

## **The Value of Agricultural Cultural Heritage in Rural Revitalization**

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*The essence of rural revitalization is cultural consciousness and it is a process of cultural consciousness towards cultural self-determination. In rural revitalization, the “dialogue and participation” of rural subjects is the only way. Rural subjects are closely related to agricultural cultural heritage and rural revitalization. Agricultural cultural heritage not only maintains the diversity of agricultural culture, but it also provides economic, cultural, product and ecological services to rural subjects for thousands of years. For this reason, enhancing the cultural consciousness of rural subjects, innovating and using agricultural cultural heritage contribute to the effective promotion of rural revitalization.*

*Keywords: rural revitalization, rural subjects, dialogue and participation, agricultural cultural heritage*

Today when advanced modern communication, transportation and other technology are widely used, production efficiency is getting higher and higher, and communication is convenient, and the spatial distance between people is shortened. But at the same time, the emotional distance between people is increasing. People’s emotions need time to brew, cultivate, and develop and this is a basic emotion that does not need to be cultivated in an efficient way. In this pursuit of efficiency, the distance between people

is gradually increasing and the communication between people is being deprived of emotional factors, which is an inevitable loss. In this context, the essence of rural revitalization deserves our deep consideration. At present, with the rapid advancement of China's industrialization and urbanization, a large number of rural populations are flocking towards cities in China, and is causing large areas of rural land to be abandoned and resulting in the emergence of many "hollow villages" (空心村). According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, from 2005 to 2015, China's rural population dropped from 744.71 million to 605.99 million.<sup>1</sup> In addition, with the rapid increase in the urbanization rate, the number of rural settlements is also decreasing year by year. The statistics show that from 2005 to 2015, the number of village committees (村委会) dropped nationwide from 629,000 to 581,000.<sup>2</sup> Paying attention to the relevance of rural revitalization, rural subjects and the agricultural cultural heritage held by them has become a realistic issue for academic concern currently.

## CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS: THE ESSENCE OF RURAL REVITALIZATION

For more than 100 years, the changes in China's modernization have basically caused a rapid urban development at the expense of the countryside. In fact, it is constantly eroding the countryside. Especially since the reform and opening up, it has entered the rapid development stage of urbanization. The decline of rural areas has become more prominent, so the revitalization of rural areas is imminent. Under this development background, a strategy of rural revitalization has been proposed. Chinese anthropologist Zhao Xudong points out that the essence of rural revitalization is to build a village where the people who love their hometown can go back to (Zhao 2018, 29-37). Japanese scholar Kaoru Ichikawa believes that human beings and natural ecological environment have formed a unique agricultural cultural heritage after a long period of running-in. The excavation of the technical system and cultural values related to these heritages is conducive to promoting the revitalization of the countryside (Ichikawa 2012, 341). China is a big agricultural country, and the "three rural issues" (三农问题) are fundamental issues that are related to the national economy and people's livelihood. Therefore, under the current situation when a large number of rural populations are flocking to cities, it has an important practical significance to study the subjective value of farmers in rural revitalization.

At present, the main contradiction in Chinese society is the contradiction between people's growing need for a better life and unbalanced and inadequate development. This problem of unbalanced and inadequate development is most prominent in rural society. The specific manifestations are as follows: Rural ecological problems are prominent, the overall level of rural development urgently needs to be improved, the rational flow of urban and rural factors urgently needs to be improved, farmers' ability to adapt to productivity development and market competitiveness is insufficient, and educational resources are not balanced. To solve this contradiction, implementing the strategy of rural revitalization is an inevitable choice for sustainable development. The basic principles of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on the implementation of rural revitalization are: adhere to the Party's management of rural areas, adhere to the priority of agricultural and rural development, adhere to the dominant status of farmers, adhere to the overall rejuvenation of rural areas, adhere to the integration of urban and rural development and adhere to the harmonious coexistence of man and nature.<sup>3</sup> It can be seen from the basic principles that the development of agriculture and rural areas is given priority and the development of the countryside is placed in an important position. However, the construction of the countryside is not a matter of over one night. It requires the joint efforts of the government and villagers.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Communiqué on Main Data of the National 1% Population Sample Survey in 2015. <http://www.stats.gov.cn/statsinfo/auto2074.201708/t20170821-1526172.html>, April 20, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Please see 2015 Statistical Bulletin of Social Service Development. <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/20160715001136.shtml>, April 11, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Please see Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on implementing the strategy of rural revitalization. People's Daily, 2018-02-05.

