



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>
aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

Analysis on the Cultivation of Modern Chinese Farmers' Values from the Perspective of Traditional Political Culture

Shiwen Zhuang*

Shandong Jiaotong University, Jinan 250023, China

Abstract Farmers in traditional China have formed the cultural psychology of being reluctant to move from native land and hate to change during the long-term closed production and life. This has exerted negative effect on the values cultivation of farmers today, who possess weak democratic consciousness, low legal spirit and cultural quality as well as strong antagonistic psychology. Measures should be carried out to cultivate their modern values. Firstly, construction of villagers' self-governance system should be stressed. Secondly, political socialization should be perfected to improve farmers' political culture. Furthermore, channels of political participation should be widened in order to gradually promote the ordered political participation of farmers.

Key words Traditional political culture, Farmers, Values, Villagers' self-governance system

Farmers' political values and culture are the vital content of studying political development and social governance in the countryside. This essay discusses the effect of traditional political culture on the values of modern Chinese farmers and further puts forward proposals for cultivating farmers' modern values.

1 Farmers under Chinese traditional political culture

Ancient China was built on the self-sufficient agricultural production, under the influence of which the closed thinking pattern of farmers formed. They adhered to the land, living and cropping according to fixed time and were reluctant to move from the land and hate to change. Longevity and even permanence were regarded as the crucial criteria for assessing value in Chinese culture. "To be large and long-lasting" in Zhouyi, "Long-time accumulation makes achievement" in the Golden Mean and "everlasting and unchanging" in Lao Tse were the typical demonstrations of this concept. Therefore, traditional Chinese society pursued "long-term stability" in politics, durability in consumer goods, immortality in region and continuity in race, which reflected the feature of pursuing stability and reality of Chinese culture and also exerted great effect on the farmers.

In ancient China where subject consciousness restricted right consciousness, individuals were attached to families and the country and did not have independent legal status and rights. The whole society advocated that individual benefits should obey family benefits and family benefit should obey national benefits. Imperial power overrode law and subject consciousness was deeply rooted. The Confucian once put forward "Mass-based" thought and advocated "the priority of the people, not the sovereign". However, this kind of "Mass-based" thought was proposed in order to protect feudal imperial power or stabilize autocratic ruling and the

subjects' contribution and obedience were the preconditions, which was quite different from modern democracy. China's current constitution claims that national power belongs to the people. To some extent, the leading concept in most farmers' mind is still subject consciousness and farmers do not have the feeling of being the master of their country. Most rural cadres still follow the traditional system and use administrative means to govern and regulate farmers, showing the sense of "official standard". Thus, subject consciousness of farmers have been strengthened. Farmers with strong native complex in remote areas care little about their political rights and freedom like the right to vote and to be voted as well as villagers' self-governance right. Currently, there is still the thought that law is obligation in Chinese rural areas. Obedience to the country and government is the main form for farmers. The Confucian thoughts have been deeply rooted in farmers' mind after thousands of years and kept generation to generation, which has resulted in their internal rejection to modern subject consciousness and the rule of law and exerted profound effect on modern farmers who are required to adapt to modernization.

2 Reflection of Chinese traditional culture on farmers' values

With the rapid improvement of China's economy in recent years, material and systematic levels have been reformed. Political consciousness and qualities of farmers have been greatly improved. However, deep psychological structure with traditional political culture has still restricted the practical implementation of villagers' self-governance and affected the normal cultivation of farmers' political consciousness^[1] (P175). Overall, most of the farmers have weak democratic competence and low qualities. Chinese traditional political culture has exerted some negative effects on villagers' self-governance.

2.1 Weak democratic consciousness and weak ability of participating and discussing political affairs Under the influence of Chinese feudal society for more than two thousand years, feudal

political culture has permeated all fields in society. Under the pressure of theocracy, monarchical power, clan power and authority of the husband, the democratic consciousness of the farmer group has been strangled and the political thought attached to feudal privilege has formed. Although feudal thought was liquidated to some extent after the establishment of new China and efforts were made in the construction of socialist democratic politics, there are still outstanding problems like imperfect democracy and legal system. Dreadful effects of feudal remnants on farmers' democratic consciousness still exist. The main reflections are rigidly stratified patriarchal thought, inertia of accepting fate with resignation and peasant ideology of admitting being inferior. Besides, heavy official standards, outstanding clan idea, weak subject consciousness and severe slavish psychology have exerted dreadful effect on the democratic capability of the Chinese farmers and rural democracy is easy to be formalistic. Most farmers have not actually performed their solemn democratic rights during the election of village committee, villagers' representatives and people's representatives in grass-roots.

