for Political Science, who participated in the above 2001 Survey says that 70% of all the people who have done voluntary work consists of people who have practiced informal volunteering in the survey. Informal volunteering is defined as voluntary work done without any organizational context. Thus, informal volunteering is practiced voluntarily on a personal basis spending time and energy for the benefit of other people. ‘Other people’ constitute three categories. The first category is people within a primary human relationship such as blood relatives or very close friends. The second category is people with whom one forms a social relationship through business, community connections, or shared hobbies or beliefs and so forth. We may call this kind of relationship a secondary human relationship. The last category is the general public or society. We can divide informal volunteering into two groups based on the different characteristics of the ‘other people.’



We usually exclude volunteering within a primary human relationship from informal volunteering. Theoretically, volunteering or mutual-help within a primary human

relationship is considered to derive from a sense of family bonds or affection and not from compassion or benevolence. Dr. Xiang Xunqing clearly states that blood relatives or close friends are excluded from 'other people' in the 2001 Survey.

We can now better understand what the very high percentage of people's participation in voluntary work means. In China 60% ($85\% \times 70\%$) of the whole population practice informal volunteering while only 25% ($85\% - 60\%$) involve themselves in formal volunteering. The greater part of volunteering seems to be inconspicuous or not visible externally in China because it is substantially based on a personal, secondary human relationship.

Chapter 2 The Position of 'Civil Society' in the 'Politics-led Social Structure' of China

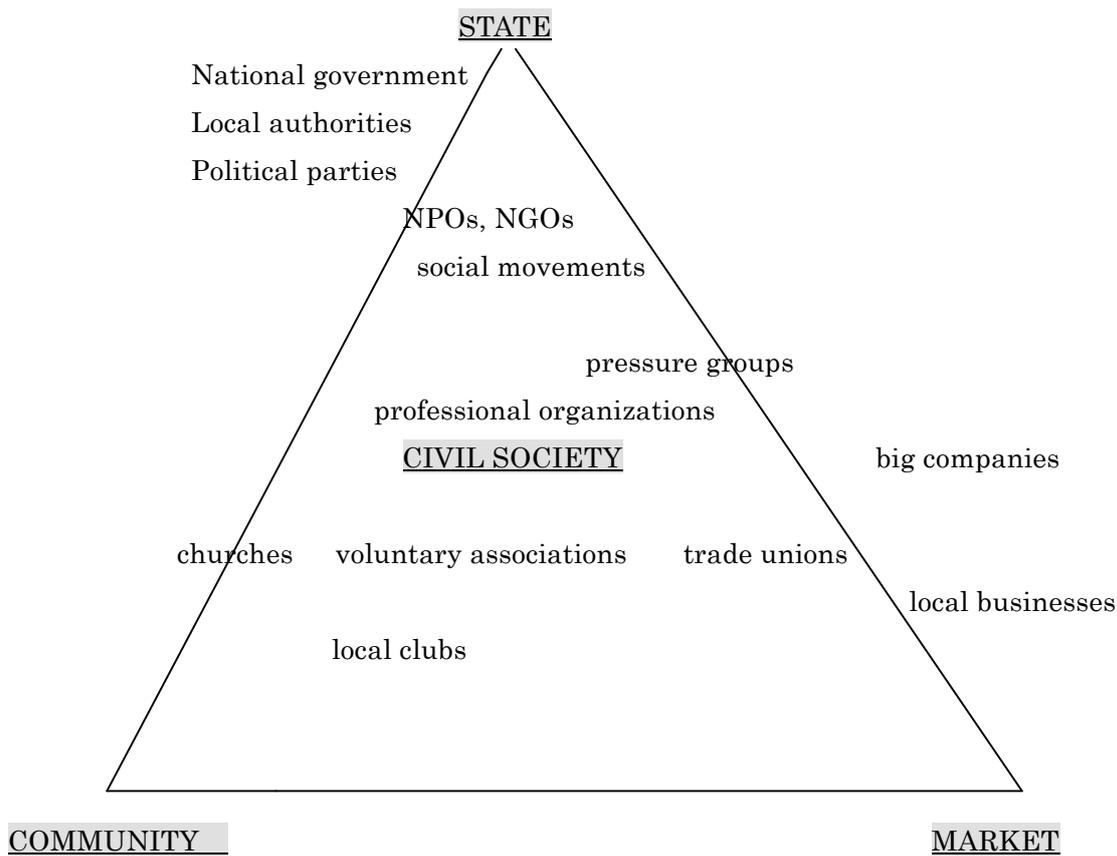
(1) Western model of civil society

Volunteering is typically practiced either in a community or in civil society in western societies. The community mainly consists of people's kin, neighbors, friends and acquaintances within a primary and secondary relationship. Civil society comprises numerous and diversified voluntary associations. The principle of communities lies in people's solidarity and civil society is based on individual voluntariness (voluntarism). Community and civil society are indispensable elements in the social order. The positions of both civil society and community in the western social order are delineated in the diagram below.