However, it is known from past construction experience that the attention of rural construction is often focused on economic development, and the construction of rural culture is ignored to some extent.

Relative to the city, the village refers to a place where agriculture is the main source of life and the population is scattered (Long 2018, 216). From the brief definition of the village, it can be seen that the village is mainly based on agricultural culture, operates agricultural activities, and uses agriculture as the main source of life. In addition, the countryside covers the history, geographical space, beliefs and religions of the countryside, including many interconnected subsystems such as the countryside economy, ecological environment, and folk beliefs. The villages located in the same area are independent and closely related to each other. Therefore, it is necessary to treat the countryside as a systematic and comprehensive organism.

Every person, every nation, and every country have its own culture that is different from other nations. It depends on culture to survive, develop, and continue. This is a cultural trait that any country, nation, or individual must possess. The development and growth of a nation is continued by the inheritance of culture from generation to generation. The disappearance of culture means the demise of the nation, and the prosperity of culture means the prosperity of the nation, thus culture is closely related to the development of the nation. In its essence, culture is characterized by its difference and integrity. Rural societies in different regions also have external differences and internal integrity. Every village also has similarities: farmers love their own land and cannot live without their own villages and communities; home is the center of their universe; marriage is the prerequisite for obtaining financial resources and material life; they abide by the rule to live in their ancestral houses and pass their descent to male heirs (Redfield 2013, 117). Different geographical environments, different historical encounters, and different social relationships constitute rural societies in various forms, and these rural societies carry different cultural types. Each village has its own characteristics and differences and has its own internal set of order to maintain the development and stability of the rural society. So it has different development paths from other villages. The external differences and internal commonalities of the countryside constitute an organic whole, which promotes the development and continuation of rural society under the influence of culture. People are one of the carriers of culture. The elements of culture also include the houses where they live, the land where they occupy, and the religions that they believe in. The main body of rural society is people. Houses, land, industries, and beliefs are all the carriers of the village. From the perspective of the elements that constitute culture and the carriers that carry rural development, rural society is a reflection of the elements of culture. From this perspective, rural revitalization is, in fact, cultural revitalization, and more importantly agricultural cultural revitalization.

Rural construction in history is not a development zone without the intervention of excessive rights, capital and other external factors, but it is accumulated and expanded bit by bit, becoming the existence of family relations, which is driven by conscious psychology. Of course, the rural construction movement did not happen by accident and it happened entirely because of the national and cultural consciousness. The so-called national consciousness is the consciousness of self-reliance (Yan 2004, 214). The village has a large space for self-generation and operation and it depends on the development of the village itself. The construction of a large number of ancestral halls in the village is a way of constructing its own order. The temples, ancestral halls, rituals and worship left in the countryside need to be reinvigorated and revitalized. It is necessary to change policies close to the reality, to mobilize cultural resources, and to make people willing to return to the countryside. In the final analysis, rural space, welfare, industry, culture and history are the re-creation and cultivation of culture. Rural revitalization is about retrieving the culture that has been separated from the countryside, constructing cultural facts that deviate from the development of the countryside, and using culture to creatively manage the countryside. In people's minds, the countryside is backward, and the city is progressive. However, to pursue a normal form of human civilization, one needs to start with the countryside. Because the countryside is the foundation, the city is the end, and the countryside is the home of human beings. It is set up by human beings for a certain purpose. Starting from the village, the organization is from the bottom towards top, from the scattered to the gathering, which is in line with the normal state and the normal civilization of mankind (Liang 2015, 186). To maintain the original bond of the village, harmony and order, there is a need to truly establish a connection between a person and

the village that exceeds personal interests and will. This internal connection is the value that the village gives to the entire culture.

