



ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT

**Shanxi Province
People's Republic of China**

February – March 2000

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MISSION STATEMENT

From February 27- March 6, 2000, a delegation from the International Republican Institute (IRI) traveled to Shanxi Province in north China to observe village committee elections in Xiwang and Chitugou Villages in Dai County, and Xiachengnan and Dongyangtun Villages in Jiexiu City. The delegation was given the unique opportunity to observe primary elections in Chitugou and Xiachengnan and observed general elections in Xiwang and Dongyangtun.

The delegation was led by IRI Resident Director for Asia, *Elizabeth Dugan*, and consisted of *Herbert Vilakazi*, Vice Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission in South Africa, *Anne F. Thurston*, Associate Professor of China Studies at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, and *Peter Mackenzie*, Assistant Program Officer for IRI's China Program.

The purpose of the delegation's trip was to observe and assess village committee elections in Shanxi Province. The delegation hopes that the findings of this report will serve as benchmarks from which progress on future elections in the province can be measured. In addition to general observations, the delegation has included specific recommendations which they believe might further improve the administration and conduct of village committee elections.

Suggestions and recommendations contained in this report are based upon IRI's previous election observations in China and take into account those election practices and procedures utilized successfully in other Chinese provinces. In 1994, IRI became the first international organization to observe village committee elections in Fujian Province, China.¹ Since then, IRI has observed elections in Anhui, Gansu, Hebei, Jilin, Shanxi, Sichuan,² and Yunnan provinces.

¹ See "People's Republic of China: Election Observation Report, May 15 - 31, 1994", International Republican Institute, May 1995, and "Election Observation Report: Fujian, People's Republic of China", International Republican Institute, May 1997, for a detailed account of elections in Fujian province.

² See "Election Observation Report: Sichuan, People's Republic of China", International Republican Institute, November 1998, for a detailed account of elections in Sichuan province.

INTRODUCTION

Shanxi, meaning “west of the mountains,” is home to approximately 31 million people, with approximately 75 percent of the population living in rural areas. Located on the arid loess plateau of northern China, the province is framed by the Taihang mountains to the east and the Yellow River to the west. Shanxi borders three other provinces, Shaanxi, Henan, and Hebei, and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

China’s earliest rulers set up their capitals in Shanxi, enriching the province with countless historical, cultural and religious sites, including sections of the Great Wall and the famous Yungang Buddhist grottoes. The province also possesses some of China’s richest mineral deposits, and as such, the economic and industrial life of the province are dominated by the mining and refinement of coal and other natural resources. Despite its rough, mountainous terrain, Shanxi is also well known for agricultural products such as rice, corn, wheat and potatoes.

With regard to village elections, Shanxi is among the more advanced provinces in China. The fifth round of village committee elections began in September 1999, and were to be completed by the end of March, 2000.³ According to provincial election officials, approximately 80% of Shanxi’s 32,375 villages had completed their elections at the time of IRI’s visit.

Village committee members are elected for three-year terms of office. The committees usually consist of three to seven members, with one chairman, zero to two vice-chairmen, and one to six members. Although there is variation from province to province and county to county, village committees generally oversee all administrative matters of a village including: tax collection, budget management, public utility management, dispute resolution, public safety, social security, public health, education, and village enterprise management.

³ Village committee elections in China are ongoing. The national election law stipulates that elections should be held every three years, but it does not provide a specific time frame. As such, there is no unified election day. Elections will be held throughout the country on different days in different years and will vary even within a province.

BACKGROUND

Regulations and Guidelines

The laws and regulations governing the fifth round of elections in Shanxi province include:

- *PRC Village Committee Organization Law* passed by the National People's Congress in November 1998 [Attachment 1];
- *Shanxi Provincial Methods for the Implementation of the Organic Law of Village Committees*, promulgated by the Provincial People's Congress Standing Committee in September 1999 [Attachment 2]; and
- *Shanxi Province Village Committee Election Handbook*, published by the Shanxi Province Civil Affairs Bureau in October 1999.

In contrast to other provincial regulations, the *Shanxi Provincial Methods* include both the regulations for the administration of elections and the election procedures. Other provinces have opted to pass separate laws for election administration and procedures. The *Election Handbook* summarizes the law and is used for training election officials and newly elected village leaders.

Shanxi's current election rules and procedures are comprehensive and include sections on civic education, voter registration, candidate nomination, polling, ballot tabulation, and dispute resolution. They are among the most complete and detailed village committee guidelines IRI has seen in the provinces in which we work. The provincial regulations closely follow the recently promulgated national law, but provide greater detail and strengthen the language in certain key areas that are left vague in the national law. For example, where the national law indicates that the size of the village committee should correspond to the size of the village, Article Nine of the Shanxi provincial regulations suggests specific population figures. The regulations are also strong in defining and explaining the division of power between the village committee and official levels of government, including the township and county.

The provincial regulations address the way in which violation of the election system will be handled, whereas the national law does not. For example, Article 43 of the *Provincial Methods* states that:

Officials [in higher levels] of government should resolutely carry out their responsibilities to react to, deal with, and investigate according to the law violations of the Village Committee Organization Law and these regulations, rather than merely passing the responsibility to others. Those who neglect their responsibilities will face serious consequences, and should look into their legal duties.

Additionally, the methods contain several anti-corruption devices, including the regulation in Article Nine that married couples or close relatives may not serve on the same village committee.

The IRI delegation believes that while the comprehensiveness of the provincial methods strengthens the rule of law in village committee management, in certain areas it also circumscribes the power of the village committee to oversee the affairs of the village. The methods reinforce a cumbersome system by which the committee must obtain the approval of the indirectly elected village representative assembly (VRA) or the village assembly⁴ to proceed on a broad range of matters (see Articles 29 through 35 of the *Provincial Methods*).

The provincial methods also leave unresolved the relationship between the village committee and the local Communist Party committee. For example, officials in Xiwang Village told the delegation that the village committee could only independently authorize expenditures of up to RMB 50 (approximately US \$6). For expenditures between RMB 50 and RMB 100 (US \$6-12), the committee would have to consult the local Party secretary. For expenditures greater than RMB 100, discussion and approval of the VRA were required. The delegation feels that regulations such as these impede the efficiency and effectiveness of the village committee, and result in excess bureaucracy at the grassroots level.

Voter Registration and Candidate Nomination

The civil affairs bureau at the county level and above is responsible for publicizing and overseeing the execution of the national and provincial regulations, researching ways to further develop grassroots self-governance, and receiving reports of irregularities within the system. Village election commissions are responsible for the overall conduct of elections in each village, including civic education, voter registration, candidate nomination, balloting, and vote tabulation. The commission also receives support and guidance from the township government. Members of village election commissions are chosen by either the village assembly or the villagers' small groups (divisions of villagers that evolved from the previous system of "production teams"). Their establishment is overseen by the incumbent village committee, or if this is not possible, by the township government.

Voter registration must be completed before a voter list is posted, which must occur at least 20 days prior to the election. The *Provincial Methods* are somewhat vague on the actual registration process, stating only that registration is to be overseen by the election commission. More specific guidelines for registration appear in the *Shanxi Province Election Handbook*.

Article 17 of the *Provincial Methods* lists three requirements that a person must meet in order to be eligible to vote: (1) the person must reside in the village; (2) the person must be 18 years of age or older; and, (3) the person must be in full possession of his political rights. The *Shanxi*

⁴ Chinese villages contain various administrative structures, including the village committee, village assembly, village representative assembly, village Party committee, village election commission, and village small group. For concise definitions of these and other structures, and a brief description of their respective functions, please consult the "Glossary of Terms" on page 49.

Election Handbook also requires that a villager be able to express his or her will and exercise the right to choose. Villagers who are mentally ill or retarded are not registered. Article 18 also provides for those who do not hold a residence permit (*hukou*) in the village, but satisfy the official definition of a “villager”, specifically that they “reside, live, work, and perform all the duties of villagers in the village”, to register to vote. To register, they must first receive the approval of the village election commission.

A voter list must be publicly displayed at least 20 days before the election. Voters can challenge lists through an appeal to the village election commission up to ten days before the election. The commission must respond to all such appeals at least five days before the election. Eligible voters receive voting cards [Attachment 3] prior to the election, which they must display on election day to participate in balloting.

The first step in the nomination of candidates is informing villagers of the role and responsibilities of village committee members. According to Article 20 of the *Provincial Methods*, the village election commission has the power to develop requirements for candidates. The *Methods* suggest that a qualified candidate is someone who “adheres to the law, is honest and upstanding, manages affairs fairly and impartially, enthusiastically serves the people, and is capable of leading the villagers toward greater wealth.” However, Article 20 also requires the village election commission to convene the village assembly so that villagers can discuss and approve the proposed qualifications.

All eligible voters have the right to nominate candidates. The national law stipulates that the nomination of candidates should be conducted through open elections employing the “sea choice” (*haixuan*) method, in which voters are given blank ballots and allowed to write in one name for each position to be elected. The *Provincial Methods* give villages the option of a single-round or multi-round nomination process.

The *Provincial Methods* state that the general election ballot should list one more candidate than is to be elected for both the chairmanship and the vice-chairmanship positions, and one to three more candidates than are to be elected to membership positions. If the primary election produces more candidates than can be placed on the general election ballot, the election commission may either hold a second primary to reduce the candidates, or the committee can choose to put the top candidates on the ballot.

The nomination process must be completed at least ten days before the general election and a list of formal candidates for the village committee posted at least five days before the general election. In Chitugou Village, the “sea choice” method produced a remarkably long roster of candidates receiving at least one vote: 405 villagers voted for 23 candidates for the chairmanship and 124 candidates for the four membership positions.