In the diagram, the state neither owns nor controls the market. Instead, the state is likely to keep watch on the market so that fair and free competition will be carried out. Likewise, the state respects and boosts people's autonomy and voluntarism based on recognition that people's diversified range of social participation will contribute to the wholesome development of the nation. The western legal and tax systems are designed to give incentives to nonprofit organizations so that they will accelerate their contributions to the public good. Thus, the western model social order is said to be a pluralistic society as it is formed on the premise that efforts by each institution to realize its own principle and values will result in improving social welfare as a whole.

(2) 'Civil society' in the politics-led social order

In contrast to western civil society, Chinese 'civil society' seems to be located outside



Informal networks in neighborhoods
 Family, friendship ties

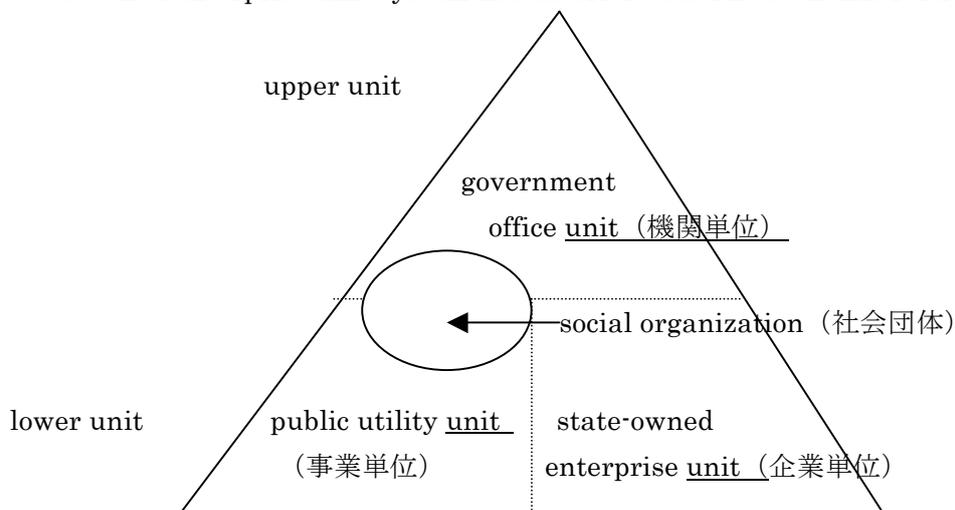
Source: Modified diagram from Civil Society in Comparative Perspective:
 Involvement in Voluntary Associations in North America and Western
 Europe, Paul Dekker and Andries van den Broek, *Voluntas: International Journal
 of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organization*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1998.

the triangle of the social order shown above. Or rather we should say that the triangle represents the state-controlled, monolithic hierarchical social order and that fledging civil society is going to grow outside the social order.

Before the economic reforms and open-door policy was introduced, all the people in China were put into a workplace as the first step of a multi-tiered hierarchy linking each individual with the central Party infrastructure. City residents were bound to their work unit or danwei (單位), a place of employment. Villagers were placed in people's communes (人民公社). The work unit system was closely interlocked with the family registration system, social welfare system, and class system. The class system,

for example, divided all the population into city residents and villagers and forbid any villager to move into an urban area. The Communist Party concentrated every effort on rapid industrialization of the country making full use of the above social system. The work unit system was emblematic of and a pillar to the politics-led social order as shown in the diagram below.