2.2 Profound effect of traditional values and lack of legal spirit

There is inevitable internal relation between democracy and legislation and they are unified. Democracy is the base of ruling by law and rule by law cannot actually reflect the willing of most citizens without wide democracy. Meanwhile, rule by law is the guarantee for democracy and democracy cannot be truly achieved and strengthened without strict legislation. Law not only regulates citizens' democratic right and the procedure of performing it, ensuring effective exertion, but also formulates strict measures to combat the illegal activities which infringe peoples' democratic right. Rule by man has been followed in traditional China and the concept has been deeply rooted in many farmers today. Villagers just know to grin and bear it and do not have the awareness of protecting the deserved democratic rights. After being rural cadres some self-claimed "leaders" use the power for personal benefits and even trample on the law. Moreover, the ideology of "upright officials" still exists among the general farmers, therefore some farmers partially seek for help from administrative departments and appeal to them constantly, not resorting to judicial remedy.

2.3 Low cultural qualities and difficulties in promoting democracy

Farmers' democratic capability is restricted by many factors, among which the most typical is low cultural qualities. This has affected the achievement and development of democratic capability and caused difficulties in the improvement of democracy. Although democratic election, decision-making, management and supervision do not require profound and professional knowledge in this kind of "acquaintance society" of villages, farmers' enthusiasm and initiative in political participation will be largely promoted with high cultural qualities.

2.4 Strong antagonistic psychology and difficulties in implementation of villagers' self-governance

In practical villagers' self-governance, some farmers hold strong antagonistic psychology, which is a great obstacle in implementation of villagers' self-

governance. There are many demonstrations of villagers' self-deterioration like not cherishing the legally granted democratic rights, voting at random, casually voting on purpose as well as violating policies issued in the town or village on purpose, which has caused antagonistic psychology of many farmers. Due to the deterioration of some villagers, democracy has been abused with anarchism among villages. There is dispersion and even confrontation between villagers and villager committee or rural government.

Besides, selfish individualism of some villagers is outstanding in rural areas. Market economy has stimulated people's pursue for material benefits, therefore some farmers partially regard market economy as making money and care little about public welfare for their personal benefits. Moreover, cooperation among people has been weakened because of people's being selfish and there is jealousy and distrust among people. The development of any community has to be based on people's cooperation in jointly solving social and economic problems, including villagers' self-governance. The above mentioned psychology will inevitably be great obstacle in the development of self-governance.

3 Strengthening the construction of political culture in rural areas and cultivating farmers' modern values

Whether farmers have necessary education, sound personality and political psychology or not directly affects the operation and sustainable development of rural democracy. During the establishment of the harmonious society, construction of rural political culture should be largely strengthened and modern rural political persons should be cultivated. Farmers' right political recognition, active political emotion and rational political assessment mode should be cultivated and formed, which can gradually eliminate the contradiction and conflicts in rural political life and guarantee the unbalanced and harmonious political operation.

3.1 Strengthening the construction of villagers' self-governance

Villagers' self-governance is a pioneering contribution to the construction of rural democratic politics in China. It contracts the state power both horizontally and vertically, helping farmers to gain self-governance, self-education and self-service through democratic election, decision-making, management and supervision. Based on the Constitution and Village Committee Autonomy Law, villager committee organizes farmers to hold self-governance activities and this kind of direct democracy is in accordance with the actual conditions in Chinese rural areas. Farmers should understand that actively participating in politics is their deserved right endowed by the constitution and law. Farmers' subject consciousness and legal awareness should be strengthened to change the coexistence of enthusiasm and indifference in political participation. Therefore, farmers' democratic consciousness can be cultivated through participating in specific democratic activities and their democratic qualities can be improved, which is the best and most practical way.