Election Day

In addition to the two general elections observed by the delegation in Xiwang and Dongyangtun, the delegation was also given the unique opportunity to observe primary elections in Chitugou and Xiachengnan. The following description of an election day in Shanxi refers to procedures common to both types of elections observed by IRI except where noted.

The elections began at a designated time and were conducted in a schoolyard, town square, or other large meeting area where all of the village's eligible voters could gather. Villagers took their seats, organized by village small groups, facing a platform on which the village election commission was seated. The election grounds were closed off to non-voting observers (with the exception of small children in the care of voters, approved election monitors from other provinces and villages, officials from the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and the IRI delegation).⁵ The chairman of the village election commission then officially opened the election meeting. The national anthem was played, and the number of registered voters present was announced. The chairman introduced himself and the other members of the election commission and read a summary of the rules and regulations of the election, which required approval by a show of hands. At this point in general elections, formal candidates for committee chairman were usually allowed to give short speeches to the assembled voters.

The election commission chairman then asked the voters to approve the election workers by a show of hands and the election workers received official badges. The chairman also read the rules and procedures for the voting, which were approved by a show of hands. The chairman explained the ballot [Attachments 4 through 9] to the voters, sometimes employing a blown-up version on a blackboard or poster, and instructed the assembled voters how to mark it correctly. In the general elections that IRI observed, candidates' names appeared on the ballot under the contested positions in order of the number of votes each received in the primary election, and spaces were available for write-in candidates. In the primary elections, a blank space was provided for each position to be contested. Some villages used separate ballots for each position, while other villages employed a single ballot. Once the ballot was explained, the ballot boxes were opened and presented to the voters to prove that they were empty, then secured with locks or paper seals, and voting commenced.

A number of ballots equal to the number of voters present was counted out and distributed in one of two ways: the first method was for representatives of each village small group to distribute ballots and pens to voters in their group who remained seated throughout the distribution; the second was for voters to file past a table, where their credentials were inspected before they were issued a ballot.

⁵The delegation observed one exception to this procedure. In Xiachengnan Village, a quorum was announced at the outset of the election meeting, but the gates were not closed to additional voters until the official voting time ended. Thus, a virtual polling station was created (such as IRI has observed in Fujian Province), since voters were allowed to enter, vote, and leave at their convenience.

Secret voting booths or rooms were provided in all elections observed by IRI; however, several villages made using the secret booths optional. In the general elections IRI observed, voters indicated their choice by marking an “O” for the candidates they supported and an “X” for those they did not support, whereas in the nominating elections, voters were asked to write in the names of those they wished to nominate.

After completing their ballots, villagers cast their ballots into the sealed ballot boxes. In some villages, specific ballot boxes were designated to each village small group. Election officials were on hand to maintain order and to provide assistance to those unable to read or mark their ballots. In some villages, election workers were allowed to cast their ballots before the other voters.

In two of the villages we observed, there was a long break between voting and counting as the committee dispatched mobile ballot boxes to distribute and collect ballots from those physically unable to attend the ceremony. Villages resolved the issue of enfranchising the elderly and disabled in different ways. In certain villages in Shanxi, voters were allowed to act as proxies for family members who are not able to attend the meeting. They did so by obtaining a special permission form from the village election commission and by presenting this form, along with the registration cards of those for whom they are acting as proxy, when ballots were distributed. The *Provincial Methods* make no mention of either mobile ballot boxes or proxy balloting, and the decision whether or not to employ these methods was left up to the individual village election commissions. Two of the villages we observed, Xiwang and Dongyangtun, had elected not to employ proxy voting. Xiwang and Chitugou Villages employed mobile ballot boxes; Xiachengnan and Dongyangtun did not, though IRI was informed at the primary election in Xiachengnan that mobile boxes and proxies would be used in the general election.

When the mobile boxes returned, or when the official polling time ended, vote tabulation began. The boxes were opened, ballots were neatly stacked and counted by election workers, and a total ballot count was announced by the election commission chairman. In some villages, questionably marked ballots were separated out at this point and decided upon by election officials, while in other villages this did not occur until formal counting took place. The votes were divided, either into random equal stacks or according to village small groups, and counting stations were set up. The counting of ballots was done on the spot in full and open view of assembled villagers in a process called “singing out the ballots” (*chang piao*). One election worker read aloud the contents of each ballot, and another worker tabulated them on a large blackboard or piece of red paper. A third official provided oversight. When all votes had been “sung,” each counting station calculated and recorded its totals. The results were presented to the election commission after workers calculated overall totals.

One of the general elections the delegation observed in Shanxi was a “drop-down” election. In such an election, candidates nominated for committee leadership posts were also nominated for all lower posts. For example, a formal candidate for chairman would also be listed as a formal

candidate for vice-chairman, and a candidate for vice-chairman would also be listed as a candidate for committee member. Should a candidate be nominated for chairman (or should a candidate receive a write-in vote for chairman) and not receive enough votes to win the chairman's race, then the votes the candidate received for the chairman's position would be added to the total votes that person received in the vice-chairman's race. Should the candidate also fail to win that race, the total of votes that person received would be added to the votes he received in the committee member race. For these votes to "drop down," the candidate must have already received at least one vote in that race. According to the *Shanxi Election Handbook*, voters may vote for a particular candidate in only one of the three races. According to provincial election officials, this "drop down" method of counting ensures that the most popular and qualified candidates are elected to the village committee even if they lose races for the leadership.

After final totals were calculated, the chairman announced the number of votes received by each candidate and the winners (in the case of a general election) or the formal candidates (in the case of a primary election). Certificates were prepared and given to each newly elected official: the transfer of power was immediate. Finally, the chairman of the village election commission announced the end of the election. On average, the entire election process took approximately four to five hours, depending on the number of ballots counted.

In order for an election to be considered valid, 50 percent plus one of all eligible voters must participate. According to the *Provincial Methods*, winning candidates must receive 50 percent plus one of all ballots cast. Run-off elections are required in instances where no single candidate receives more than half the votes.

The *Provincial Methods* outline the dispute resolution framework for controversial elections. As the Ministry of Civil Affairs is responsible for the oversight of village committee elections, any villager may lodge a complaint with the county-level bureau of civil affairs, or with the township or county-level people's congresses. Investigations into complaints are conducted by the county civil affairs bureau, in cooperation with township governments. If irregularities or vote fraud are determined, the county-level people's congress standing committee can invalidate the election and order elections to be held again for those positions in dispute.

Article 26 of the *Provincial Methods* provides that one-fifth of all eligible voters may request the removal of a village committee member. The request should supply reasons for the recall, and the member in question should be given the opportunity to defend himself. Within 30 days of receiving the request, the village committee must call a village assembly meeting at which more than half of all registered voters must give their approval if the member is to be removed from office.

DELEGATION OBSERVATIONS

The delegation was impressed by the efforts of election officials to secure ballot boxes, provide numerous voting locations, educate voters on election day on the proper way to fill out ballots, and archive election materials. Although the electoral process was similar in the four villages IRI visited, slight variations were observed. These variations did not detract from the overall enthusiasm of voters for the elections, the ability of the electorate to write in candidates, or the transparency of the vote tabulation. In all general elections, the transfer of power immediately followed the announcement of the results of the election.

IRI also noted instances where regulations appeared not to be followed or issues of secrecy may have been overlooked. The delegation does not believe these instances were in any way deliberate attempts to subvert the electoral process. Clarification of election regulations and additional training of election officials should resolve these irregularities.

Campaigning

Of the two Shanxi villages in which the delegation observed general elections, only one, Xiwang Village, allowed chairman candidates to address the assembled voters at the election meeting. In Dongyangtun village, the delegation was told by officials that a separate meeting had been held several days prior to the election at which candidates were given time to make speeches, and that they had been allowed to give speeches in other formal and informal settings. No vice-chairman candidates addressed the voters in either village, and neither provided villagers the opportunity to ask questions of individual candidates for office. No candidates addressed the voters in the period before either primary IRI observed. Additional campaign opportunities which allow greater interaction with the electorate, such as door-to-door campaigning or placing posters in public areas to increase awareness of each candidate's platform and campaign promises, were not common practice in the villages. In a briefing given by civil affairs officials in Dai County, the delegation was told that "lobbying for votes is discouraged."

In Xiwang, the incumbent chairman was allowed to speak first, followed by the challenging candidate. It is likely that the order of speakers reflected the order on the ballot, which in turn reflected the number of votes each candidate had received in the primary.

In Xiwang Village, the incumbent chairman, Fan Yingui, gave a lengthy speech in which he apologized for not doing as good a job as he could have, and promised to do better in the future. He pointed out accomplishments made by the committee under his leadership, such as the construction of a new school, and made promises of what the committee would achieve for villagers in the next two years, including more economic prosperity, greater expendable income, improved irrigation, and the establishment of factories. His challenger, Fan Ji yuan, gave a much briefer speech in which he promised to bring prosperity and extra money to the village, and to make everyone work together.

Incumbent chairmen and vice chairmen fared well in both of the general elections and one of the

primary elections IRI observed. In Xiwang Village, the three incumbents were re-elected by sizable margins; each will now serve his third term on the village committee. In Xiachengnan Village, the incumbent chairman had announced his retirement from the committee. Of the two candidates nominated to succeed him, one was his vice-chairman and the other a former chairman of the village committee. In Dongyangtun Village, all incumbents also won handily, the incumbent vice-chairman and two committee members benefitting from built-in advantages offered by the “drop-down” system. Through questioning of residents of all four villages, IRI found that most villagers were satisfied with the overall performance of their village committees. Common issues of concern among villagers included economic development, the introduction of modern technology, effective farming techniques and profitable crops, small enterprise development, and education.