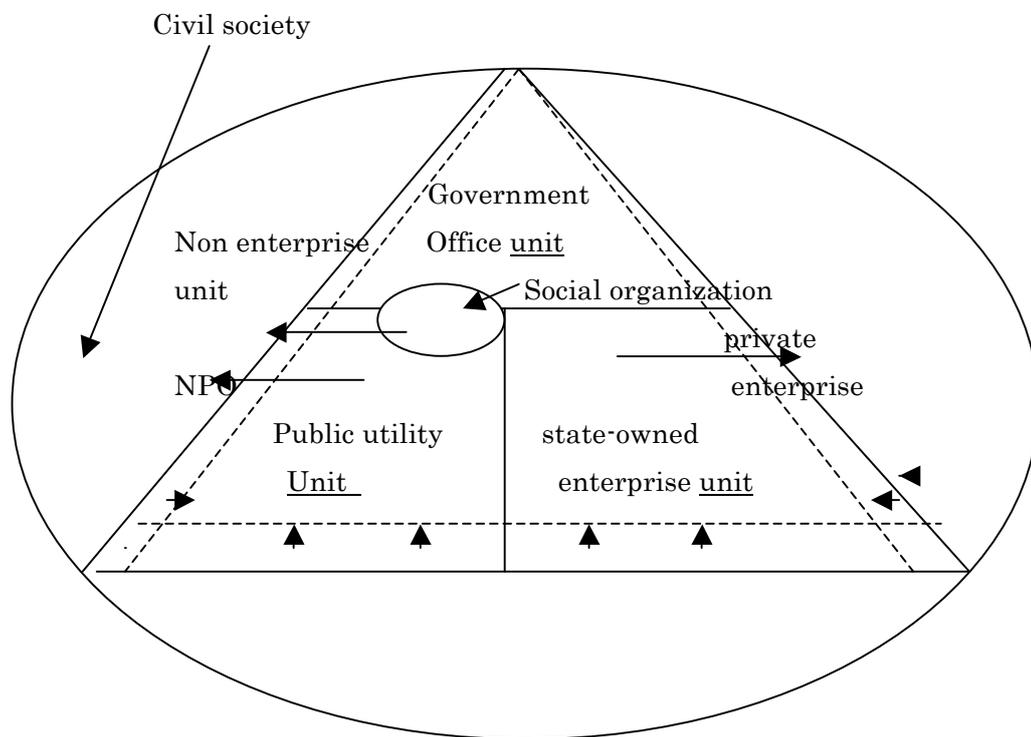
It greatly contributed to the creation of a heavy industry-oriented economy, which at the same time brought about an insufficient supply of consumer goods and farm products. Since the economic reforms and open-door policy were implemented, the work unit system has been forcibly transformed. The state-owned enterprise unit, for example, was given discretionary power over its personnel system. A state-owned enterprise became to be able to hire or dismiss employees on its own judgment. Once a state-owned enterprise attained freedom of management, it was par for the course that it would desire more and more freedom. Thus, state-owned enterprises have begun to jump out of the unit system and private enterprises have been increasing steadily. As a result, the state-owned enterprise unit system has deteriorated. The economic reforms also called



upon government office units to promote organizational and personnel reduction. Similarly, the public utility unit was pressed to raise money for a part of their businesses on its own. The total work unit system was, therefore, shaken and became unstable. Chinese society is now witnessing more frequently a lot of social issues which are not adequately dealt with within the existing work unit system. The streamlining of work unit system has brought economic efficiency, but at the same time it has produced a vacuum where social welfare is not well supplied. Serious social problems such as environmental issues and widening social disparity are increasingly taking place outside or across the entire unit system.

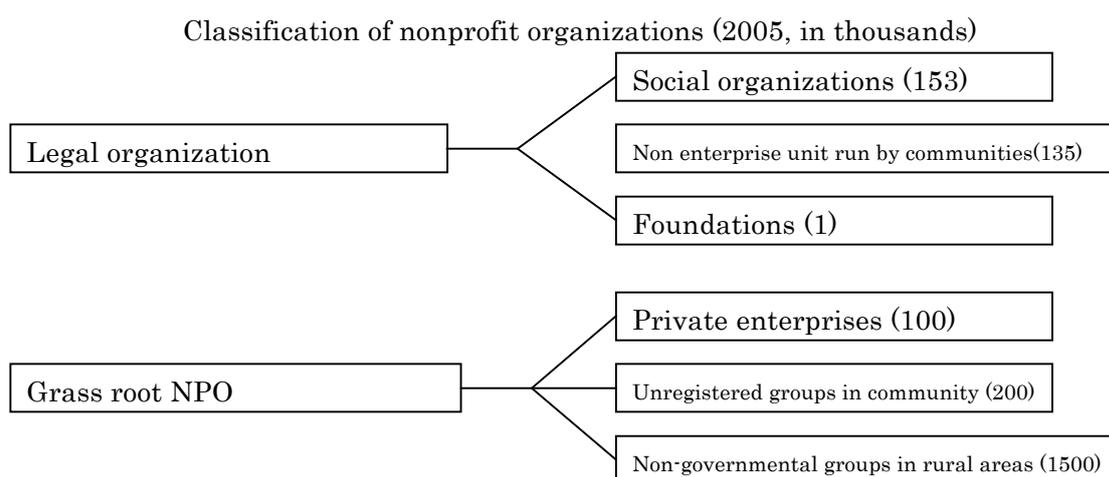
Social organizations (社会团体), which are legally authorized nonprofit organizations,

used to be assured of stability and security under the work unit system. They have now become less obsessed with a sense of belonging to the work unit system as the system starts to deteriorate. They are now gradually being established outside the work unit system. These organizations are enhancing vitality, carrying out their programs without feeling shackled by the work unit system. Furthermore, non-enterprise units run by the community or nongovernmental initiatives (民弃非企业单位) have been set up outside the work unit system by public utility units, state-owned enterprises or individuals since 1998 when their legal status was established by regulations. These non-enterprise units are service-providing institutions such as schools, universities, hospitals, nursing homes, or research centers run on a non-profit basis. Thus, in China 'civil society' is now emerging outside the politics-led, hierarchical social order. As we see in the diagram below, the position of civil society is not clearly delineated.



