# Review of Whole-Village Crime Phenomenon in China

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**Abstract:** In recent years, the whole-village crime phenomenon has caused frequent attention from media, government and academic. Some scholars have analyzed this phenomenon and proposed specific countermeasures. The research status of the whole-village crime has too few researches and insufficient academic attention; the term definition is chaotic, which seriously affects academic exchanges; and the reasons and countermeasures are explored from multiple angles. The study of the whole-village crime phenomenon should attract more attention, unified terminology, multi-disciplinary and multi-angle, qualitative and quantitative research, and draw on western criminological theory and localization efforts to seek further development.

**Key words:** whole-village crime, criminal village, cause of crime

## I. Overview of whole-village crime phenomenon

In recent years, despite the relatively stable social order in rural China, the whole-village crime phenomenon has frequently occurred. According to some scholars, there are nearly 30 this kind of villages distributed throughout the country, such as “village of killing”, “village of drugs”, “village of fraud” and “village of fake”. Some crime even spread to the whole township and county. The criminals in these villages are mainly youth , the crime types diversified and the means of committing crime varied, which reflects the social disorder in rural China. The whole-village crime, which is more professional and well-organized, is different from the individual crime. Some village crime has even formed a criminal chain, resulting in a great threat for social order and people’s lives and property safety, which must arouse great attention. The whole-village criminal gangs not only occupy a considerable proportion of rural crimes, but also are significant reason of social instability in China. Therefore, it is urgent to analyze the cause of whole-village crime in rural areas and to find out countermeasures to prevent the spread of this phenomenon.

## II. Research status of whole-village crime phenomenon

### 1. Too little studies, and insufficient academic attention.

However, in sharp contrast to the lively debate over the phenomenon of whole-village crime by the mass media, little attention has been paid by academia, especially criminology on this particular hot crime phenomenon. The terminology of the phenomenon is summarized as “the whole-village crime”, “criminal village”, “criminal professional village”, etc., which are all formed spontaneously by the media, lacking the definition of scientific concept, let alone deepening theoretical analysis of this phenomenon from the perspective of scientific criminology and the introduction of effective criminal countermeasures.

At present, the research on the phenomenon of whole-village crime is still at its initial stage, and only ten papers directly involve this topic research. They are On the Rural Population Crisis in China from the Perspective of "Wenjiang Village Phenomena“( Mu Guangzong, 2014), Thinking about the phenomenon of rural criminal professional villages (Xing Yaole,2014),An alternative economic professional village — seeing the lack of government responsibility( Cong Yu,2014),Analysis of the Evolutionary Game Formation of Group Events——Taking the Drug Boshe Village in Lufeng City, Guangdong Province as an Example, (Zhuang Jiadi, Bin Ning, Li Guangjie, 2014), The Prevention and Control Path of the Behavior of the Deviant Community in the Homeland Society( Yan Jiexin,2016),Study on the Regionalization of Serial Crimes(Yao Zhengui, 2016),Inquiring into the Governance of Regional Professional Crime Groups—— Taking Sanming City, Fujian Province as an Example( Xiao Yimao,2016),Study on the Regional

Characteristics of Certain Types of Crimes( Wang Chen and Li Wei ,2017), Closed Equilibrium and Social Morality: The Conflict between Tradition and Modernity——Thinking and Governing the Whole Village Deception(Shuming Xiong and Zhang Qi,2017),Research on Rural Village Crime and Its Governance (Zhang Zhengyun, 2017).

Among them, Mu Guangzong (2014) pointed out in the article On the Rural Population Crisis in China from the Perspective of “Wenjiang Village Phenomena” that “rural migrant workers” becoming the “deviant population” or even “criminal population” through gang-related networks in the process of population urbanization is a kind of “human capital assembly effect” in order to avoid the criminal costs and risks caused by the lack of personal human resources. The “Wenjiang Village Phenomenon” reflects the deep crisis of sparseness, impoverishment and negative deterioration of the rural population in China. Xing Yaole examined the characteristics and causes of “crime village” phenomenon in Henan province and put forward specific countermeasures and suggestions in the article Reflections on the Phenomenon of “Professional Villages of Crime” in Rural Areas. She Jiexin used the concept of sociology to define the phenomenon of “whole-village crime” as the “deviant community” behavior in the post-local society, and believed that it had the characteristics of deviant type diversity, deviant purpose of profitability, deviant behavior of contagious and organized.

