

# Historical Development and Implications of Rural Land System with Chinese Characteristics

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**Keywords:** Rural land system; farmers' collective land system; social productivity.

**Abstract:** Rural land system with Chinese characteristics is intellectual crystallization of Chinese people and builds a solid foundation for social productivity. Chinese rural land system should be comprehensively analyzed with the purpose of finding historical developmental logic. Feudal land system was eliminated and farmers' collective land system was established with the leadership of Communist Party of China(CPC). China land evolution, means of production, sustainable supports from Communist Party of China as well as aiding policies contribute to establishment of farmers' collective land system. Reform and opening up policy has been carried out for more than forty years, adjustment of land managements and separation of three rights are two major innovations in farmers' collective land system. Therefore, state ownership and collective ownership are basic principle for land system in China, collective land system should be persisted wholeheartedly because it is suitable for basic national situation in China. Combining with big data as well as artificial intelligence will be future developmental directions of Chinese rural land system, which is social developmental trends and the needs of realizing modernization in rural area and agriculture.

## 1. Introduction

Karl Marx has stated that: "The property in the soil is the original source of all wealth."(Karl Marx, 1872) It means that land is one of the most important one in the productive elements, which demonstrates that land is the fundamental means of production in agricultural area. The potential power of land can be ignited with the appropriate land system, that is, land ownership. Land ownership cannot be ignored because it has been recognized as possessing decisive characteristics as well as basic structure in productive relations. Chinese land ownership have been adapted to Chinese agricultural production, promoting the development of Chinese agricultural production as well as guaranteeing the blueprint of Chinese agriculture. Chinese land ownership is also one of the most important pillars in socialist public ownership, socialist cause cannot be prosperous without Chinese land ownership. Chinese land ownership cannot be achieved without any efforts, its intellectual crystallization is formed by the leadership of Communist Party of China. The leaders of Communist Party of China takes Chinese land ownership into consideration, combining with the basic principle of Marxism, in order to create rural land system in Marxism with Chinese Characteristics. Therefore, Chinese rural land system can be regarded as a indispensable part of the theories of Marxism with Chinese Characteristics, it is necessary to summarize historical experience of developing Chinese rural land system, analyzing how Chinese rural land system can contribute to Marxism with Chinese Characteristics. Moreover, it also has very important implications for accelerating modernization of agriculture and rural areas.

## 2. Establishment and Improvement of Chinese Rural Land System

### 2.1 Chinese Farmer's Collective Land system

Chinese rural land system have developed for nearly a hundred year and totally changes productive relations in China. There are mainly two steps to establish Chinese rural land system: one is to subvert feudal land system and give the land back to original owners, which is called

farmer's revolution; the other one is to reconstruct farmers' ownership on the land, that is "Chinese farmers' Collective Land System".

First and foremost, feudal land system should be eliminated, which is ranked the first priority when China was going through the land revolution. Soviet Union's October revolution have published "*The Degree of Land*" and symbolized landlordism was abolished, land system was changed incompletely because it was based on democratic revolution of bourgeoisie. Nearly a hundred year ago, Chinese rural land was possessed by the landlords, which is less than ten percent of the population in China. It is desperately difficult to eliminate feudal land system because it was protected by other countries intending to separate China at that time. Apparently, China's land evolution was facing tremendous predicaments, and definitely much more difficult than Soviet Union's land evolution. The starting point of China's land evolution can be considered as the period of establishment of Communist Party of China (CPC) instead of new regime in 1949. the members of CPC were devoted themselves to land revolution, the slogan at that time was "combating land tyrants and distributing land". CPC tried to solve the irrational phenomenon and found a way out conscientiously. In China's civil war, CPC stated persistently that we should be rooted in poor peasants, allied with middle peasants and limited rich peasants, protect merchants ranging from rural to city and annihilate landlord class. Before the new regime established in China, namely, People's Republic of China, CPC put forward that feudal land system, or land system with exploited characteristic should be abolished, made a master plan for land evolution for developing agricultural production and also laid a solid foundation for socialist construction.