We don't know whether Chinese civil society is a place or space where people can feel relieved and self-supportive away from the rigidity of social order, or if it is taking on the role to complement what the government or work unit system cannot provide. On the other hand, the work unit system itself seems to be contracting, also making it difficult to draw well-defined lines in the work unit system triangle in the diagram. Both fledging civil society and the destabilizing work unit system are in the process of rapid change and evolution.

According to Dr. Wang Ming (王名)、Associate Dean of the School of Public Policy & Management, Tsinghua University, nonprofit organizations in China are classified into two groups as the diagram below indicates. Each group is broken down into three subgroups. Non-governmental groups in rural areas account for about 70 percent of all the nonprofit organizations. In the wake of the introduction of economic reforms and the open-door policy, People’s Communes were abolished in 1983-1985. Farm production consequently shifted from a collective basis to an individual basis. Villagers have come to help each other or support distressed people on their own and a large number of non-governmental organizations have been set up in rural areas.



(3) Mainstream of politics-led social order

What constitutes the core of the social order in China is power of the state. In China, the social order is determined by political power. The opposite cannot be true. The social order is always under the control of political power. No component of the social order, be it the economy or nonprofit sector, no cultural field including academism, religion, arts, social customs or communities can operate independently of political power, however formally autonomous it seems to be. There is no other way but to be subject to political authority, to be under its protection, to compromise with it, or to assimilate into it.

However, if we carefully analyze the modal quality of power, we can discern that this political power consists of unstable elements and stable elements. Granting that the supreme power is not strong, social order will be maintained as long as its bureaucratic structure is solid.

In China strong bureaucracies are a long, deep-rooted tradition. They traditionally consisted of a middle ruling class, termed ‘court officials’(士大夫). They handled the affairs of the state as back stage manipulators on behalf of the emperor for a long time in Chinese history. The court official regime was said to cease to exist when the Chinese

Revolution took place in 1911. However, since 1949 when the People's Republic of China was established by the Communist Party of China, China has reverted to its traditional regime. The Communist Party of China is a secret society and secret societies have been a tradition since ancient times. They have often involved themselves in political turbulence.

The critical issue Chinese civilization confronted through the ages was how to balance surplus population with scarce resources. When the government failed to control the society as a whole, famine and war instantly broke out. The government was responsible for providing food to its people. Emperors had to regulate the waters of the Yellow River or build the Great Wall using large-scale mobilization of labor. The dominant thought cultivated by Chinese civilization was to save society from distress and threats by exerting strong political power.

Chapter 3 Volunteering under economic reforms and the open-door policy— the logic of politics

(1) 'Party for society and government for people' (立党為公、執政為民)

The Communist Party of China (CPC) was born not as a result of one of the inevitabilities of history. It was born because Marxism was a very useful vehicle for the state of China in controlling society with its one-dimensional sense of values. Besides that, Marxism justified the existence of the CPC's political power. As already noted, in China political power had overwhelmingly predominated over the social order for a long time.

However, even if political power can do just as it wants to, the change of its economic system from public ownership to private ownership can be a double-edged sword to the present political power, the Communist Party of China. As people's lives improve, a sense of independence will grow up in people's minds resulting in an increasing demand for democracy among the nation. The Communist Party of China is now eagerly calling on every cadre and membership to gather the will of people and work for the people, employing the slogan 'Party for society and government for people'.

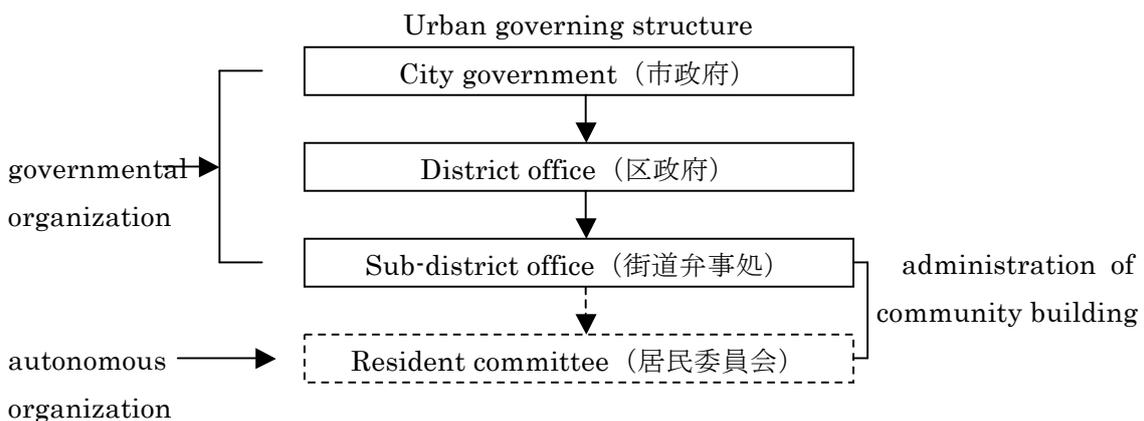
When we put civil society or volunteering in such a political context, we may come to understand that political power doesn't necessarily intend to suppress and subjugate civil society or volunteering to the state. The political power side has its own logic.

