

# *Institutions and Provision of Public Goods in Rural China: An Empirical Study Based on Villages in Guangdong Province*

Lin Zhu and Yongshun Cai

## *Abstract*

In societies where formal institutions are absent or weak, informal institutions are found to serve as mechanisms that enhance government accountability. Pertinent research on China has come up with similar findings. But two issues have not been adequately addressed in existing research. One is the relationship between formal and informal institutions in shaping government behavior if both types of institutions exist. The other is the factors that affect the (re)emergence of informal institutions. Based on a survey of about 800 villages in Guangdong province, this article shows that the existence of both formal and informal institutions may enhance government accountability in the provision of public goods. Factors such as community history and practical needs contribute to the (re)emergence of informal institutions.

---

**Lin ZHU** is assistant professor at the Center for Chinese Public Administration Research, School of Government, Sun Yat-sen University. Her current research interests include corruption and anti-corruption, governance in rural China. Correspondence should be addressed to zhulin26@mail.sysu.edu.cn.

**Yongshun CAI** is professor at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. His current interests include social movements and collective action, legal institution building, and cadre management in China.