The essence of rural revitalization is to restore the discourse power of the people living in the rural settlements, giving them creative ability, and realize the process of cultural consciousness to cultural self-determination. Cultural consciousness is an arduous process. Only on the basis of knowing one's own culture and understanding the multiple cultures that one has come into contact with, can one have enough to establish one's position in this emerging multicultural world. Then by independent adaptation, one needs to live together with other cultures, and learn from each other's strong points to complement each other, thus setting up a basic order that are recognized by all and a set of rules that enable all various cultures to coexist peacefully, to demonstrate one's own strong points, and to develop together

(Fei 2015, 186). Today's problem is that we have rushed to the revitalization of the countryside and want to completely change it within 3 to 5 years. This kind of quick success and quick profit is worthy of our reflection. The decay of the countryside has prevented the development of the city. In this context, the revitalization of the countryside has been proposed, and the operation and construction of the countryside should be re-established. In the final analysis, rural space, welfare, industry, culture and history are the re-creation and cultivation of culture. Rural revitalization is about retrieving the culture that has been separated from the countryside, constructing cultural facts that deviate from the development of the countryside, and using culture to creatively manage the countryside. Whether it is local ecological poverty alleviation or poverty alleviation by relocation, the main source of poverty alleviation is people, and it must rely on the full display of the initiative of the human subject, using local natural and human resources to develop rural industries and achieve the goal of getting rid of poverty and finally becoming rich.

The essence of rural revitalization is cultural consciousness. Its task is to continue rural culture, reactivate rural vitality, and allow rural culture to find its place in the modern civilization system. By promoting cultural revival from the village itself, especially letting farmers become the main body of rural culture, the rural culture can play a broader and central role in promoting rural revitalization.

## **EQUAL DIALOGUE: A PREREQUISITE FOR RURAL REVITALIZATION**

The countryside is the source of culture. From the coinage of the structure of Chinese characters, “*xiang*” (乡) (township) means that two people sit opposite to each other and have a meal together, which reflects the dialogue, exchange and communication between people, including family and relatives. In this sense, rural society is an ethical and affective society, and village is a bond connecting villagers' emotions and a bridge for dialogue and communication among people. Today's rural revitalization is a top-down political and economic movement. Under the impetus of the national perspective and external forces, rural society is slowly being reconstructed. From the perspective of the relationship between the state and society, the government has weak control over the rural society, and the connection between state power and rural society is relatively weak. Revolutions and movements by state forces in modern times have penetrated and transformed rural social activities, a top-down social integration, and to a certain extent, a social movement led by “outsiders” that are based on formal projects. However, formal projects are actually parasitic in informal processes. Without these informal processes, formal projects can neither be produced nor could exist. However, formal projects often do not recognize or even suppress the informal process, which not only damages the interests of the project target population, but also leads to the failure of the designer (Scott 2004, 6). The promotion of state power has boosted the development of rural society and the economy, but the state's attempts to transform the society are likely to produce counter-productive effects.

For a long time, cities have been developed at the expense of the countryside. That is to say, farmers have helped the construction of cities, but now the revitalization of villages requires urban people to help the countryside. In the depths of people's consciousness, the country is backward and looked down upon, and the city is advanced and worthy of yearning. Especially in the current development process of pursuing high-efficiency and modernization, the so-called advanced concept of the city is even more prioritized. The reason is that a deep-rooted idea of “de-agriculturalization” deeply affects people. Traditional thinking believes that doing things in rural areas is called farming and doing things in cities is called working. Then

the implementation of rural revitalization is to allow urban people to do things in the countryside. What should this be called? If it is the urban people who help the villagers implement the revitalization of the village, then the city people must understand things in the countryside. If they don't, it means that the rural construction is fictitious. Marx believes that since human society has cities, there has been an inherent law in the evolution of urban-rural relations from urban-rural antagonism to urban-rural integration. Rural revitalization is to seek this inherent law of urban-rural integration.