China is shifting its policy of the past twenty years of 'economic reforms and open-door' policy to a new stage of 'building up a harmonized society' (調和社会) at the outset of the

21st century. The ideal image of the Harmonized Society is a society where fairness is established between society, the economy and political power by realizing justice, strengthening thought and morals, and by building a law-abiding nation. Political power seems to make good use of non-profit organizations or volunteering with ingenuity in order to build up a harmonized society. The main targets are community and youth. Where volunteer activities take place most frequently is communities in urban areas (社区) and rural areas (村落) and the generation most involved in voluntary work in terms of numbers is the youth (the volunteering rate is 90.6% for those aged 18 to 24 and 86.4% for those aged 25 to 34).

(2) Community (社区) and volunteering

Communities in urban areas have come to be a focal point for solving social problems caused by the instability of the work unit system, which is attributed to the introduction of economic reforms and the open-door policy in the 1980s. From the viewpoint of political power, the state has not been able to involve itself directly with people's lives any longer in urban regions where many people work and live. The Government has been driven urgently to find ways to maintain or recover the stability and security of people's lives. Thus, the community building policy (社区建设) has been developed and implemented. The major characteristic of the new policy is reconstruction of the traditional community governing structure. Sub-district offices' (街道办事处) function has been strengthened and resident committees (居民委员会), originally meant to be autonomous organizations, have been rehabilitated with an expanded role(see the diagram below). This shows us that the government could not accomplish its community building policy alone with its own governing capacity and that it had to add urban people's power to make up the deficiency. City dwellers have been required to lend their support to the government or help solve social problems--from social welfare to social security--providing a wide variety of services to residents.



In the early 90s, sub-district offices were assigned a new, important role of promoting community service (社区服务) in the community building policy and resident committees bore the administrative work. If we take one example, the resident committees in Shanghai City had set up 2,414 community service centers and elderly activity centers, 280 community volunteer groups, and 1,300 community playgrounds by 2000. They had also developed more than 100 community service menus. The following are typical examples of community services.

- medical care and health – around-the-clock medical services, hotline services, traveling clinics
- housekeeping – housemaid referrals, home tutor referrals, nursery services
- physical education – classes in tai chi, fitness exercises, Japanese croquet, etc.
- elderly university – classes in calligraphy, painting, music, foreign languages, dance
- round-the-clock services for elderly living alone
- senior citizen’s public center – housing, care for daily life, medical services, food services
- employment placement – vocational services for unemployed people

In theory resident committees are supposed to be autonomous organizations, but actually they are under the guidance of the Communist Party. Therefore, each resident committee must promote the Communist Party’s policies while making efforts to expand positively residents’ participation by paying attention to their initiative and leadership. As just described, resident committees have two-sidedness, and voluntary work, which is promoted by the resident committees, is considered to face the same dilemma. This kind of dilemma doesn’t seem to be peculiar to the Chinese social system. In Japan, we also have similar social groups with common ties to a region throughout the country. We call them neighborhood associations (町内会). They are more or less local government-led organizations. Every neighborhood association is laid out based upon an administrative district or street and every resident is supposed to be a member of the organization. Almost of all the residents in neighborhood associations involve themselves with ‘voluntary work,’ which most of them think of as forced or required tasks – such as collecting membership fees, raising donations for government-led charitable organizations, delivering local government’s bulletins and so forth. Japan has a long tradition of government-led structuring of society as a common proverb indicates, ‘You can’t fight City Hall.’ In such a social structure, the boundary line between individuals and the government is likely to be ambiguous. In this vague

relationship, the government seems to have implicit authority over people. The government may not necessarily need to suppress and force each resident to do voluntary work as a slave. The government must understand very well that any resident will surely do what every resident is expected to do whether from a sense of duty or willingness because mutual monitoring and mutual supervision work in the neighborhood association.

(4) Youth and volunteering

The youth are outstandingly more active than any other generation in voluntary work. As for community services, statistics show that youth volunteers comprise a fair portion of community service volunteers, accounting for 36% of all community service volunteers. The number is estimated at about 6 million. However, in view of the fact that the total number of formal youth volunteers exceeds 100 million, the ratio of youth community service volunteers is very small. It is said that compared to community service volunteering, youth volunteers show a strong tendency to pay more attention to large-sized projects carried out by the state.