Whether candidates for village committee membership were also members of the Communist Party varied from village to village. In Xiwang, neither of the formal candidates for chairman were Party members; in Dongyangtun, both chairman candidates belonged to the Party.

The involvement of female candidates in the elections was also interesting. The *Village Committee Organization Law* and the *Shanxi Provincial Methods* both state ambiguously that there should be “an appropriate number of women” on village committees. In accordance, several of the villages nominated or elected female candidates. However, none of the villages placed women in serious contention for leadership positions on the committees. For instance, in the Chitugou primary, even though Ms. Wang Meimei came in second among the three candidates nominated for committee member, with 133 votes, she was not among the 23 candidates receiving at least one vote for the committee chairmanship.

The primary election IRI observed in Chitugou Village presented a remarkable exception to the general satisfaction with incumbents that IRI observed in most villages. From the results, it was clear that villagers were profoundly disappointed with their leadership. The incumbent chairman, Pang Siwen,⁶ finished fifth in the primary, with only nine votes (2.2 percent of the total). The delegation spoke with several villagers who said they had hoped to see positive economic development and high income growth under Mr. Pang’s leadership, but were dissatisfied with his performance as chairman. Only one of the four incumbent members of the village committee, the village accountant Pang Li, succeeded in being re-nominated.

Of the two candidates nominated for the chairmanship, neither had intended to run. Pang Fasheng, a man in his forties who, according to villagers “cares about others”, was the chairman of the village’s third-round village committee, but retired in order to buy two trucks and pursue a

⁶It is common in Chinese villages for a large proportion of villagers to share a surname. In the case of Chitugou, approximately 60 percent of villagers (and 5 out of the 6 candidates nominated) are surnamed Pang. In Xiwang, approximately 70 percent of villagers (and 4 out of 5 candidates) are surnamed Fan. However, IRI saw no evidence that clans had influenced the administration of elections or the voting itself.

successful transportation business -- he is now one of the richest men in the village. Pang Baolong is a well-liked young man who for the past few years has been working for a mobile construction team and living outside the village -- he returned to the village to volunteer as a vote counter. Pang Baolong told IRI that he had not yet decided whether he would return to the village to take up the post if he were elected because he had not expected the nomination. He was, however, thankful to the voters for their trust. He also told IRI that he did not intend to campaign for the position, but was interested in speaking with voters to learn of their concerns. On a later visit to Shanxi, IRI staff learned that Pang Fasheng had won the general election with 58% of the vote.

Both general elections enjoyed a high voter turnout: 95 percent in Xiwang and 98 percent in Dongyangtun. Primary elections had slightly lower, but still impressive, turnouts: 71 percent in Chitugou and 91 percent in Xiachengnan.

Voter Identification/Registration Lists

In all villages, the electorate received voter identification cards shortly before the election. On election day, two out of the four villages did not check identification cards against voter registration lists prior to the handing out of ballots. In Xiwang and Chitugou, voters received ballots while seated in village groups. The delegation believes that the length of time required by identification checks may have contributed to this oversight. Additionally, election officials often remark that registration cards are not necessary because villages are small and everyone knows each other.

In Xiachengnan and Dongyangtun, election workers seated at tables checked voter cards against registration lists before handing out ballots. In Xiachengnan this process went fairly smoothly (though slowly), as voters lined up and filed past the table in an orderly fashion. As a result, the election workers quickly identified and dealt with the one case of voter fraud IRI observed in Shanxi: a woman in her thirties attempted to vote using the registration card of a 69-year-old, but was not allowed to do so. In Dongyangtun, on the other hand, the process descended into chaos, as voters crowded around the table, waving their registration cards at the election workers. Midway through the voting, the harried workers at one of the tables stopped consulting the registration lists and simply handed out ballots to anyone who presented a registration card. In none of the villages were voters asked to produce identification proving that they were the person registered or asked to sign the register.

Voting Process/Ballot Secrecy

There were definite variations in the casting of ballots in the four villages the delegation visited having primarily to do with the use of secret voting booths. In Xiwang and Chitugou, ballots and pens were distributed to villagers as they sat in their village small groups. Nearby classrooms had been set up as secret voting booths, but their use was optional, and almost no one chose to

exercise this option. Many younger voters filled out their ballots as soon as they received them, while many older voters consulted with each other in groups of four or five before filling out their ballots. Once all ballots had been marked and villagers returned to their groups, voters were finally invited to deposit their ballots in sealed boxes.

In Xiachengnan Village, voters filing past the balloting table were directed into one of several different classrooms, where election workers seated them at desks far enough apart that privacy was ensured. Only two or three voters were allowed in a classroom at one time, though married couples were allowed to vote together. Election workers, all of whom were from other villages to avoid conflicts of interest, were stationed outside the classroom to assist illiterates and others requiring assistance. Ballots were then deposited into boxes just outside the classrooms. In Dongyangtun, voters filing past the balloting tables were directed into makeshift voting booths constructed by propping up tarpaulin with poles around a desk. However, the system was not well regulated, and before long as many as five people were crowding into booths at a time. Many bystanders wandered around the area between the table and the booths, peering over voters' shoulders to see what they were doing. Finally, ballots were deposited into boxes near the booths.

In Xiwang and Chitugou, mobile ballot boxes were employed to allow sick or elderly villagers the opportunity to vote without having to come to the meeting. In Xiachengnan and Dongyangtun, no mobile boxes were used, but Xiachengnan officials informed IRI that they would be employed in the general election. In Xiwang, village officials told the delegation that those using the mobile ballot boxes had requested to do so more than two days before the election. Village officials in Chitugou, on the other hand, told IRI that election officials were able to discern who had not been able to attend by surveying the assembled voters, and dispatched the mobile boxes to their houses. IRI staff followed mobile ballot boxes in both cases, and found that nearly all the voters who used the mobile boxes were illiterate women in their 70s and 80s. Many of those using the boxes had apparently not been informed that they were coming, and seemed hard-pressed to make a decision. Several asked the election workers to choose for them, but the election workers politely refused to do so. It was clear to IRI that the use of mobile ballot boxes allows much opportunity for fraud, as was illustrated when one of the workers bumped the ballot box he was carrying into a doorjamb, inadvertently breaking the seal. When he returned to the election ground with the box, he was not asked by officials why the box was no longer sealed. In the same village, no list was kept of the voters who used the mobile ballot boxes.

Counting Process

The delegation was very impressed with the transparent counting process observed in all four villages. However, IRI observed certain inconsistencies in the methods used to determine and separate out invalid ballots. Furthermore, the entertainment provided to the electorate during the count in Dongyangtun Village distracted voters' attention from the process and made the singing

out of ballots more difficult to hear.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1: Improve Ballot Secrecy and Security

Greater emphasis should be placed on ensuring the secrecy of ballots, including mandatory use of private voting booths. The use of mobile ballot boxes and proxy voting should be abolished. Instead, a system of absentee balloting should be developed to allow the elderly, sick, and villagers working outside the village to participate in primary and final elections.

IRI believes that ballot secrecy should be the top priority of Shanxi election officials.

In other village committee elections IRI has observed in China, ballot secrecy is mandated by provincial laws and regulations. Regulations in Anhui, Hebei, Fujian, Jilin and other provinces do not simply guarantee that secret voting booths are present, as do the *Shanxi Provincial Methods*, but make their use *mandatory* to all voters. Making the use of private voting booths optional, as was the case in some villages IRI visited in Shanxi, places the burden of ensuring ballot secrecy on the voter, rather than on election officials. Voters who wish to vote in secret are thus faced with an awkward situation that makes them stand out from other voters.

In Fujian and Jilin Provinces, where voting is permitted at several polling stations located throughout a village, election officials provided the electorate with either private voting booths or rooms. Only one voter at a time should be allowed into a private voting room if no private booths are utilized.

IRI also recommends that the use of mobile ballot boxes and proxy voting be replaced by a system of absentee balloting. Mobile ballot boxes and proxy voting may be convenient to some villagers, but they open the process to fraud and potential misrepresentation. The principle of one person, one vote should be strictly enforced. Fujian and Jilin Provinces are experimenting with absentee balloting in lieu of mobile ballot boxes and proxy voting.

Issue 2: Amend Provincial Regulations

Provincial regulations should be amended to clarify, unify, and improve the conduct of village committee elections throughout the province.

IRI is impressed with the depth and comprehensiveness of Shanxi's recently-amended laws and regulations regarding village elections. However, there are still areas where the regulations could be further amended and updated to ensure conformity with the national law and to provide clarification and uniformity for certain election practices and procedures.

Amendments should be included to: guarantee the complete secrecy of the ballot; require the

mandatory use of private voting booths; mandate uniform ballot distribution in which voter identification is checked to prevent fraud; clarify registration procedures and qualifications; encourage the use of polling stations so the electorate can vote throughout the day; abolish the use of proxy voting; abolish the use of mobile ballot boxes in favor of absentee balloting; abolish “drop down” elections; and abolish negative voting (*fan dui piao*).

Issue 3: Abolish “Drop Down” Elections

Villagers should be afforded an opportunity to both nominate and vote for all candidates who stand in the final election. The “drop down” method of voting should be prohibited, and candidates should only appear on the ballot for positions for which they have been directly nominated.