The land evolution was fierce after establishment of China regime in 1949, but Chinese government adopted peaceful ways to continue land evolution. Historical fact should be clarified that some violent methods were adopted before new regime, otherwise, it would not be successful when combating feudal power. Even if the land was distributed to farmers' land, landlord's counterattack should not be underestimated. Without the land evolution leading by CPC, *the armed independent regime of workers and peasants and surround the cities from the countryside* would not happen in China. Moreover, China land evolution was led by CPC and totally different from communist party of Soviet Union. During the period of October evolution, the central point of Soviet Union's evolution was cities, China, on the contrary, the key point of evolution was rural area. CPC published several acts for land evolution, and *Land Reform Act of People's republic of China* was published after "New China" was established. Several acts and policies which were made for the land evolution would lead to the success of China land evolution.

Secondly, farmers' collective land system is established, after farmers received the land, distinctive phenomena appeared in China and Soviet Union. Serious polarization emerged in Soviet Union, in China, farmers would sell their land to keep them away from poverty. Chinese government carried out agricultural cooperation based on farmers' collective land system in order to curb polarization, build up water conservancy project, defend natural disasters and adopt new agricultural technology. Soviet Union, on the contrary, agricultural collectivism started in 1929, the campaign was pretty rapid and the proportion of collective farms were over 40 percent, but farmers' rebellion was emerged and remained unsolved. Why there is a huge different situation between China and Soviet Union?

The first reason is that China land evolution had laid solid foundation for agricultural cooperation. China spent a lot of time on land reform, longer than Soviet Union. A majority of farmers were led by CPC, and farmers had persistent political stance, some of them become elites in agricultural cooperation;

The second reason is that land and means of production were served for farmer collectives. China is a traditional agricultural country, the only way to ensure agricultural development is to choose cooperation and then pave the way for mechanization;

The third reason is about the aiding policies. CPC followed farmers' will and appropriately ignited farmers' activeness. CPC also paid more attention on increasing production in agricultural cooperation, farmers' activeness could be promote when they realized the achievement they made;

The last one is about supports from CPC. CPC spared no effort on agricultural cooperation

because they did believe the way for promoting the living standard of farmers. Therefore, agricultural technology stations were built to invent new agricultural tools; rural credit cooperatives were constructed in order to buy brand new agricultural tools for farmers; rural supply and marketing cooperatives provided farmers a way to do some transactions as well as offered means of production.

## **2.2 Exploration and Improvement of Chinese Farmers' Collective land system**

Chinese farmers' collective land system have established, Chinese rural area was always adjusting and improving its specific contents in practical ways. Overall, two dimensions should be mentioned because these are important achievements in the process of exploration and improvement:

First of all, the concrete form of land management with Chinese characteristics should be comprehensively analyzed. In the early period of new China, we learned from Soviet Union about how to carry out land collective system, agricultural production and management imitated Soviet Union's format. During the period of people's commune campaign, farmers gradually realized that land management and the way of production should be improved, otherwise production of rural area would be limited. In order to solve the predicament, household contract responsibility system was adopted at that time, which was regarded as a major progress in the development process of land management. The reason why household contract responsibility was implemented was complicated, not only did Chinese government want to deal with starvation, but also centralize labor of industrialization. In 1991, Communiqué of eighth plenary session of the 13rd central committee of the CPC published a political document called *Decision of Central Committee of Communist Party of China on Promoting Work on Rural Area and Agriculture*, the document regulated that household contract responsibility system was a basic system in Chinese rural collective economic organization. Implementing household contract responsibility is beneficial for production in rural area and problem of starvation is solved. Furthermore, implementing household contract system facilitates industrialization, which provides powerful engine for development of rural area.