The Communist Party and the government have attached importance to youth and have developed national youth policies and programs especially since 1993. The Chinese Young Volunteer Association was established in Beijing the next year. Youth volunteering is said to have become well organized and well ordered under the leadership and coordination of the Chinese Young Volunteer Association. This association is a subordinate organization within the Chinese Communist Youth League. The Chinese Communist Youth League is a well known training institution for a hopeful cadre of the Communist Party and the source of future political power in China. In 1996, The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party issued the Decision of Many Issues for Establishing Socialist Spiritual Civilization, which encouraged the Communist Youth League and Young Pioneers to play full roles to unite and guide the improvement of youth and to carry out activities such as Project Hope, Young Volunteers and hand-in-hand, in order to carry forward the spirit of mutual care and finding pleasure in helping others. Furthermore, the next year the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee arranged to carry out a program for awakening socialist spiritual civilization. The program itself appeared to be the most unsuccessful in the last 20 years because most Chinese people were sick of socialistic preaching under the pressure of the government or related organizations. Even though this program was unpopular among Chinese people, the Communist Party and government adamantly has been pursuing the policy of including volunteering in socialist values and also of

making full use of volunteering for the sake of the state.

As mentioned above, the Communist Youth League and the Chinese Young Volunteer Association have been playing a key role in youth volunteering. The following are outstanding programs carried out or supported by the two organizations:

- The 'One-to-One' project (1996), where one volunteer helps one person in need as a partner. The number of volunteers involved in the program reached 12 million.
- Participation in big events such as the Fourth World Conference on Women (1994), and the Eighth National Games (1997), and support to victims of natural disasters such as serious floods (1994) and damage caused by a typhoon with heavy rain (1994).
- Poverty-Alleviation programs such as the Volunteer Vacation program (1996~), where students go to rural areas to disseminate knowledge and technology during their vacation.
- Participation in environmental protection programs such as the Chinese Young Volunteers Green Camp Project (1999~)
- The Go West Volunteer program (2003~), where college graduates go to the western regions to provide volunteer services for one to two years. The program also gives them an opportunity to find jobs there.

The Chinese Young Volunteer Association is said to organize more than 85% of youth volunteer programs in China due to its strong and widespread network throughout the country. More and more young Chinese people seem to be searching for individual values and self-fulfillment in their voluntary work today. The logic of political power is facing a serious challenge regarding to what extent youth volunteers' desire or quests should be tolerated.

Chapter 4 Village and mutual help or informal volunteering—community logic

(1) Today's characteristics of rural areas of China

a) Politics

In the rural areas, which are considered at the bottom stratum of the administrative structure, both direct elections of villager committees (村民委员会) by the village people themselves and disclosure of public documents to villagers have been brought into operation since the late 80s. This so-called village people's self-government started in the wake of the collapse of the People's Communes. Due to the disappearance of

People's Communes, there were no longer any offices to administer public affairs in villages. Therefore, villagers themselves laid down rules for fire prevention, security, utilization of water, etc. Villager committees became responsible for administering land and enterprises, security, education, welfare and so forth.

b) Economy

Economic reforms have changed the basis of economic activity from collective production founded on public ownership to a family-operated subcontract system on the premise of private ownership. Any villager (subcontractor) can operate a business by forming a group. He or she may keep a surplus after paying land rent and a given sum of money to the villager committee which administers the village's land. A business group which consists of one to seven members is called an individual household (个体户) and a group consisting of eight or more members is called a village and township enterprise (乡镇企业). Millionaire households (万元户) have emerged from among village people with great resources.

c) Public finance

Each village owns and keeps a handle on land. It collects rent from villagers. Many villages run enterprises or subcontract public work to individuals or private companies, enabling them to increase their revenue. Rich villages can provide their residents with improved social services.

d) People's life in rural communities

Informal volunteering or mutual help within what we call a secondary human relationship is prevalent among villagers. Today every villager has to compete economically under the equal conditions of a subcontract system. In order to be more successful in the race, he or she needs to form a human network so that he or she will quickly be able to obtain useful information or support from within the network.

Moreover, within this network someone who has received help from another person returns the favor somehow for the support. In this way villagers help each other through this private human network. In other words, they show courtesy mutually by giving information, money or other types of gifts including voluntary work. The mutual help based on courtesy is called human feelings or sympathy. Mutual help within the secondary human network is more appreciated because the more it spreads the less it has a sense of obligation, which the primary human network retains. A villager who sincerely practices courteous exchange or gives a helping hand to others comes to enjoy the confidence of his or her community. Such a person is respected as a man or woman who has amassed acts of charity not for display (陰行) .