The delegation recommends that the “drop down” method of voting, as described on page 68 of the *Election Handbook*, be abolished to ensure that all candidates are treated equally. “Drop down” elections give candidates who fail to be elected chairman or vice-chairman an unfair advantage in the race for vice-chairman and committee member, respectively. Contrary to the argument that drop-down voting ensures that the best people will get a position on the committee even if they lose a race for a leadership position, such a system actually deprives talented candidates for membership of the positions they deserve in order to accommodate less capable candidates who have failed to be elected to higher offices.

Furthermore, both forms of “drop down” election that IRI has observed, in Shanxi and elsewhere, have particular disadvantages. In one form, chairman, vice-chairman, and committee member positions are elected one by one, adjusting each successive ballot to the results of the previous one. This necessitates that not one but three separate rounds of voting be held, dragging out and complicating the process. In another form, as practiced in Dongyangtun, one round of voting occurs, in which each candidate is placed on the ballot for the position for which he was nominated, as well as all lower positions. This is even more problematic: first, it creates a long and complicated ballot, which will confuse many voters; second, many voters who do not understand the rules will vote for their favorite candidate for all three positions; finally, when a candidate wins a higher office, all those who voted for him for a lower office have thrown away their votes.

In the case of Dongyangtun, this resulted in 586 wasted votes out of 2,480 (24 percent) in the vice-chairman and member races. At the same time, those who vote for losing candidates in leadership elections have their votes counted twice or even three times as the candidate “drops down”. “Drop down” races distort the will of the voters, violate the principle of “one man, one vote,” and produce countless invalid or wasted votes. Therefore, the delegation believes that they should be abolished.

Issue 4: Standardize Ballot Distribution

The system for ballot distribution should be standardized to prevent irregularities, and should involve greater supervision by representatives of different village groups. Ballots from all boxes should be mixed and randomly distributed to each counting group.

In other provinces, the system of ballot distribution is uniform and election officials fully understand the importance of checking voter identification cards against registration lists to prevent fraud and irregularities. Shanxi Province Civil Affairs Bureau officials also understood this when they published the *Election Handbook*, which on page 72 makes it clear that ballots should be distributed from stations manned by at least three workers, at which voter registration cards and proxy slips are checked against voter rolls. However, the delegation saw only two such stations in the villages it visited, and one of them did not check voter rolls. The process of checking identifications may lengthen election day procedures. IRI suggests that if this is a concern to election officials, the use of polling stations should be permitted to allow voters to cast ballots throughout the day. In Fujian, villagers can use a number of polling stations and the count is conducted at a central counting center. Officials may also be concerned that election workers may not be adept at the complex non-alphabetical system required to place Chinese names in order. This can easily be remedied by assigning each voter a registration number.

Finally, to further ensure the secrecy of votes the delegation suggests that ballots from all boxes be mixed together and randomly distributed to each counting group. Such practice would improve the counting process because village small groups often vote in blocs, and to show how each bloc voted compromises ballot secrecy.

Issue 5: Standardize Election Official Training

Polling place procedures should be standardized, and election officers should be trained according to their specific function. Provincial officials should encourage the broader use of the *Election Handbook*. All election workers should be made to study this manual and to have it close at hand on election day.

Shanxi's easy-to-use *Handbook* for election officials, which outlines their roles and responsibilities as well as election procedures, is an invaluable document with which all election workers should be familiar. At certain village elections that IRI observed in Shanxi, procedures made clear in the handbook were not properly performed, in the specific areas of ballot distribution, ballot secrecy, voting, and determining the validity of ballots. In other villages, attempts were made to follow these procedures, but lax supervision by election officials and workers caused the process to descend into chaos, compromising the quality of the election.

Each county should hold training sessions for election officials at which the handbook is used to clarify and improve the conduct of all village elections. Amendments to provincial laws and

regulations, election official training, and use of the manuals will contribute to the standardization of elections throughout the province. IRI is pleased to have sponsored training seminars in Shanxi and recognizes and appreciates the challenging task provincial officials face in providing manuals and training to tens of thousands of village level election officials.

Issue 6: Improve Campaign Activities

Candidates should be given more opportunities to campaign and should be given public venues for announcing their platforms before primary and final elections. Photographs of candidates, platforms, and biographical information should be publicly displayed in or near polling stations on election day.

IRI recommends that provincial laws and regulations be amended to sanction and encourage campaign activities during the primary and final election periods. The use of campaign materials -- including posters, pamphlets, and fliers -- should be permitted, as well as door-to-door campaigning. Campaign expenses should be the responsibility of individual candidates. Vote buying should be expressly prohibited.

IRI also recommends that campaign activities be allowed in the primary election round as well as the general elections. Candidates in primaries should be given forums in which to announce their intention to run for office, give indications of what they would accomplish as village committee members, and answer questions from the villagers. This not only provides voters with valuable information about candidates, but also informs candidates about villagers' concerns. Campaigning may also provide the additional benefit of reducing the number of candidates produced in the primary elections. Informed voters will be able to make better choices. This can be accomplished by convening well-regulated "open floor" meetings to which all villagers are invited, and at which any qualified candidate may make a brief presentation to voters.

On election day, village election officials should display photographs of each candidate, along with a brief biography or platform summary, outside polling areas. Each candidate should be responsible for preparing his or her own biographical and platform summary. IRI observed this practice in Fujian Province. At the election meeting, all candidates for chairman or vice-chairman should be allowed to address the voters, in an order chosen at random, and time should be allotted for voters to ask questions of the candidates. IRI believes that favoritism toward incumbents or other early front-runners in the sequence of speakers places other candidates at a disadvantage.

The campaign period (i.e. the time between the primary and final election) should be long enough to permit adequate opportunities for campaigning. Election officials should provide a public forum for candidates, and certain campaign activities on election day should be considered as long as they do not interfere with the voting process at polling stations (e.g. campaign areas are established outside polling stations).

Issue 7: Increase Civic Education

Civic education activities should be conducted on an on-going and regular basis. Target groups should include registered voters as well as primary and secondary students. Civic education materials, including posters, videos and pamphlets, should be developed and distributed. Election officials should send sample ballots to voters prior to primary and final elections.

Civic education is central to the success of village committee elections throughout China. Programs and activities to inform voters of their roles and responsibilities and the proper way to mark ballots should be an ongoing effort. A more educated electorate will increase support for village elections and ensure more efficient and timely balloting on election day.

IRI recommends that provincial authorities develop standardized written and visual civic education materials targeted to a broad audience, including women and youth. Content should include: the rights and responsibilities of citizens in elections (such as the right to a secret ballot and freedom of choice); comprehensive instruction on the election process (including nomination procedures); and information on voting procedures (such as the proper way to mark ballots). Whenever possible, visual aids should be used. IRI recommends that Shanxi officials utilize the “how to vote” posters developed by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (Attachment 10).

Finally, sample ballots should be distributed to the electorate prior to primary and final elections. The sample should include the time of election, the location of polling stations, and instructions on voting procedures, and should be clearly marked “sample” or color coded to avoid confusion with the actual ballot form.

Issue 8: Encourage Transparency and Accountability

Demonstration villages and counties should be selected to serve as models of efficient and effective elections. Newly elected candidates should receive specialized training on good governance practices and procedures, including financial management and accountability.

IRI encourages Shanxi officials to identify demonstration villages and counties that conduct sound village committee elections and recommends that provincial, county, and local election officials meet regularly to discuss the experience of elections in the province and to exchange information on voting procedures and civic education activities.

IRI recommends that newly elected candidates receive specialized training on good governance practices and procedures to ensure social and economic development at the village level. Special emphasis should be given to financial accountability and transparency.

CONCLUSION

Shanxi's fifth round of elections began in September 1999 and all but four counties concluded the election cycle by March 2000. In May 2000, IRI cosponsored a post-election analysis conference in Shanxi at which approximately 60 leaders from the provincial, county, township, and village levels summarized their experiences during the elections and identified areas for future improvement, including civic education efforts. During the conference, IRI staff presented the list of recommendations outlined in this report. Provincial officials strongly concurred with Issue 1 (improve ballot secrecy and security), but said that it may take some time to consider Issue 3 (abolish "drop down" elections).

In the post-election analysis there was also a strong focus on improving the quality of elected officials. Leaders in Wenshui County, where the conference was held, were pleased to report that the average age of a newly elected village leader in Wenshui is 44 and that more than half of these leaders have a high school education. Shanxi officials displayed their commitment to improving village leadership by organizing a local governance training conference in Yuncheng Prefecture from May 14-16. IRI staff participated in the training conference for 70 newly elected village leaders. Lectures outlining the national laws and regulations governing village committees were given by provincial election officials, academics, and representatives from the national Ministry of Civil Affairs. IRI staff gave lectures and answered questions on effective campaigning methods and international standards of responsive governance.

IRI expresses its gratitude to the people of Xiwang, Chitugou, Xiachengnan, and Dongyangtun Villages for allowing the delegation to observe elections, and commends all villagers for their enthusiasm for the elections. The delegation is generally impressed with the commitment of Shanxi's election officials in implementing village committee elections and ensuring effective elected officials. Furthermore, during the elections, all officials, including those at the village level, demonstrated a firm knowledge of election rules and regulations. IRI believes that the success of village committee elections throughout China lies with those directly responsible for conducting and overseeing the elections process.

Finally, IRI is committed to assisting Shanxi election officials to strengthen and improve their elections through technical assistance and the sharing of election experiences with other Chinese provinces. IRI staff will continue to discuss specific training needs with provincial election officials. In addition, IRI recognizes village committee elections as a first step toward improving local governance and will continue to offer support for programs that train newly elected village committee members on transparent and accountable governance.