Rural revitalization, to achieve the integration of urban and rural development, and the equal status of the rural and urban areas, requires "dialogue" and "communication" between the city and the country. Only with the "dialogue" between the city and the countryside can we fundamentally understand the needs of the countryside, and the culture of the countryside, and truly realize the revitalization of the countryside. In short, rural revitalization is not only to create some substantial environment, but the most important thing is to establish the awareness of rural people to participate in the rural culture, which is a process of cultural consciousness to cultural self-determination. Of course, there are many ways to revitalize the countryside. Among them, urbanization of the countryside is not excluded, or as some people have imagined, the village will be enlarged and be turned into a town. But this road is completely different from the road that leads to "remembering homesickness and seeing the green mountains and green waters"(记得住乡愁、看得见青山绿水). For this reason, to embark on the path of rejuvenating villages to remember homesickness and see green mountains and rivers, rural areas must be built into rural areas. This requires attention to agricultural culture and agricultural heritage.

## **AGRICULTURAL CULTURAL HERITAGE: THE BASIS FOR RURAL REVITALIZATION**

There is a close relationship between rural revitalization and agricultural cultural heritage, because now the emphasis is on the subjectivity of farmers and farmers' participation in decision-making, or their right to self-determination. However, if rural revitalization is urbanization, then for the villages, cities and towns are foreign and new. There is no way to talk about the subjectivity of farmers. The agricultural cultural heritage is adjusted to the ecological environment and belongs to the knowledge of farmers, thus providing the basis of knowledge for the subjectivity of farmers.

To promote rural revitalization, one must have a sense of the course awareness (道路自觉意识), respect one's own history, be aware of real problems and development trends, re-understand and discover the value of rural characteristics, seek to transform characteristics into resources in the new era, and to search diversified roads to re-integrate traditional characteristics with modern elements (Lu 2019, 141). For a long time, in the traditional Chinese thinking, agriculture has been the foundation of China's rural development. However, the current reality is that the basic status of agriculture has been fundamentally shaken. The concrete manifestation is that it is difficult for agriculture to rely on its own operations to reinvest and upgrade, and the problem of weakening agriculture has appeared. Therefore, it is difficult for the majority of farmers to increase their incomes in their villages. This has led to the continuous flow of rural population to cities, and the number of people who are still sticking to the countryside is decreasing. It can be said that the absence of people in the countryside means that the main body of rural revitalization is missed. For this reason, to realize rural revitalization, traditional agricultural cultural heritage should be regarded as the foundation, and the rational transformation of the industrial structure is the key.

Theodore W. Schultz, a representative of development economics, pointed out in his book "*Economic Growth and Agriculture*" that in the process of economic development, Latin American countries ignored the basic status of agriculture. It has become one of the key reasons why these countries have been unable to escape poverty for so long. For this reason, he also pointed out in the book that Argentina has done a good job in this regard, and its economic growth has been relatively stable, and it is not fluctuating (Schultz 1991, 78). Regrettably, Argentina has suffered a severe economic recession and an economic crisis. But as a whole, Schultz's warning still has great reference value and enlightenment to this day. Another scholar, from the perspective of food sovereignty, has studied a traditional agricultural intercropping model called *Milpa* that has been run by farmers in Guatemala and Mexico for thousands of years. This intercropping

technology is mainly used in corn intercropping beans and pumpkins, peppers, and other cash crops, which in turn helps local residents obtain greater economic returns from the land. Studies have shown that this diversified traditional livelihood can not only ensure food security, economic stability, and maintain the traditional agricultural system, but it also protects the local crop resources. It can also retain many local varieties that are closely related to the traditional agricultural system (Lewis 1989, 101).