Secondly, separation of three rights is a major breakthrough in farmer collective land system. In the preliminary stage of the reform process, household contract responsibility system was implemented in order to adapt productive force, which provided huge dynamism for agricultural production. With the development of urbanization and industrialization, household contract responsibility system should be improved to adapt productive relation. At the fifth meeting of the Central Steering Group for In-depth Reform in September 2014, Xi Jinping put forward separation of three rights, that is, ownership rights, contractor's rights as well as land management rights, rural governance was injected by the "three in one" method, in order to level up the quality of rural governance. It is also another major innovation in rural reform, which has very profound legal implications.

Separation of ownership rights, contractor's rights and land management rights can reflect the need of productive forces, remaining labor of rural areas will be attracted by industrialization, but they are reluctant to abandon the land in rural areas. In the legal structure of separation of three rights, contractor's right is sacred for farmers, hence, farmers can still possess contractor's rights, while land management rights can be transfer to someone else. Farmers are able to find other occupations in cities instead of being restricted in rural areas, which keeps stability of China basic rural governance system. All parties involved in the land management system can be protected better with the establishment of separation of three rights, rational land distribution will be achieved and building up a scientific agricultural management system will be realized. Therefore, separation of three right is a solid legal foundation for improving land and labor productivity, ensuring that modernization of rural areas and agriculture will be come true in future.

### **3. Conclusions and Implications**

#### **3.1 Unswervingly stick to collective land system**

Karl Marx have stated that: "...I assert that the economical development of society, the increase and concentration of people, the very circumstances that compel the capitalist farmer to apply to agricultural collective and organized labor, and to have recourse to machinery and similar contrivances, will more and more render the nationalization of land a 'Social Necessity' against which no amount of talk about the rights of property can be of any avail."(Karl Marx, 1872) Nationalization of land that Karl Marx mentioned combines with concrete situations in China, there are two kinds of land ownership in China. According to Constitution of People's Republic of China, article 10: " Land in the cities is owned by state. Land in the rural and suburban areas is owned by collectives except for those portions which belong to the state in accordance with the law; house sites and privately farmed plots of cropland and hilly land are also owned by collectives." Therefore, state ownership and collective ownership should be regarded as basic principle for land development in China. All kinds of amendment related to land management should be based on state ownership and collective ownership. Collective land system is major innovation in China land management system.

Land is the basic means of production for human to maintain food production and survival, most of land on Earth is farmland except for the mountain, desert where human cannot live on. China farmland is the fundamental resource for farmers, it is also an important resource for society to achieve sustainable development. China farmland Rural collective land system with Chinese characteristics should be persisted unswervingly and keep improving the contents of land system, which can be adapted to modernization of rural areas and agriculture. Some scholars claims that privatization of rural land is appropriate way to improve rural land utility instead of implementing collective land system, Privatization of rural land is not advisable because farmers in China is vulnerable groups scattering everywhere, they cannot protect themselves or their land property when they encounter vicious power in society. Other scholars euphorically support the idea that contractor's right should be ranked above land ownership, inappropriately transfer excessive rights to land management, which will be detrimental to collective system and do not correspondent to the law of constitution.

#### **3.2 Future Developmental Directions of Chinese Rural Land System**

With the development of industrialization and production in rural areas, great changes will have taken place in rural areas, modernization of rural areas and agricultural areas will be realized in future, which cannot be altered. Many farmers will leave agricultural areas because of technological development, agricultural scale will be increased. Agricultural areas will be gradually connected with database and artificial intelligence, which means "the liberation of farmers"because farmers can work on farmland in the way of remote control. With the combination of agricultural ecology and artificial intelligence, Chinese rural land system keeps abreast of time, specific contents in Chinese rural land system should be improve in order to meet various requirements of agriculture and rural areas. Moreover, agricultural intensification, specialization and supervision are also developmental directions in rural areas, the requirements of collective management will be increased, it means that basic principle of Chinese rural land system should be persisted. Capital, labor and technology are three important factors which will influence farmer's collective land system, new types of agricultural organizations will be emerged. We should abide by the basic principle of Marxism in order to develop rural land system with Chinese characteristics.

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