2. Domestic and foreign research on rural crime for reference

Although there are few papers on the phenomenon of “whole-village crime”, there are a lot of researches on rural crime and crime of urban migrant workers, which studies the characteristics, causes and preventive measures of rural crime and urban crime of migrant workers from the different perspectives of label theory, cultural conflict theory, social control theory, human rights, social capital theory and community, using the relevant theories in criminology, economics, sociology and psychology. The content of these researches is more or less involved in rural criminal gangs, which can be used as a reference.

One notable problem is that Western criminology theory, which is in the leading position in criminological theory, is based on the urban crime as the background and sample to do the empirical investigation and research. The criminological research on rural crime has never been paid enough attention. Western criminology has long been a clear urban bias, that crime and confusion is only a by-product of urbanization while rural areas, culture and population irrelevant. However, with the rise of ecological criminology, recognizing that environmental crime and judicial problems often occur in rural areas and have significant negative impacts on rural areas and populations, scholars have begun to combine rural criminological issues with macro-cultural, economic, social changes and their impact on rural communities.

In particular, there are a large number of empirical work in three areas of rural criminology: first, the study of the relationship between social, cultural and economic characteristics of the community and the rural crime mainly by using the social disintegration theory of the Chicago School; second, agricultural crime; third, rural otherness. Some scholars believed that the above study was largely descriptive, low-level empirical research, reflecting the relative lack of rural criminology theoretical basis. (Joseph Donnermeyer, John Scott & Elaine Barcla, 2013). Other scholars argued that rural crime research may make important contributions to crime policy, criminological theory and criminological research methods. “Criminology and criminology and justice research are often based on urban models of social organization, and the application of these theories and methods to rural environments provides an opportunity for them to better understand them and to define the hypotheses on which they are based.” (Ralph A . Weisheit & L. Edward Wells, 1996; Ralph A. Weisheit & Joseph F Donnerneyer, 2000) In addition, the research on gangs in rural areas of the United States suggests that urban and rural areas have different gang models and that the criminal justice system that deals with youth gangs in non-urban areas requires a different approach. (Ralph A. Weisheit&L. Edward Wells,2004) The theory of gang theory can provide a theoretical reference

for the case study of the whole-village crime. The theoretical research and empirical methods carried out in rural criminology abroad are worthy of our reference.

3. Definition of terms Chaos, seriously affecting academic exchanges.

It can be seen from the above-mentioned thesis of the ten whole village crime phenomena that although the academic community has discussed this phenomenon from different aspects, the concepts used are almost completely different. For the same phenomenon, there are different titles such as “criminal village”, “criminal professional village”, “regional professional criminal group crime”, “deviant community of post-country community society”, “alternative economic professional village” and “whole-village crime”. The terminology is not uniform, which brings certain obstacles and difficulties to the literature search, review and communication discussion in the research process. It is not conducive to in-depth study of the whole-village crime phenomenon.

Although the specific title is different, the description of the whole village crime phenomenon, especially the feature summary is basically the same. Most people think that the whole village crime has the characteristics of profitability, criminal form diversity, kinship, regionality, professionalism, and spread of infection.I suggest using the same term “whole village crime” as the mass media to describe this particular group crime phenomenon in order to maintain the unity of terminology, to facilitate public understanding and academic exchange.

4. Reasons and countermeasures for multi-angle exploration

(1) Typical cases reflect social structure problems

Some scholars use one or several typical case villages as entry points to reflect on the social structure problems reflected by the whole village crime phenomenon from different angles, and put forward targeted social structure reform proposals. These include specific issues such as the rural population crisis, rural traditional ethnic values, and lack of government responsibility. The characteristics of these studies are that they explain the causes of the whole-village crime from one aspect and one perspective. Although they are lost in one-sidedness, their advantages are profound, that is, they profoundly reveal the social problems reflected in the whole-village crime, and they can master the corresponding theory for in-depth interpretation. Compared with other comprehensive considerations of the various reasons of the whole-village crime, it is easier to reach a certain theoretical depth.