Rural revitalization is still the continuation of historical logic because China is a country with agriculture as the basis. Agriculture is said to be an industry, rather than a business of agricultural politics, which contains a large number of historical and practical issues (Peng 2019, 73). For a long time, the Chinese have supported a huge population on their own. “*Four Thousand Years of Farmers*” by Franklin H. King pointed out that the agriculture of the East Asian nations had been able to feed a large population a few centuries ago. They used legumes and a variety of other plants to rotate crops to maintain the fertility of the soil. Almost every piece of land was used to grow crops to provide food (King 2016, 1). From this point of view, no matter which method is adopted to realize the transformation to modernization, it can actually start from its original agricultural basis to realize the primitive accumulation of capital, to support the industrial transformation, and to meet the needs for personnel and technology. Although China’s primary industry has suffered various shocks in the past half-century, there is one basic fact that cannot be changed. That is, the Chinese government has always adhered to the basic status of agriculture. The “Document No. 1” issued by the central government every year revolves around the “three rural issues”. Even in the rapid advancement of industrialization, although China’s agriculture has been severely hit and unfairly treated, its economic strength has not yet been fundamentally impacted, and it has never been a constraint on economic development. Until the end of the 20th century, China’s agricultural product supply remained more than self-sufficient. The change of this pattern only became apparent after China’s accession to the WTO in the 21st century. After that, China changed from an exporter of agricultural products to an importer of agricultural products. Its rural agricultural products have gradually lost their market competitiveness and have fallen into an embarrassing situation. The uneconomical farming has become a lingering psychological shadow for most farmers.

China may want to deal with the current problem of agriculture weakening by means of “migrant workers” (农民工) entering cities to work. But this kind of economic development model in which raw materials, technologies, and markets come from abroad, while the processing links are in the country, has led to the dependence of China’s economy on foreign markets. As a flexible strategy, it is understandable, but in the long run, such a “gradient theory” (梯度理论) is obviously not a sustainable development strategy. Some scholars believe that when the economic crisis broke out in 2008, China’s economy was the most dragged down by these “two-headed” companies (两头在外的企业).<sup>4</sup> The least affected by the financial crisis were China’s impoverished areas. It indicates that it is not the industry itself that hits the rural areas, but the “hollowing” (空心化) of the rural areas, especially the loss of farmers who are the main body of the countryside (Yang 2017: 67). It can be seen that the original advantages of the coexistence of multiple cultures in the rural areas of China have not exerted their effects in the current rural construction. Therefore, the Chinese government’s correct decision to “stimulate domestic demand” needs to be fully implemented in this aspect to maximize the advantages of agriculture, and to take advantage of this opportunity to change China’s current unreasonable industrial structure.

Farmers are not only rational resource distributors, but also the best adaptors to the natural ecological environment (Shi 2005, 5). However, affected by agricultural modernization, many regions blindly introduced agricultural production methods from Western developed countries, leading to the disappearance of many traditional agricultural systems. For China, as an ancient agricultural country with a large number of ethnic groups who have rich traditional agricultural systems in history, there is no need to rely on Western developed countries for food production. What we need to do now is to consider how to improve development of traditional agriculture, promote the combination of its tradition and modernity, and realize

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<sup>4</sup> Companies which depend on foreign countries for raw production materials and markets.

the green development of agriculture. And such a development goal happens to make full use of the mission and responsibility of China's traditional agricultural cultural heritage.