In recent years nongovernmental groups in rural areas have been rapidly increasing in

number. If we take welfare as an example, there is a long Chinese tradition for a family to shoulder the responsibility of caring for their elderly (尊老愛老). However, as more young people have moved from rural areas to urban areas, elderly people are left behind. How to care for such solitary old people is becoming a serious social problem. Mutual help within private human networks including both primary and secondary human relationships may not sufficiently cope with such welfare issues as before. In addition, villages lacking ample funds or public finance cannot afford to provide such services to their residents. Here lies one of the key factors which have brought about the emergence of so many nongovernmental groups in rural areas.

Lastly, religion appears to be reviving throughout China. Temples(廟) and ancestral halls (祠) have increasingly been being reconstructed, especially in rural areas. These sacred buildings are beginning to play a key role in preserving villagers' codes of conduct and helping them achieve a fulfilling life. We will discuss the revival of religion more in detail in the next paragraph.

(2) Religion – the highest courteous relationship with the Dragon King

Due to the Chinese first major survey on faith conducted by the East China Normal University in Shanghai, three hundred million people consider themselves religious, three times more than previously estimated by the government. About two hundred million people among the believers are Buddhists, Taoists or worshippers of legendary figures such as the Dragon King, and forty million others are Christians.

The revival of religion in China may have been caused by the retreat of socialist ideology. People themselves must have had to seek their own identity in the newly introduced competitive world. The two key background reasons the respondents in the above survey have pointed out for the religious revival are 'it shows the true path of life' and 'it helps cure illness, avoid disasters, and ensure that life runs smoothly'. These views appear to be especially commonly held in rural areas.

How then is revived religion influencing or changing villagers' ways of life? It seems that religion is reconstructing community in rural areas by giving cultural (religious) meaning to villagers' life and the community structure, thus forming a cultural order in rural areas. There is an interesting study that could give us insight into this issue. It is a book entitled 'Heilongtan (黑龍潭) - Estate and Wealth in a Village in China' written by Dr. Luong Hong-Guang (羅紅光) of Chinese Social Science Institute. We would like to explore this topic a little more with this thesis as a hint.

The Heilong Temple (黑龍廟), or Black Dragon Temple in English, is the most revered religious institution in the area of Heilongtan, whose population is approximately 4,400, with an average of about two hundred people paying visit to the temple each day. The

visitors come to obtain a paper oracle. The temple prepares 100 kinds of oracles. Each paper has three articles on it. The first article describes drawer's luck in two words such as 上上, which means double good luck. The second one tells a historical anecdote about a famous figure. The last one is a message deduced from the anecdote. The message is conveyed through the lips of an interpreter to the drawer. The interpreter gives advice when the drawer consults him about the message. If the drawer is not convinced of the message, he or she may draw paper oracles continuously as many times as it takes to be satisfied. In the end, every drawer receives an oracle as a wonder-working divine message. Then, all the drawers make every effort to solve their matters causing worry following the divine oracle. Nearly half of their worries are related to economic matters. If a drawer's prayer is answered, he or she feels strong gratitude and respect for the Black Dragon King, considering the accomplishment as a divine favor. When a prayer is not answered, the drawer requests an oracle again. He or she tries very hard to adjust his or her way of life to the surrounding environment.

The relationship of pious villagers to the Black Dragon King is based on supreme courtesy and the believers repay the Black Dragon King for his divine favor with the highest honor, which means making a generous offering and rendering a service to the Black Dragon King. The Black Dragon Temple, in turn, offers the money donated by the believers to the rural community hoping the gift will help improve welfare and build infrastructure. A list of recipients of the donations made by the Black Dragon Temple covers a wide field--from education, entertainment, recreation, tree planting, agricultural facility support, and welfare, to security and so on. As for education and entertainment, one of the donations from the Black Dragon Temple covered 75% of the construction cost of a TV relay station for the administrative area of Zhenchuan-zhen, which includes Heilongtan. Another donation established a scholarship system in the primary schools of the seven villages in Heilongtan.

Thus, the wealth produced by the villagers is passed from hand to hand and finally returns to their community. In summary, wealth acts to help promote bonding of the community, passing through a cultural (religious) circuit.