ATTACHMENT 1:

The People's Republic of China Organic Law on Village Committees

**Passed at the 5th session of the 9th National People's Congress Standing Committee,
November 4, 1998**

(Translated by IRI staff)

Article 1. In order to guarantee the implementation of self-governance by the rural village people, pursuant to the concept of village masses governing themselves according to the law, and to develop village grassroots democracy and advance the construction of rural socialist material and spiritual civilization upon the basis of the Constitution, we formulate this law.

Article 2. The village committee is a grassroots, mass self-governing organization for self-management, self-education, and self-service by villagers. It implements democratic elections, democratic decision-making, democratic management, and democratic supervision.

The village committee handles the public affairs and public welfare of the village, mediates conflicts among the people, helps to protect public security, and relays to the people's government villagers' opinions, requests, and suggestions.

Article 3. The Chinese Communist Party's village-level grassroots organizations perform their work according to the Party Charter, serving their role as the core of leadership. Relying on the Constitution and the laws, they support and guarantee the rights of villagers to develop self-governing activities and to directly exercise their democratic rights.

Article 4. The duty of the people's government at the township, minority township, and town levels is to provide guidance, support, and assistance to the village committee, but not to intervene in matters within the legal limits of village self-governance.

The village committee assists the people's government at the township, minority township, and town levels in developing its work.

Article 5. The village committee should support and organize according to the law the development of various forms of cooperative economy and other economy, assume the service and coordination of village production, and work toward the construction of village industry and the development of the socialist market economy.

The village committee should respect the sovereignty of collective economic organizations in independently carrying out economic activities according to the law, defend the household responsibility system and the dual operating framework, and guarantee the legal property rights and other legal rights and interests of collective economic organizations, contract managed enterprises, joint ventures, or other partnerships.

The village committee shall manage according to the laws and regulations all land and other property belonging collectively to the villagers, and shall educate the villagers to use natural resources reasonably, in order to protect and improve the natural environment.

Article 6. The village committee should publicize the Constitution, laws, regulations, and national policies, educate the villagers and mobilize them to carry out their obligations under the laws and regulations, protect public property, preserve the legal rights and interests of the villagers, develop cultural education, spread technological expertise, promote solidarity and mutual assistance between villages, and develop various activities to build socialist spiritual civilization.

Article 7. In villages with residents of diverse ethnic nationalities, the village committee should educate and guide the villagers to strengthen solidarity, mutual respect, and mutual assistance between nationalities.

Article 8. Village committees should be established based upon the residence conditions and population size of the village, in such a way that facilitates the principle of mass self-governance.

The establishment, dismissal, and limited adjustment of the village committee should be conducted upon the proposal of the people's government at the township, minority township, or town level, with the discussion and consent of the village assembly, and the approval of the county-level people's government.

Article 9. Village committees are made up of chairmen, vice chairmen, and committee members, totaling three to seven members. Among the committee membership, there should be an appropriate number of women. In villages having residents of diverse ethnic nationalities, minority nationalities should be represented on the committee.

Village committee members should not refrain from production activities, but in accordance with local conditions, should receive suitable compensation.

Article 10. The village committee may, in accordance with village residence conditions, establish a certain number of village small groups, whose leaders shall be chosen by a meeting of each small group.

Article 11. Chairmen, vice chairmen, and members of the village committee shall be directly elected by the villagers. No organization or individual may appoint, designate, or dismiss village committee members.

Each village committee member shall serve for a term of three years. When a term of office is completed, elections for a new village committee should be held in a timely manner. Village committee members may run for and serve consecutive terms of office.

Article 12. All villagers above the age of eighteen have the right to vote and stand for election, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, occupation, family background, religion, education level, financial situation, or length of residence. However, this does not include those who have been deprived of their political rights according to the law.

A list of villagers with the right to vote and stand for election should be posted at least twenty days before the election.

Article 13. Village committee elections are managed by the village election commission. The village election commission is chosen and established by the village assembly or by the village small groups.

Article 14. When electing a village committee, all eligible voters of the village may directly nominate candidates. The number of candidates should be greater than the number of positions to be filled.

A village committee election is considered valid if more than half of the village's eligible voters participate. A candidate receiving more than half of the votes cast shall be elected.

Village elections should put into practice the methods of secret ballot and public ballot counting. Election results should be announced immediately. At the time of election, secret voting booths should be set up.

Specific election methods shall be regulated by the standing committees of the provincial, autonomous regional, and municipal people's congresses.

Article 15. When threats, bribery, forged ballots, or other illegitimate means are employed to impair the exercise by villagers of their rights to vote and stand for election, undermining the village committee election process, the villagers have the right to report to the township, minority township, and town people's congresses and people's government or the county-level people's congress standing committee and people's government, as well as the appropriate responsible departments. The appropriate mechanisms should be employed to responsibly investigate and handle the situation according to the law. Those using threats, bribes, forged ballots, or other illegitimate means to be elected shall have their elections invalidated.

Article 16. A request for the recall of a village committee member may be submitted by petition of more than one-fifth of a village's eligible voters. Recall requests should supply grounds for the proposed recall. A village committee member subjected to a recall request has the right to defend himself. The village committee should convene the village assembly to make a decision by vote regarding the recall request. The recall of a village committee member requires the approval of more than half of the village's eligible voters.

Article 17. The village assembly is made up of all members of the village over the age of eighteen. To convene the village assembly, more than half of village residents over the age of eighteen should participate, or representatives of more than two-thirds of the village's households, and all decisions made by the village assembly should receive the support of more than half of those attending. When necessary, business and enterprise work units and mass organizations located in the village may be invited to send delegates to the assembly.

Article 18. The village committee shall be responsible to the village assembly and shall report their work to the village assembly. Each year, the village assembly shall discuss the work report of the village committee, and appraise through discussion the work of the village committee members.

The village assembly shall be convened by the village committee. The village assembly should be convened whenever a proposal is raised by one-tenth of all villagers.

Article 19. The village committee must offer the following matters related to the villagers' interests to the village assembly for deliberation and decision:

4. Methods for the collection of planning fees levied by the township, and the collection and use of village funds;
5. Quotas and standards for village unemployment subsidies;
6. The use of income from collective village economy;
7. Plans for raising funds to be used in village public welfare projects such as the administration of schools and the construction of roads;
8. Plans for the establishment and contracting of village collective economic projects and the contracting of village public welfare construction projects;
9. Plans for contract-operated projects;
10. Plans for residential land use; and,
11. Additional matters involving village interests that the village assembly deems within its own mandate to debate and decide.

Article 20. The village assembly may formulate and revise village self-governance regulations and charters, and report them for township, ethnic township, and town records.

Village self-governance regulations and charters, as well as matters debated and decided upon by the village assembly or the village representative assembly, may not contradict the Constitution, laws, regulations, or national policies, nor may they infringe upon villagers' individual rights, democratic rights, or legal property rights.

Article 21. Villages with large or broadly dispersed populations may select and constitute village representative assemblies. It is the responsibility of the village committee to convene a meeting of the village representative assembly, to debate and decide upon matters authorized by

the village assembly. One village representative shall be selected by every five to fifteen households within the village, or a number of village representatives may be selected by the various village small groups.

Article 22. The village committee shall implement open and transparent systems of village service. The village committee should publicize the following items in a timely manner. Financial matters must be publicized at least once every six months, so that they may be subject to villagers' supervision:

1. The matters debated and decided upon by the village assembly that are discussed in Article Nineteen of this law, and their implementation;
2. The implementation of national family planning policies;
3. The dispensation of funds for disaster and emergency relief; and,
4. The collection of water and electricity fees, as well as other public interest matters that are the subject of particular concern of the villagers.

The village committee should guarantee the accuracy of public information, and should welcome villagers' inquiries.

If the village committee fails to publicize the appropriate information in a timely matter, or if the information that it publicizes is inaccurate, the villagers have the right to report this to the township, minority township, and town people's government or the county-level people's government and other related administrative departments. The appropriate government organs should responsibly investigate, verify, and publicize the matter. If an investigation verifies that the law has been broken, the individuals involved should be held responsible according to the law.

Article 23. The village committee and its members should abide by the Constitution, laws, regulations, and national policies, impartially manage their affairs, carry out their duties with honesty, and enthusiastically serve the people.

Article 24. Decisions made by the village committee shall follow the principle of majority rule.

In performing its work, the village committee should follow the mass line, maintain full democracy, conscientiously listen to dissenting opinions, insist upon persuasion and education, and not employ force or orders, or seek retaliation.

Article 25. The village committee shall, when needed, establish subcommittees to handle issues including public mediation, public security, and public hygiene. Village committee members may concurrently serve on these subcommittees. Village committees in villages with small populations may decide not to establish subcommittees, and instead to distribute public mediation, public security, and public hygiene tasks among individual village committee

members.

Article 26. The village committee should assist the appropriate departments in implementing the education, assistance, and supervision of villagers who have been deprived of their political rights according to the law.

Article 27. Organizations, groups, military units, state-owned enterprises, and enterprise work unit personnel located in the village shall not participate in village committee organizations. Those who do not work for village-administered collectively owned work units may choose not to participate in village committee organizations. However, they should all observe pertinent village regulations. These groups should be consulted when the local village committee, village assembly, or village representatives discuss or handle matters pertaining to them.

Article 28. Various levels of local people's congresses and various levels, county or higher, of people's congress standing committees shall guarantee the implementation of this law within their jurisdiction, in order to safeguard the exercise by villagers of their legal democratic rights.

Article 29. People's congress standing committees at the provincial, autonomous regional, and municipal levels may, according to this law combined with the realities of their own jurisdictions, formulate implementation methods.

Article 30. This law shall go into effect on the day it is publicized. On the same day, the "People's Republic of China Village Committee Organization Law (Experimental)" shall be nullified.