Mu Guangzong pointed out that the rural “working population” in the process of population urbanization has become a “deviant population” or even a “criminal population” through gangs’ crimes. It is a “human capital assembly effect” to avoid the crime costs and risks brought about by the lack of individual human resources.The rural population has experienced population deterioration in the process of moving to the city, that is, its own human capital (including intellectual capital and moral capital) is lacking, encountering social exclusion and barriers of the city, leading to social adaptation failure, moral disorder, behavioral anomie, and ultimately Lead to crime. The “Wenjiang Village Phenomenon” reflects the profound crisis of sparse, impoverished and negative deterioration of China’s rural population.In order to cope with the crisis of China’s rural population and achieve population optimization, the author put forward the strategy of implementing national compulsory compulsory education, constructing a large education system including family, school and society to achieve quality education, and improving family-friendly social public policy system.

Bi Mingxiong and Zhang Qi use the theory of sociology and evolutionary game to explore the closed equilibrium and social morality of the whole village deception, and believe that the whole village deception is the evolutionary stable balance in the adaptive competition of closed ethnic groups. This is in serious conflict with the general will of the country and the modern morality of society. To curb similar crimes in the whole village requires the transformation and reconstruction of traditional ethnic values, which cannot

be separated from the external coercion of third parties, and cannot be separated from the propaganda of modern moral values and the imposition of the rule of law consciousness. At the same time, the functions of traditional clan and village society are also facing the task of transformation in an open society. They believe short-sightedness and ignorance are important reasons for crimes in the whole village. Groups that have received higher education and have modern consciousness rarely regard behaviors that harm others' self-interest as a virtue. The short-sightedness, vanity, and weak concept of the rule of law have become the common characteristics of this group, and it is also the soil for the whole village crime. To eradicate the soil of the whole village crime must rely on raising the level of ideological understanding of the group. Therefore, the awareness of equality, citizenship, rights, and obligation necessary to cultivate a modern federal society is imminent. In the deep-rooted areas of traditional clan concept, these traditional small communities of clan villages have become stubborn bastions in the process of expanding the modern market order and in the process of universal moral practice. Traditional clan and village communities need to further eliminate their traditional conditions, especially those with destructive and feudal traditions, in order to obtain the conditions and opportunities for continued survival and development in modern society. Introduce the factors of modernity, use socialist ideology and cultural forms to transform themselves, and transform themselves into non-mandatory, non-utilitarian mutual aid organizations that can meet the requirements of modern social development and functional civil organizations that maintain social order.

Cong Yu opposes he reason of the alternative economic professional villages as poverty, but take the lack of government responsibility as the basic theoretical perspective, and thoroughly analyze the government's responsibilities in solving the problem of alternative economic professional villages. Specifically, it includes the government-based view of public administration, public choice theory, and collective action theory to analyze government responsibility.The so-called alternative economic professional village refers to the village that uses the improper economic interests (or even crime) as its main source of income and reaches the group consensus of the village internal community.

The lack of government responsibility means that the government is unwilling or unable to take responsibility for its administrative consequences, resulting in the separation or unequalness of the administrative powers and the administrative responsibilities that the government has. The urban and rural dual system and related policies have absorbed and exploited rural resources, so that funds, talents and other resources are continuously input into the city, while the feedback and compensation of the city and the country to the vast rural areas is extremely limited. The government manages the working methods and mechanisms of the rural areas, attaches importance to hard tasks such as economic development, and ignores soft tasks such as social and human development. Even the education of peasants is always promoted by the untimely unified ideology standards, ignoring the characteristics and needs of the peasants themselves, so that more and more new generations of peasants are not sure how to live. Throughout the process, the government has been ignoring the interests of the peasants, resulting in the inability of the peasants' material life, and the spiritual world to sink quickly. They have to live on their own, and farmers have taken a surprising alternative economic path because of their limitations. Some officials of the government are lazy, have low ruling ability, and distorted their views on political achievements. In order to pursue personal interests, they allow illegal criminal acts to be shackled, allowing various mega-cases to occur, allowing the national and people's lives and property to suffer major losses and threats. They have seriously damaged the legal authority of the country and the credibility of the government.