3.2 Perfecting political socialization and improving farmers' political culture

Healthy political characteristics are indispensable

ble in political socialization. As the subject of rural democratic politics, the improvement of political qualities, perfection of subject consciousness, establishment of modern political characteristics like political participation, innovation as well as rational value judgment of farmers play a significant and fundamental role in the construction of democratic political order. Farmers should have multi-channel and multi-level basic education as well as technical training, especially the cultivation of the consciousness of democracy and rule by law in order to increase their self-governance ability as well as participation ability. Farmers should become the rational political strata in the sense of modern democracy, which depends on both practice and education.

Firstly, education of science and culture should be strengthened. Basic education and scientific and cultural qualities of villagers are to be largely improved, which lays a good foundation for the development of rural political culture. Various forms of education should be explored. School education should be properly combined with social and family education in order to cultivate farmers' high citizen consciousness and all-round cultural qualities. Farmers should be guided to establish socialist political thoughts and set up right values of democracy, freedom, justice and human rights. Their recognition of modern democracy should be scientific and rational.

Secondly, the relation between modern political culture and tradition political culture should be properly handled. Any effort to modernization can not completely exceed tradition. It can never be ignored that native culture and rural areas are profound and influential. The essence of Chinese traditional culture should be drawn while the political appendage consciousness which is against modern political culture should be discarded, including the supremacy of the monarchical and patriarchal power as well as the sacredness of moralities. Moreover, scientific spirit, democratic thought, legal concept, human rights theory, free consciousness, public consciousness and market consciousness of western culture should be actively learned. National political culture should be enriched and developed by drawing the advanced experience of rural political construction in various countries in the world.

Furthermore, publicity and guidance should be flexible and effective to fully exert the comprehensive functions of leading political culture in rural areas. Due to the low cultural qualities of Chinese farmers and the complexity of rural society, socialist political culture has not taken up the major position in rural areas and not led farmers' political consciousness. Farmers' understandings of socialist democracy are generally superficial and conceptual. Currently, education of political culture with socialist democracy

as the main content should be strengthened. Farmers' faith and confidence in socialism should be improved through the publicity of scientific development view and the idea of harmonious society. Their basic democratic culture and spirit, involving participation consciousness, concept of power and responsibility, self-governance spirit and tolerance feelings as well as justice, equality, freedom and harmony should be gradually cultivated.

3.3 Widening channels of political participation and gradually improving farmers' ordered political participation

"The biggest difference between modern countries and traditional ones is people's participation in large-scale political organizations and the effect on people"^[1] (P39-40). "Democracy theorists from Aristotle to Bryce have emphasized that democracy depends on citizens' active participation, wide spread of citizens' transactions and public information as well as the pervasive sense of obligation among citizens"^[3] (P12). Due to the negative effect of traditional culture, low qualities of farmers and the dual structure of society, farmers' political participation is generally impassive. Socialist harmonious democracy requires the improvement of political participation. Through political participation, farmers can increase their political knowledge and skills, break up traditional political thinking pattern, set up rational political recognition and value judgment, supervise the normal operation of political system, maintain their basic benefits and the whole social benefits as well as promote political democratization and modernization of political culture. System construction of farmers' participation should be gradually perfected and channels for their participation should be widened, making their interest expression systematic and ordered. For example, villagers' self-governance system can be perfected and farmers should be motivated to participate in democratic election, decision-making, management and supervision. Besides, relevant conditions should be provided for villagers' self-governance in order to fully achieve self-management, self-education and self-service. Furthermore, citizens hearing system, inquiry system, supervision system and investigation system should be established and perfected so that farmers can have rational understandings of their political roles and actively mould the modern political characteristics through diversified political participation.

References

- [1] WANG HL. Villagers' self-ruling based on rural political culture[M]. He'nan People's Publishing House, 2008. (in Chinese).
- [2] [USA] Samuel P. Huntington. Political order in changing societies[M]. Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 1989. (in Chinese).
- [3] [USA] Almond GA, Verba Sidney. The civic culture[M]. Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 1989. (in Chinese).