ATTACHMENT 2:

Shanxi Province Methods for the Implementation of the “People’s Republic of China Organic Law on Village Committees.”

Passed by the twelfth meeting of the ninth session of the Shanxi Provincial People’s Congress Standing Committee, on September 26, 1999.

(Translated by IRI staff)

Article 1. In order to guarantee the implementation of the “People’s Republic of China Organic Law on Village Committees” (hereafter abbreviated as the Village Committee Organic Law), in accordance with the practical realities of our province, we formulate these methods.

Article 2. The village committee is a grassroots, mass-based self governing organization for village self-management, self-education, and self-service, implementing democratic elections, democratic policy-making, democratic management, and democratic supervision.

Article 3. The grassroots organizations of the Chinese Communist Party perform work according to Party regulations, and serve as the core of leadership. In accordance with the Constitution and laws, they support and guarantee the development of village self-governance activities, and the direct exercise of democratic rights.

Article 4. Various levels of the people’s government should incorporate the implementation of the Village Committee Organic Law and these methods into an overall social development plan, adopt measures, and organize and coordinate related departments and work units to put into practice the Village Committee Organic Law and these methods.

Article 5. The civil affairs bureau of the people’s government at the county level and above is responsible for carrying out the day-to-day work of the Village Committee Organic Law and these methods, including the following key tasks:

1. Organize propaganda for the Village Committee Organic Law and these methods;
2. Guide village committee election, decision-making, management, and supervision activities;
3. Conduct research into the important challenges of developing rural grassroots democracy and guaranteeing the exercise of self-governance by villagers, and make policy recommendations to other people’s governments at the same level; and,

4. Accept and hear reports of violations of villagers' direct exercise of their democratic rights, and jointly conduct investigations with related departments.

Article 6. The township (town) level people's government shall give guidance, support, and assistance to the village committee, but may not interfere in matters falling within the legal jurisdiction of village self-governance.

Article 7. The village committee shall assist the township (town) level people's government to carry out environmental and resource protection, land management, construction planning, public security enforcement, public hygiene, cultural education, family planning, emergency relief, tax collection, grain purchase, and other duties.

Article 8. The village committee has the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Publicize the Constitution, laws, regulations, and national policies; educate and mobilize villagers to submit to government management; carry out the laws, and duties proscribed by regulations; and protect public assets;
2. Draft and implement village economic and social development plans and fiscal year plans; support and organize village production development; undertake production duties and coordinate work; lead villagers to get rich together; and raise villagers' living standard;
3. Manage the public affairs and public welfare of the village;
4. Mediate conflicts between people, and promote unity and family harmony between villagers, between ethnic groups, and between the village and other villages; manage relations with work units located in the village;
5. Assist and safeguard public security, organize disaster, fire, and theft prevention in the village, and promote rural social stability;
6. Relay the opinions of the villagers to the people's government, and produce suggestions and requests;
7. Safeguard the household responsibility management system as the basis; maintain the dual management system; respect the right of collective economic organizations independently entering into economic activities according to the law to operate independently; guarantee the property rights and other legal rights and interests of collective economic organizations, individual villagers, contract households, combined households and partners;
8. Manage according to the law all villagers' collective land and other assets belonging to the village;
9. Educate villagers to reasonably exploit and utilize natural resources, protect and improve the ecological environment;
10. Educate and mobilize villagers to implement family planning;
11. Develop cultural education, disseminate scientific and technological knowledge, and launch various types of socialist spiritual civilization building activities; and,

12. Other responsibilities and tasks bestowed by the laws and regulations.

Article 9. Village committees are made up of chairmen, vice chairmen, and members, altogether totalling an odd number between three and seven. In villages with populations under 500, the number of village committee members will normally be three; in villages with populations between 500 and 2000, the number of village committee members will normally not be greater than five; in villages with populations greater than 2000, the number of village committee members may not be greater than seven. A specific number of village committee members is to be suggested by the township (town) people's government according to the size of the village, the work assignments undertaken by the village committee, and the principle of relieving the burdens of the rural people; this number is to be discussed and decided upon by the village assembly or the villagers' representative assembly.

Within the villagers' committee there should be an appropriate number of women. In villages with residents from different ethnic groups, there should be committee members belonging to minority nationalities.

Among the committee members there may not be married couples or close relatives.

Article 10. Already existing village small groups should be adjusted according to village conditions and the principles of facilitating self-governance, benefitting production, and making daily life convenient.

Village small groups shall manage according to law collective land and other assets belonging to them.

The village small groups are responsible to help the village committee develop its work.

Article 11. Village small group leaders are to be chosen by a meeting of the group. Such a meeting is made up of all the members of the group over the age of eighteen.

The selection of village small group leaders is to be overseen by the village committee. When selecting a village small group leader, the group should nominate specific people and then choose between them by show of hands or ballot. If the members of a village small group are unsatisfied with their leader's work, a meeting of the group may remove him.

Article 12. Chairmen, vice chairmen, and members of the village committee are to be directly elected by the villagers. They may not be elected by the household representatives or the villagers' representative assembly, nor may committee members be elected first and then choose their own chairmen and vice chairmen. No organization or individual may designate, appoint, or remove village committee members.

Article 13. Each term of the village committee shall last three years, and when a term has reached completion, a new election should be held. Election work should be completed within three months after the last day of a serving village committee's term of office. If due to unusual circumstances an election may not be held within the appropriate time frame, the township-level people's government should seek the approval of the county-level people's government.

Village committee members may be elected to consecutive terms.

Article 14. New election rounds are to be deployed by all levels of the province's people's government acting in concert.

The county (city, district) and township (town) should at the time of a new round of elections establish election work leadership mechanisms and organizations to direct village committee election work within the appropriate administrative districts.

Article 15. Village committee elections are to be organized and overseen by the village election commission. The village election commission is made up of a chairman and members, totaling an odd number of people between three and seven. These members should exhibit a definite representative character. The election commission members are to be chosen by the village assembly or the villagers' groups. The establishment of the election commission should be overseen by the incumbent village committee. If due to unusual circumstances the village committee is unable to oversee this process, the township-level people's government shall determine who shall oversee the selection of village election commission members after extensively soliciting the views of the villagers.

If a village election commission member is designated as a formal candidate for membership in the village committee, he should resign from his duties as a member of the village election commission. Resulting deficiencies in the village election commission membership may be made up for.

Article 16. The main responsibilities of the village election commission are as follows:

1. Draft an election work program according to the law, and ask the village meeting or villagers' representative assembly to approve it;
2. Publicize to the villagers relevant village committee election laws and regulations, as well as the election's significance, methods, and steps;
3. Designate and train election workers;
4. Determine and announce the election date, voting times, location, and balloting methods;
5. Organize voter registration, investigate and confirm villagers' election qualifications, and announce a name list of villagers possessing the rights to vote and be elected;

6. Organize voters to choose formal candidates for village committee membership, determine and announce a list of formal candidates;
7. Oversee election work, announce election results, issue certificates of election, and report election results to the township-level people's government; and,
8. Establish election archives, and enter the new village committee into these archives.

The village election commission shall perform its duties from the time of its composition until the time at which a new village committee is produced.

Article 17. All villagers over the age of eighteen, regardless of ethnic background, race, sex, occupation, family background, religious beliefs, or length of residence; however, this does not include those who have been deprived of their political rights according to the law.

For the purposes of these methods, "villagers" are defined as those holding a residence permit (*hukou*) from the village, as well as citizens who, though not holding a *hukou* from the village, reside, live, work, and perform all the duties of villagers in the village.

Article 18. At the time of an election for a new village committee, villagers normally register in the village of their *hukou*.

Those who reside, live, work, and perform all the duties of a villager within the village of their spouse, but who have not transferred their *hukou* to that village, should be allowed to register if they request to do so, with the approval of the village election commission.

Those who have transferred to a non-agricultural *hukou*, but continue to reside, live, work, and perform all the duties of a villager within the village, should be allowed to register if they request to do so, with the approval of the village election commission.

Others who reside, live, work, and perform all the duties of a villager within the village, but do not hold a *hukou* from the village, may be allowed to register if they request to do so, with the approval of the village election commission.

No villager may be registered in two or more different villages simultaneously.

A villager has reached voting age if he will be eighteen years old on election day.

Article 19. A list of villagers possessing the rights to vote and be elected should be posted at least twenty days before the election.

Villagers who have objections to the posted name list should raise them with the village election

commission at least ten days before the election; the village election commission should produce explanations or make corrections at least five days before the election.

Article 20. The village election commission should draft a list of qualifications for village committee candidates, according to the principles that a village committee member should be someone who adheres to the law, is honest and upstanding, manages affairs fairly and impartially, enthusiastically serves the people, and is capable of leading the villagers toward greater wealth. The commission should also draft, according to the wishes of the villagers, the specific conditions of the villagers possessing the rights to vote and be elected, and the requirements of the village committee's work. The village election commission should ask the village assembly to discuss and pass these qualifications, and then announce them to all villagers.

Article 21. Candidates for the village committee are to be nominated by direct ballot of the village's eligible voters. The number of formal candidates for village committee positions should be greater than the number of positions to be filled. The number of formal candidates for chairman and vice chairman should exceed the number of positions to be filled by one. The number of formal candidates for village committee member should exceed the number of positions to be filled by one to three.

If the number of people named as candidates for village committee is larger than the appropriate number of formal candidates, the village election commission should convene more than half of the village's eligible voters to hold a primary election using the anonymous ballot method, with formal candidates to be determined according to the number of votes received. Alternately, the number of votes received in the original nominating election can be used to determine formal candidates.