(2) Analysis of the multi-factor theory of criminal Causes

Some scholars start from social reasons and think that social reasons are the main reason for rural crime. They believe that the causes of rural crime are various, including economic inequality, initial political participation, imperfect legal environment, corruption, clan dependence, lost faith, psychological imbalance,

and so on. Some scholars explore the causes of crime and the countermeasures for crime from the aspects of personal qualities (mainly psychological quality) and environmental factors. Compared with the study of the whole-village crime from only one side of the social structure problem, these studies pay more attention to the reasons of the whole-village crime from the broad social background. Crime is rooted in society, and the cause of crime should be sought from the social level. This is a question of correct direction. In addition, the personal factors of criminals, especially psychological factors and values, are also factors to consider. The analysis of the causes of the whole-village crime by comprehensive personal factors and social factors is the proper meaning of the multi-factor theory of criminal causes.

Xiao Yimao believes that regional occupational crime groups refer to criminal gangs that use a certain geographical kinship as a link to invade wealth and have a certain regional characteristic. It has the characteristics of the criminal group's clustering, the rigor of the criminal organization and the rogue nature of the criminal form. There have been many criminal professional villages across the country. The complex geographical relations within the regional criminal gangs will seriously affect the speed of investigation and resolution by public security organs. The means of committing crimes are relatively fixed, the criminal gangs are more rigorous, and the anti-investigation consciousness is strong. Some regional criminal gangs imitate corporate management, have special personnel, clear internal labor, and strong professionalism. Different crimes are handled by different personnel, and single-line communication is adopted between each link. It is usually necessary for a number of criminal suspects to work together to complete a crime.

The causes of regional occupational crime groups mainly include the criminals' bad psychology and social environment. Specifically, they include the disparity between the rich and the poor, the mentality of the supreme morality, the inferiority of their own bad roots, and the lag of combat. To crack down on regional occupational crime groups, we must build a coordinated and co-management pattern led by the party committee and government, a clear-cut legal governance mechanism, an integrated prevention and control system for publicity and education, and a crackdown mechanism for multiple synthetic operations, and continuously improve the level of combating governance and effectively eliminate hidden dangers of social harmony and stability.

Xing Yaole believes that the main causes of "criminal professional villages" are poverty, greed, low cultural quality, weak legal awareness and weak rural security infrastructure. Correspondingly, it is necessary to accelerate the development of rural economy, strengthen the rural legal system, and improve rural security. Focus on supervision of criminal professional villages and establish an effective supervision and prevention mechanism. Although China's rural population accounts for two-thirds of the total population, they are in a weak position in society. We must pay more attention to and study rural crimes, so as to effectively prevent the occurrence of rural crimes. At the same time, rural crime is a comprehensive social problem. It is also a systematic project to effectively prevent and cure rural crimes. The development of rural crime from the theoretical level to the institutional level to the practical level is not a simple process. Our discussion of rural crime is still far from enough. There is still a long way to go in theoretical exploration and practice. The best social policy is the best criminal policy. Therefore, we must work hard to solve the problem of rural crime from all aspects.

(3) Summary of crime generation model

Some scholars believe that the simple search for the causes of crime from both personal and social aspects can not reveal the dynamic process of the whole-village crime generation, and advocates the use of appropriate criminological theory to dig deep into the path of the whole-village crime generation, and then propose targeted precaution. Compared with the previous two models, the discussion of the whole-village crime generation model is undoubtedly further, because the dynamic generation process of the whole-village crime is based on the comprehensive analysis of the static multi-factor theory of criminal causes and the profound theoretical analysis. The summary of the crime generation model also involves

the study of the whole-village crime phenomenon, especially the specific steps of the whole village crime development and the characteristics of each step. Finding a specific whole-village crime generation model means that the understanding of this criminal phenomenon is more profound and detailed, and it is easier to take corresponding measures for different development stages of the whole-village to better combat and prevent it.