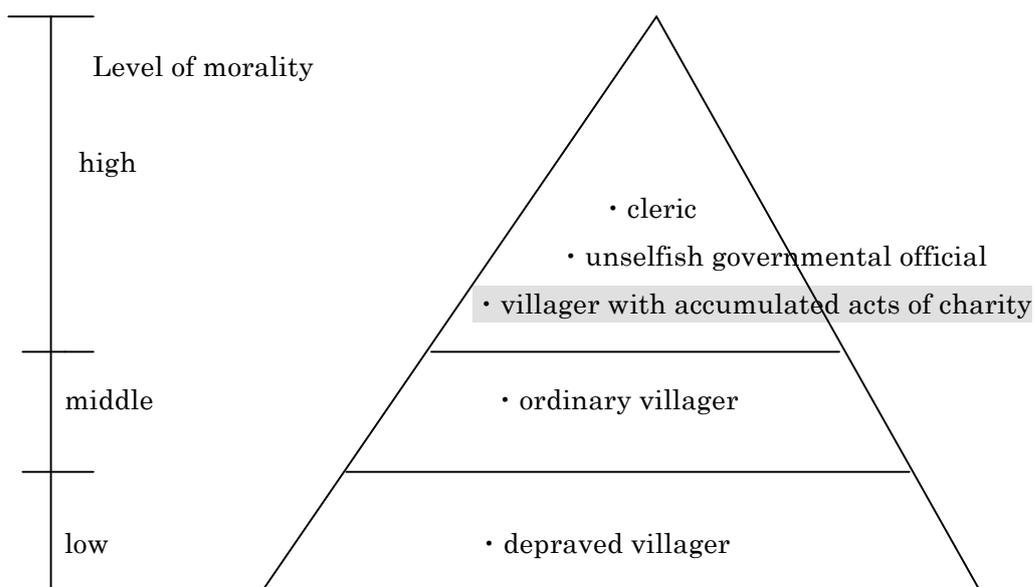
(3) Informal volunteering and the cultural stratum in Heilongtan

Exchange of useful information, money or gifts, including voluntary work, within a private secondary human network is practiced to show courtesy to its members. The fundamental motive for forming a network may come from self-interest, but once the network is set up, the members try to exchange with courtesies each other with high esteem or gratitude. This personal exchange of courtesies finds an institutional value or quality when put into a religious context. As we have already seen, the Black Dragon

King is revered in and around the village of Heilongtan and it is forming a cultural, social structure there. Villagers who have accumulated acts of charity not for display are placed at the highest level of the cultural, social structure as shown in the diagram below.

As in this cultural, social order most villagers, except the 'depraved' are believed to exert themselves to climb to an upper level. Exchange of courtesies seems to be practiced widely among them, especially within their secondary human networks. Informal volunteering, which is one type of courtesy, too must be performed by the villagers. Here, informal volunteering is related au fond to religion, one of the key

Cultural, social astratum in Heilongtan (黑龍潭)



elements which constitute culture. The logic of culture appears to be renewing its power all the more in the reformed economy.

At the same time, we must point out that the rapidly changing rural areas are calling for more formal types of non-governmental organizations which will focus on providing services to needy people or solving social problems with the help of people's participation.

Conclusion

In China, where political power dominates the entire society, volunteering--especially the formal type--has been coming under the strong influence of politics. Formal

volunteering has taken on a government-led character. However, it doesn't seem that the government is forcing all urban residents into volunteering whether they like it or not. Community building policies promoted by the government would not go forward well without residents' help. Resident committees have to pay high regard to residents' initiative and leadership while the committee is responsible for carrying out government policy. Resident Committees are faced with the dilemma of ordering of priorities or how to balance politics with resident's autonomy. If a voluntary work is 100% government-led, any resident who does the voluntary work feels it rather as an assigned or compulsory duty and becomes gradually reluctant to participate in volunteering. Not all the voluntary works are necessarily 100% government-led. Even if many volunteer organizations have been established at the outset under the sponsorship of government or resident committees, some of them now seem to be independent in terms of personnel and finances. Furthermore, unregistered groups in communities, which are classified as a subgroup of the grass-roots NPO, may well have been started up voluntarily by residents, like civic organizations in Japan, most of which are private organizations neither controlled nor protected by law. What we call volunteering based on an individual's own free will is likely to be in a germinal stage in China.

The most remarkable characteristic of volunteering in China is that informal volunteering accounts for 70% of all the volunteering. We have concentrated our efforts on understanding the cultural background. As a result, we have discovered firstly that informal volunteering is typically practiced within a secondary human network in rural areas and secondly that informal volunteering takes on the form of exchange of information, money or gifts or voluntary work to mutually accord courtesy. Anyone who sincerely shows courtesy within his or her private human network is respected as a person of integrity or a person of honor. We might as well say that the underlying motive of volunteering for Chinese people--especially those in rural areas is summed up in a wise old saying, 'amass acts of charity without display!'

At the same time, formal volunteering seems to be beginning to bud, bearing in mind that as many as 1.5 million non-governmental groups have been set up throughout rural areas. Economic reforms have now brought about a situation in which there is a need for both informal and formal volunteering. If the government maintains its practical and clever policy of respecting traditional culture such as religion, informal volunteering will inconspicuously remain the mainstream of volunteering for many years to come.

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