A list of formal candidates for village committee, in order of the number of votes they received, should be posted at least five days before the election. Once a list of formal candidates for the village committee has been determined, no organization or individual may revise or alter it.

Article 22. The election of village committee positions can consist of one round of voting by eligible voters, or can be divided into consecutive rounds of voting. In multi-round elections, unsuccessful candidates for chairman and vice chairman may in subsequent rounds be candidates for vice chairman and committee member, respectively. In this case, the number of formal candidates for vice chairman and committee member shall be exempt from the limits enumerated in the first paragraph of Article Twenty One.

Article 23. More than half of the registered voters in a village must vote for a village committee election to be considered valid. Only candidates who receive favorable votes from more than half of those voting may be elected.

If the number of candidates receiving favorable votes from more than half of the voters exceeds that of the positions to be filled, the candidate receiving the most votes shall be elected. If an equal number of votes is received and a winning candidate may not be determined, a runoff election should be held between the candidates receiving an equal number of votes, and the person receiving the most votes in this election shall be elected.

Article 24. If at least three village committee members have been successfully elected, but not enough to fill all open positions, another election may be held for the empty positions, or they may be left vacant. If fewer than three people are elected, another election should be held for the empty positions. If after the second election, there are still fewer than three people elected, the empty positions may be left vacant.

If after an election is completed, the position of village committee chairman remains vacant, the candidate receiving the most votes for vice chairman may temporarily oversee the work of the village committee. If both the position of chairman and that of vice chairman remain empty, the candidate receiving the most votes for committee member may temporarily oversee the work of the village committee. If the position of village committee chairman remains vacant, a new election should be held within six months.

Article 25. Village committee elections shall employ the anonymous ballot method. At the time of election, secret ballot booths and corresponding ballot assistance desks should be set up. When balloting is completed, votes should be tallied in public, and election results should be announced immediately.

Article 26. A request for the recall of a village committee member may be entered by petition of one-fifth or more of a village's eligible voters. The petition should supply reasons for the recall. A committee member who is the subject of a recall request has the right to defend himself. Within thirty days after receiving a recall request, the village committee should convene the village assembly, which should make a decision by vote regarding the recall request. A motion to recall a village committee member must receive the votes of more than half of the village's eligible voters to pass.

If the village committee exceeds the time limit for convening the village assembly to make a decision on a recall request, the township-level people's government may urge the village committee to convene the village assembly to decide the matter by vote.

Article 27. If a village committee member chooses to resign, he should submit his resignation to the village committee in written form. The village committee should then submit it to the village assembly or villagers' representative assembly for their decision.

Article 28. If the position of chairman is vacated, or if the positions of vice chairman and committee member are vacated so that fewer than three members remain on the committee, a

village meeting should be held within six months' time in order to hold a special election. Village committee members elected in a special election shall serve a term equal to the unserved portion of the term of the members whom they replace.

Article 29. The village assembly consists of all villagers over the age of eighteen. In order to convene the village assembly, more than half of the villagers over the age of eighteen, or representatives of more than two-thirds of all village households, must participate.

All decisions made by the village assembly must receive the support of more than half of those participating.

Article 30. Village assembly meetings are organized by the village committee, and at least one must be held per year. At the request of one-tenth of all villagers, a village assembly meeting should be held.

The village committee is responsible to report its work to the village assembly.

Article 31. The village assembly is an organization for the direct exercise by villagers of their democratic rights, and is the highest decision-making mechanism of village self- governance. The village assembly exercises the following powers:

1. Hold elections, recall elections, and special elections of village committee members;
2. Formulate and revise village self-governance regulations and regulations of contracts between the villagers;
3. Deliberate village economic and social development programs and yearly plans;
4. Consider work reports of the village committee;
5. Appraise through discussion the work of village committee members;
6. Decide whether or not to establish a villagers' representative assembly and village representative nominating methods; decide which matters fall under the authority of the villagers' representative assembly;
7. Cancel or modify inappropriate decisions of the villagers' representative assembly and the village committee; and,
8. Decide on matters of great importance to village interests.

For the village assembly to exercise the areas of its authority enumerated in numbers one, two, three, and seven of the above regulations, more than half of all villagers above the age of eighteen must participate.

Article 32. In the following matters pertaining to the interests of the village, the village committee should ask the village assembly to hold discussions, make decisions and determine how the matters should be handled:

1. Planning of income and expenditures; planning the division of labor for use of, responsibility for, and accumulation of village financial reserves;
2. The number of committee members who enjoy compensation for their administrative work and the standards of compensation;
3. Distribution and use of the income and profits of village collective economy;
4. Methods of raising funds for village schools, the building of roads, and other public welfare undertakings;
5. The development of village collective economy matters; management planning; and planning for the establishment, contracting, and use of public welfare enterprises;
6. Planning of household contract management;
7. Planning for the use of residential areas; and,
8. Other matters in the village interest that the village assembly deems within its mandate to discuss and decide upon.

Article 33. Villages made up of five hundred or more people, or two natural villages, may choose to nominate villagers' representatives. Every five to fifteen households may choose one person as a representative, or each village group may choose a certain number of people. Normally, a village will have at least twenty villagers' representatives. Villagers' representatives serve three-year terms, and may serve for consecutive terms.

Villagers' representatives may be replaced by the households or village groups they represent. No other organization or individual may designate, appoint, or replace villagers' representatives.

Article 34. The village congress may authorize the villagers' representative assembly to exercise part of the village meeting's powers, but the powers numbered one, two, three, six and seven in the first paragraph of Article Thirty One of these methods can only be exercised by the village assembly.

Article 35. The village committee is responsible for organizing and overseeing the villagers' representative assembly. Villagers' representatives should be notified of meeting topics at least three days in advance, and opinions should be solicited from all quarters of the village.

In order to hold a meeting of the villagers' representative assembly, at least two-thirds of the villagers' representatives must participate. All decisions of the villagers' representative assembly must receive the support of more than half of the villagers' representative assembly.

Article 36. Village self-governance regulations, regulations of contracts between villagers, and matters decided upon by the village assembly or villagers' representative assembly, may not contradict the Constitution, laws, administrative regulations, local rules, or national policy, and may not violate the individual, democratic, or personal property rights of the villagers.

Villagers should abide by village self-governance regulations, regulations of contracts between villagers, and the decisions of the village assembly and villagers' representative assembly, submit to the management of the village committee, and fulfil their responsibilities as villagers.

Article 37. The village committee shall establish a system of openness and transparency in village affairs.

The village committee should, in a timely matter, make public the following matters, and other financial affairs, at least once every six months, for the villagers' supervision:

1. Matters discussed and decided upon by the village assembly and the villagers' representative assembly, as well as implementation conditions;
2. Implementation plans for national family planning policies and provincial family planning regulations;
3. Conditions for the provision of funds for disaster and emergency relief;
4. Detailed conditions for village financial planning, as well as income and expenditures;
5. Conditions for the use of national allowances and social assistance for poverty relief, resources for agricultural development and other financial administration, and special funds for aid work;
6. Conditions for contract management in village collective economic organizations;
7. Conditions for the collection and expenditure of compensation and relocation expenses for confiscated land;
8. The assumption of fees and work by rural people;
9. Pricing of water and electricity utilities, and conditions for the charging, collection, and payment of utility fees; and,
10. Other matters related to village interests and of common importance to villagers.

Article 38. The village committee must ensure the open and accurate disclosure of village affairs, and should accept inquiries by the villagers. Before a village committee election, the village committee should perform an audit upon the financial income and expenditures of the election, and openly disclose the results of the audit, according to the "Shanxi Province Provisional Statute on the Auditing of Rural Collective Economy."

Article 39. Issues decided upon by the village committee should follow the principle of majority rule.

When the village committee performs its work, it should insist upon the mass line, and should sufficiently add to the glory of democracy, listen seriously to dissenting opinions, rely upon persuasion and education, instead of forcing and giving orders, or taking retribution by force.

Article 40. When the first regulation of Article Thirteen of these methods is violated, and a village committee election is not held in time, or is delayed for no valid reason without the approval of the county-level people's government, the county-level people's government should order the village to hold an election, and oversee the responsibilities of the relevant officials.

Article 41. In the event of one of the following, villagers have the right to report to the township-level People's Congress and people's government, or the county-level people's congress standing committee and people's government, as well as the civil affairs department. When these institutions receive such a report, they should investigate the situation and handle it according to law:

1. Using threats, bribery, falsified ballots, or other illegitimate means to interfere with a valid election, impairing the villagers' exercise of their rights to vote and be elected, and spoiling a village committee election; or,
2. Altering candidates for village committee membership without authorization; designating, appointing, replacing village committee members; or forcefully taking retribution upon villagers who take part in the prosecution of those who engage in illegal activity during a village committee election, or upon villagers who request the removal of village committee members.

The county-level people's congress standing committee has the right to decide upon and declare invalid the election of anyone who has achieved their position through threats, bribery, or other illegitimate means.

Article 42. If the village committee fails to make public the appropriate items, or if the information it releases is false, the villagers have the right to file a complaint with the township-level people's government, the county-level people's government, and the civil affairs department of the county-level people's government. The appropriate institutions are responsible to investigating the truth, and to publicize or rectify the situation.

Article 43. Officials in the township-level people's government, county-level people's government, the civil affairs department of the county-level people's government, and related national institutions should resolutely carry out their responsibilities to react to, deal with, and investigate according to the law violations of the Village Committee Organization Law and these regulations, rather than merely passing the buck to others. Those who neglect their responsibilities will face serious consequences, and should look into their legal duties.