She Jiexin believes that the unique behavior of the deviant community is different from the traditional deviant behavior. The criminological theories such as containment theory, social control theory, anomie theory, neutralization theory, broken window theory and group effect theory can provide many theoretical support for revealing the causes of deviant behavior. However, the crime problem in China is still closely related to national politics and culture. Theoretical methods cannot lack local customary customs information. Therefore, we need to analyze the mechanism of the deviant behavior, and focus on the special action logic and ideas of the villagers in the special context of the local society and the unique psychological effects of the group, and find out the important influencing factors of the initial proliferation and outbreak of the deviant behavior.

The special social background of the village includes the hard living environment, the weak control force, the special ideas of the villagers, and the unique psychological effects of the group. In the rural society during the transition period, the original self-sufficient life mode has been unsustainable. The rural single agricultural development model makes the villagers' living conditions extremely fragile. Villagers who are unwilling to settle in poverty may take the lead in derailing. If the society lacks effective external organization control and regional management, it cannot make the members of the group reach a more unified norm and recognition, and actively participate in regional activities, then deviation behavior will occur. Under the concept of village self-government, the state's formal control is gradually retracted. Especially in the more remote and backward villages, the state has little control. However, the traditional rule of the rural society and the patriarchal norms do not work well, and the rural external control and internal control are relatively loose. The weak control force and vacuum control system let go of the deviant behavior.

The special ideas of the villagers include weakened inner containment, blindly imitating follow-up, and changing the clan culture. The traditional rural social morality is strong and the patriarchal rules are strict. These have played an important role in curbing the illegal crimes of villagers. However, since the reform and opening up, the shock and impact of the multicultural concept has led to the transformation and confusion of the values of the villagers. Faced with the endless stream of rural problems, the continuous decline of the villagers' moral values and the high crimes that have remained high have caused the villagers' public morality to gradually decline, and the village's voice to defend morality has gradually disappeared. The fear of the law and the belief have not yet formed, and the inner impediment of the villagers has gradually weakened. The deviant behavior continues to occur. In villages with strong authoritative ideas and worships, villagers often under the influence of elites, losing personal reason and blindly following the deviant of elite leaders will lead to the influx of a large number of deviant followers. When the rural elites, especially the rural cadres, join the ranks of the deviant, they will infect more and more villagers with their talents, abilities and prestige to go to the quagmire. When the rural elite and the national staff work together to engage in deviant behavior, the deviant behavior will inevitably develop in the direction of specialization, scale and openness. The existence of clan culture accelerates the speed of transgression. Clan culture also makes the deviant behavior more professional and harmful.

The unique psychological effects of the group include the infection of subcultures and the psychology of responsibility transfer. With the gradual increase of deviant personnel, especially the highly influential rural elites engaged in deviant behaviors, drug trafficking and drug trafficking are not shameful, but merely a means of getting rich, the misconceptions have become stronger and stronger into the countryside, and

more villagers The concept has changed invisibly, and the behavior originally rejected by the villagers will gradually be tolerated and even proud of. When an individual conducts a deviant behavior, the inner sense of guilt and morality will constrain him from conducting deviant behaviors. Individuals need to constantly seek deviant justification for their deviant behavior and break through the inner obstacles. However, groups are always madder than individuals, and violence against social ethics, because it is difficult for groups of individuals to recognize the harmfulness of their behavior. They blame their behavior and responsibilities on the group, and become more unscrupulous because of the group's power.

Starting from the process of generating crimes in the whole village, it is believed that the trajectory of the "deviant community" behavior of the whole village crime generally follows the following path: the first involvement of the deviant starter → the sporadic appearance of the early deviant followers → the massive surging of the late deviant followers In. It is believed that the change of the objective environment of the local society, the change of the villagers' ideological concepts and the personal factors of the actors have created the emergence of the deviant initiators. The early paving of the deviant beginners facilitated the deviant behavior of the early deviant followers, and the group psychological effect promoted the influx of the late deviant followers. Therefore, we need to establish a healthy economic development concept, optimize the rural development model, improve the formal control methods, tap the private control resources, make good use of the rural clan culture and regain public moral obligations, from the macro level and the micro level, formal control and Informal control, external containment, and internal containment prevent the generation, spread, and outbreak of deviant behavior.