The key to rural revitalization requires the conscious participation of rural people. Industrial revitalization is an important guarantee for rural revitalization, and the conscious participation of villagers is the key to industrial prosperity. Farmers become the real development subjects, and the industries led by the villagers cater to the wishes of the villagers. Only this kind of industry has good development prospects. For example, Changputang Village (菖蒲塘村) of Liaojiqiao Town (廖家桥镇) in Fenghuang County (凤凰县) in west Hunan province is a well-off demonstration village in the process of rural revitalization. It mainly uses kiwi, honey pomelo and other fruit industries to promote the development of rural revitalization. The fruit industry is driven by the "competent people"(能人) in the countryside. In 1995, the kiwi fruit planted area in the village was 200-300 *mu* (亩),<sup>5</sup> and the market price was 5 *yuan/jin* (斤),<sup>6</sup> and the sales prospects were good. Farmers who planted a lot of kiwi fruit trees were too busy and had to ask their neighbors for help. Affected by these "competent man", the planting area has gradually expanded. Now the planting area has reached more than 6000 *mu*, and it has developed into a fruit industry dominated by kiwi fruit. In 2018, the per capita income was 12,000 *yuan*. The fruit industry accounted for 90% of the total income, and the income from migrant workers accounted for a small proportion. The development of rural industries has led to the return of rural migrants. At present, there are 3,035 local people in the village, and only 120 people are working outside. The return of the main rural population provides a strong guarantee for the development of the industry. Rural women who have the skills of seedling grafting set up "women's grafting teams"(女子嫁接队), and go to Guizhou, Sichuan, Chongqing, Shaanxi, and other places to work, generating annual income of up to 3 million yuan. The industrial development of Changputang Village was developed under the drive of the "capable man", and was planted voluntarily by the villagers without government intervention. On the one hand, this kind of industrial model is made by the farmers themselves and formed spontaneously by the villagers' own strength. It stimulates the people's enthusiasm to develop rural industries, and promotes the development of rural industries. On the other hand, the correct guidance and assistance provided by the government is an effective integration of bottom-up strength and top-down countermeasures and promotes the development of rural revitalization.

## UTILIZING AGRICULTURAL CULTURAL HERITAGE: A WAY TO REVITALIZE THE COUNTRYSIDE

In the process of the rise of China, the key issue that deserves to be considered most precisely is how to treat China's traditional agriculture. For a period of time, some people have exaggerated excessively the value and status of intensive agriculture in Western industrial countries, and even directly advocated China to take the road of intensive agriculture, imitating Western intensive agriculture to completely transform China's traditional agriculture. Undoubtedly, Western intensive agriculture is the backbone of the stable economic power status of industrial powers, and it is also the economic means for these countries to influence developing countries or nations. However, the problem that needs to be reconsidered in contemporary times is that the current agricultural business models in developed countries happen to be concentrated on "mechanization" and "chemicalization". And the ecological problems caused by such mechanical agriculture and chemical agriculture happen to be the malpractice recognized in the world, and it is regarded as the concentrated expression of the "negative effect" of industrial civilization. Although some developed countries in the West are aware of the harmfulness of this agricultural business model and have also introduced some more stringent laws and regulations, such as strictly restricting the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, etc., they have also introduced a series of agricultural subsidy policies to support the stability of intensive agriculture. However, it is still unable to change the negative effects of

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<sup>5</sup> One *mu* = 0.0667 hectares.

<sup>6</sup> One *jin* = 1/2 kilogram.

the disadvantages of intensive agriculture. As the American scientist Ms. Rachel Carson's "*Silent Spring*" says, a large number of chemicals are entering the world where life depends on survival through various channels, and into biological tissues through life and death. The transfer and migration of the chain link is constantly appearing in new colors. They have invaded violently, making it too late for nature and life to be adjusted. Unfortunately more and more toxic chemicals are still being invented and produced, and they are thrown into this world that is already on the verge of imbalance (Carson 2017, 1).

With the occurrence of economic crises in Western countries from time to time, the development model of the agricultural industry that mainly relies on government policy subsidies has its own big problems. In contrast, China's agricultural cultural heritage has incomparable advantages. If it is effectively used, it will become a basic way for rural revitalization.