Article 44. The people's congresses at various levels and the standing committees of the people's congresses at or above the county level should strengthen supervision toward the Village Committee Organic Law and these methods and implementing conditions, ensure the correct implementation of the Village Committee Organic Law and these methods within this

administrative jurisdiction, and guarantee the exercise by villagers of their self-governing rights according to the law.

Article 45. The standing committee of the provincial people's congress is responsible for explaining these methods.

Article 46. These methods shall take effect on the day they are announced. At that time, the "Shanxi Province Methods for the Organization and Implementation of Village Committees" promulgated by the twenty-second meeting of the Standing Committee of the Seventh Provincial People's Congress on May 12, 1991, shall be nullified.

ATTACHMENT 3:

Shanxi Province Standard Voter Registration Card
(source: *Shanxi Province Election Handbook*, pg. 50)

A County **B** Township **C** Village **n**th Round Village Committee Election Voter Identification

Name:_____ Sex:_____ Age:_____			
Voting time:_____			
Voting place:_____			
Important items: 1. This certificate must be presented to receive a ballot. 2. Only one person may use this certificate. 3. This certificate is invalid without an affixed seal.			
Date of issue:	Year	Month	Day
C Village Election Commission (Seal)			

ATTACHMENT 4:

**General Election Ballot, Xiwang Village
Chairman Ballot**

Xiwang Village Round Five Village Committee Election Ballot Committee Chairman Ballot				
Candidate	Fan Yingui	Fan Jiyuan	Other	
Mark			Candidate	
Instructions	<p>1. For the candidate on the ballot that you support, mark an “O” in the space under the name. For the candidate you do not support mark an “X”. If you wish to abstain, do not make any marks.</p> <p>2. If you wish to vote for another candidate, you may write the name of the candidate for whom you wish to vote in the blank for candidate and mark an “O” in the small space below the name.</p> <p>3. Each ballot may contain a vote for chairman for only one person. Those containing votes for more than one person are invalid.</p>			

ATTACHMENT 5:

**General Election Ballot, Xiwang Village
Member Ballot**

Xiwang Village Round Five Village Committee Election Ballot Committee Member Ballot						
Candidate	Gao Ermei	Fan Ji'en	Fan Fucui	Other Candidate		
Mark						
Instructions	<p>1. For the candidates on the ballot that you support, mark an “O” in the space under each name. For the candidates you do not support mark an “X”. If you wish to abstain, do not make any marks.</p> <p>2. If you wish to vote for other candidates, you may write the names of the candidates for whom you wish to vote in the blanks for candidate and mark an “O” in the small space below each name.</p> <p>3. Each ballot may contain votes for committee membership for only two people. Those containing votes for more than two people are invalid.</p>					

ATTACHMENT 6:**Dongyangtun Village Fifth Round Village Committee Election Ballot****Chairman Ballot**

Candidate	Liu Yingquan	Duan Yugui	Other Candidate	
Mark				

Vice Chairman Ballot

Candidate	Liu Yingquan	Duan Yugui	Li Fengbao	Guo Shaotong	Other Candidate	
Mark						

Committee Member Ballot

Candidate	Liu Yingquan	Duan Yugui	Li Fengbao	Guo Shaotong	Zhang Aixiang	Li Fengqi	Wang Youfen	Tian Xiaolai	

Instructions:

1. From among the candidates, choose one name for chairman, one name for vice chairman, and three names for committee member. Ballots containing votes for a number of candidates less than or equal to the number to be elected are valid, but those containing votes for more than that number are invalid.
2. When filling out the ballot, write an "O" in the space underneath the name of the candidate you wish to vote for. For those you do not wish to vote for, write an "X". If you wish to vote for another candidate, write the name of the candidate in the space marked "other candidates" and mark an "O" below the name. Ballots without any marks will be counted as abstentions.
3. You may only vote for each individual candidate for one position. If a candidate is voted for more than once on a ballot, only the vote for the highest position will be counted.

**Dongyangtun Village Fifth Round Village Committee Election Ballot
(Chinese)**

ATTACHMENT 7:

**Candidate Nominating Ballot, Chitugou Village
Chairman Nominating Ballot**

<p>Chitugou Village Round Five Village Committee Election</p> <p>Chairman Candidate Nominating Ballot</p>		
<p>Village Committee Chairman</p> <p>Candidate</p>		<p>Instructions: Choose one name for village committee chairman. Choosing more than one name will render the ballot invalid.</p>

ATTACHMENT 8:

**Candidate Nominating Ballot, Chitugou Village
Member Nominating Ballot**

Chitugou Village Round Five Village Committee Election				
Member Candidate Nominating Ballot				
Village Committee Member				
Candidate				
Instructions: Choose four names for village committee member. Choosing more than four names will render the ballot invalid.				

ATTACHMENT 9:

Xiachengnan Village Committee Election

Candidate Nomination Ballot

Village Committee Chairman Candidate: _____;

Village Committee Vice Chairman Candidate: _____;

Village Committee Member Candidate _____;

Instructions:

1. Each voter may only nominate one person for chairman, one person for vice chairman, and one person for committee member. Ballots containing a number of votes for candidates less than or equal to the appropriate number are valid; ballots containing a number of votes for candidates more than the appropriate number are invalid.

2. Each voter should write the name of the person for whom they are voting in the space after the appropriate position. The name of each individual person for whom you are voting should only appear once within the three spaces. If a name appears more than once on the ballot, the ballot is invalid.

3. Names of candidates must be written neatly and clearly.

March 4, 2000

**Xiachengnan Village Committee Election
Candidate Nomination Ballot
(Chinese)**

ATTACHMENT 10:
Civic Education Poster
(Ministry of Civil Affairs)

Glossary of Terms

Clan

A clan is an extended family that usually shares the same last name. Some natural villages in China are inhabited primarily by members of the same clan.

Chairman, Village Committee

The chairman of the village committee essentially serves as the village mayor. He is the central leader of the village government and directs the work of the village committee.

“Drop-down” Method

The “drop-down” method of voting is an electoral system used in some Shanxi villages. Under this system, the losing candidate for chairman drops down to become a candidate for vice chairman; the losing candidate for vice-chairman drops down to become a candidate for the committee at large.

Formal Candidate

A formal candidate is a candidate whose name is printed on the general election ballot. Under Shanxi law, the ballot must present voters with a choice of multiple formal candidates for each position on the village committee.

People’s Congress

The legislative branch at all levels of the people’s government.

People’s Government

The term used officially to refer to the government of the People’s Republic of China.

Proxy Vote

In some Shanxi villages, villagers unable to participate in elections are able to provide written authorization to another person to vote on their behalf. Permission from the village election commission is required, and the proxy voter must present an official form before receiving ballots.

Provincial Implementation Methods

The *PRC Village Committee Organic Law* provides for individual provinces to pass their own specific “methods” for its implementation. Such legislation, passed by provincial people’s congress standing committees (see page 27), sets out specific guidelines for the practice of elections and the operations of the village committee.

Roving Ballot Box

The roving ballot box is a small ballot box that is carried to the homes of the aged, infirm and others who are unable to go in person to the polling station.

“Sea Choice” (hai xuan) Primary Election

When nominating formal candidates, voters are given a blank ballot and asked to write in a name for each position to be filled. The top vote-getters are designated as formal candidates.

Township

The lowest official level of the people’s government, and the level that directly oversees the village committee.

Vice chairman, Village Committee

The vice chairman is the second-ranking member of the village committee. When the chairmanship is vacant, or when the chairman is unable to perform his duties, the vice chairman serves as head of the village committee.

Village

Throughout this report, the term “village” refers to the political unit of local government at the grassroots level. A village may in fact consist of several geographically distinct natural villages that are organized under a common political structure.

Village Assembly

The village assembly consists of the entire voting-age population of a village, similar to a New England town meeting. Under the law, it is the highest decision-making body in the village and must be convened by the village committee to debate and decide upon major issues of village policy.

Village Committee

The village committee is the executive branch of government at the local level. However, it is not a formal level of the Chinese government hierarchy. There are three to seven members on most committees, usually presided over by a chairman, vice chairman(men), and member(s). According to Chinese law, members of the village committee must be chosen by direct elections.

Village Committee Organic Law

Law passed by the National People’s Congress in Beijing on November 4, 1998, governing the election and functions of the village committee.

Village Election Commission

The village election commission, which is appointed by the village assembly under the supervision of the incumbent village committee, usually has three to seven members, including a chairman and vice chairman(men). The commission is responsible for overseeing the planning for and execution of village committee elections, and is disbanded as soon as election work is completed.

Village Party Committee

The village party committee is the local branch of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). It is headed by a chairman and vice chairman(men), who are allowed to concurrently serve on the village committee. The formal relationship between the party committee and village committee remains poorly defined, but in most villages the party committee carries out party operations at the village level and counsels the village committee on party policies. The two committees often share offices.

Village Representative Assembly

The village representative assembly, not to be confused with the village assembly, provides policy guidance to the village committee on issues such as infrastructure and agriculture development. It usually consists of twenty to sixty village elders who meet several times a year to establish village priorities, and to hear reports from the chairman of the village committee.

Village Small Group

The village small group is a smaller organizational unit below the village. Just as the village committee and village representative assembly are successors to the commune structure, small village groups have replaced production brigades.

Write-In Candidates

A write-in candidate is a candidate whose name is not printed on the ballot, but has been written in by voters. In Shanxi, printed ballots normally have a designated space to enable voters to write in the candidates of their choice.

Map of the People's Republic of China

(Source: National Geographic)

Map of Shanxi Province
(Source: Hai Feng Publishing Co.)