Zhang Zhengyun borrowed the theory of criminal chemical reaction equations and believed that the whole village crime was produced under the joint action of "bacterial group", "guilt factor" and "catalyst". Among them, the "bacterial group" refers to a small family with criminal capacity and means or a small group with bloodline clan as a link in the whole village crime. The "elite" group in the countryside chooses to interact with homogenous groups or township parties because they cannot integrate into the city. After some of them quickly get rich through the offense of crime, the members of the group will join this small group of deviant under the influence of mutual imitation, suggestion and herd. The "criminal factors" are divided into external and internal factors: external factors include the remote geographical location of the village and the harsh natural environment, which makes the villagers eager to change the status quo; the internal factors include the villagers' original values and morality collapse. They have the endogenous motivation of the whole village crime. At this time, the whole village criminal motive is spreading in the village in the form of infectious diseases through clan and blood relationship. The "catalyst" refers to weaker social control capabilities. Due to the lack of management of grassroots villages and the inability of the police to control, some deviant villagers found that their deviant behavior was not effectively supervised, and the cost of crime was so low that more and more villagers went to the ranks of crime. The whole-village crime was formed in a village like this.

He believes that without the role of a "catalyst", criminal behavior will not happen. Therefore, the most direct way to prevent and control the entire village crime is to remove the "catalyst", that is, to strengthen rural governance and increase rural police investment. Of course, it is undeniable that changes in internal and external factors can also prevent the occurrence of crimes in the whole village, such as strengthening poverty alleviation, increasing farmers' income, rebuilding villagers' values, and increasing legal publicity. These are also a long-term and continuous process. Therefore, in order to prevent crimes in the whole village, it is necessary to rebuild the grassroots cadres and the police system, boost the rural economic and social development, strengthen the propaganda of moral and rule of law, establish correct values, and rebuild the rural public order and good customs based on the clan culture.

III Prospects for the study of the whole-village crime phenomenon

The study of the whole-village crime phenomenon should attract more extensive academic attention,

not only to increase the number of research results, but also to improve the quality of research.

First, the terminology defined by this phenomenon should be unified, and the term “whole-village crime” accepted by the mass media should be applied to avoid confusion and repetitive research in academic exchanges.

Secondly, the whole-village crime phenomenon is complicated, and it should be analyzed from multiple perspectives. The perspective of population issues in the case analysis, the perspective of government responsibility, the perspective of traditional ethnic values, and the equilibrium perspective of game theory provide a good example. In the future, we can use relevant theories in the fields of criminology, economics, sociology, and psychology. For example, label theory, cultural conflict theory, social control theory, and social capital theory are studied to broaden the breadth of research on the whole-village crime phenomenon.

Thirdly, the research on the causes of crimes and countermeasures not only explores the causes and countermeasures of static crimes from both personal and social aspects, but also explores the dynamic generation model of crimes in the whole village, which is quite scientific and reasonable. However, these studies are purely theoretical qualitative research. The data on which they are based mostly come from news media reports. The lack of in-depth empirical investigation and quantitative research makes it difficult to test and prove the scientific nature of the theory. The study of the whole-village crime phenomenon in the future should be combined with qualitative and quantitative research, especially to carry out quantitative research to make up for this gap.

Finally, the whole village crime phenomenon is a rural crime phenomenon, and the western criminology theory is mostly urban-oriented. In the above research, some scholars directly apply some urban-oriented criminological theory when studying the whole village crime problem, and do not pay attention to the localization test of these theories. We need to reflect on it. In addition, according to the theory of crime and modernization, China’s crime phenomenon is a unique “late-onset exogenous modernization” process of crime, and its rural and urban structures are not the same with developed countries. Therefore, we can not simply use the theory of crime modernization to explain China’s rural crime phenomenon, but to establish a specific local theory of Chinese crime to explain China’s rural crime phenomenon.

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