First, agricultural cultural heritage has high ecological value. Agricultural cultural heritage is the result of long-term interaction between farmers and natural ecosystems. As a result of thousands of years of practices, agriculture has been highly adapted to its natural and ecological background. Various natural disasters and ecological "negative effects" caused by agriculture have been effectively dealt with in the long historical years. This should be the wealth for the sustainable development of rural areas, and should not be treated as a burden. The American scholar Professor Franklin Jin pointed out very early that the fertilization method that has been used by the Orientals since ancient times is to use human feces, to protect soil fertility and increase crop yields, and to avoid environmental pollution. Westerners burn garbage and discharge sewage into the sea, while Chinese use them for fertilizer. They buried human feces and domestic garbage in clean soil for natural purification, while fertilizing the soil, effectively maintaining the fertility of the soil (Carson 2017, 1). In addition, the agricultural cultural heritage "*Jiangsu Xinghua Duotian Traditional Agricultural System*" (江苏兴化垛田传统农业系统) has played an important role in maintaining the regional ecology. This kind of agricultural system can achieve dry land farming in towns densely covered with rivers and lakes (水乡泽国) by virtue of man-made terraces. In order to maintain the stability of these artificial terraces and to withstand the intrusion of water, special techniques must be adopted. Different plant species are arranged on the slope of the platform. From wet to drought, the biological species need to be arranged along the contour line. The growth of organisms can resist flooding and ensure the stability of the slope. The entire technical system, in essence, has played an ecological maintenance function to improve biodiversity, and at the same time formed a special ecological landscape. Thus, both of them can play a key role in today's ecological maintenance.

Second, agricultural cultural heritage has a relatively high yield per unit area. Although traditional agricultural labor has invested a lot of labor, the output per unit area is the highest in the world, while the output per unit area of intensive agriculture in Europe and America is mostly less than 1/3 of China's output per unit area. The problem is that, as a country with a large population, China is also a country with extremely low per capita arable land resources. If intensive agriculture is promoted on a large scale, it will certainly not be able to feed the huge population, and the growth of food imports will be faster than economic growth. In this sense, intensive agriculture is not worth emulating in China. There is empirical evidence that deserves everyone's attention. After more than half a century of operation, the Northeast Plain (东北平原) has become China's main grain producing area, and its management method is to imitate Western intensive agriculture. But today, the so-called old industrial zones in the three northeastern provinces lag behind the national level in the current economic development. At the same time, the degradation of the black land in the northeast has reached an alarming level. As a result of mechanized and chemical planting of corn, the black soil layer, which was originally more than one meter deep, has rapidly thinned, and the thickness of many black soils has dropped to less than 5 cm. At the same time, further mechanization and chemical agricultural production will rely more on the large input of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. This is obviously an unsustainable agricultural model, and it is also an unbearable agricultural management method for China's ecological and food security. This should be a hard lesson. Western-style intensive agriculture must never become the direction of China's next development.

Third, agricultural cultural heritage has high food safety attributes. Traditional agriculture can be described as "ecological agriculture" and "green agriculture" in the true sense. As long as the basic system



of traditional agriculture is inherited, its agricultural products can fully meet the requirements of ecological agricultural products. In contrast, the products of Western intensive agriculture, despite strict laws and regulations which have achieved effective control and regulation, food crises caused by agricultural products have emerged one after another. The more ironic fact is that, according to China's "WTO" regulations, China has opened its agricultural product market to the United States. The most profitable agricultural product that the United States exports to China is genetically modified soybeans, and genetically modified foods have been rejected in developed countries throughout Europe. In other words, China has accepted products that are not even allowed by developed industrial countries to impact our country's ecological agriculture. The United States exports genetically modified soybeans to China, and at the same time, imports non-genetically modified soybeans from China at higher prices. In fact, the large-scale cultivation of genetically modified soybeans in the United States has caused its own ecological crisis. Planting genetically modified soybeans that do not even eat insects will also disrupt its own ecological balance. In today's world where the demand for ecological food is soaring, there is absolutely no reason for us to imitate so-called Western-style intensive agriculture. The United States itself is reflecting on its own intensive agriculture and is also advocating the "no-tillage method". Then, it is totally unreasonable to devalue the value of traditional agriculture. In fact, the traditional agricultural system is based on local knowledge and practical experience, reflecting the harmonious relationship between mankind and nature. These agricultural systems not only have a beautiful landscape culture, but can also continue to provide diverse industries and services, maintain food and livelihood security, and ensure people's quality of life. From this point of view, to realize rural revitalization in ethnic minority areas in China, it is necessary to take advantage of unique resources and advantages of ethnic minority areas, and under the stimulation and mobilization of external resources, take an endogenous path for rural revitalization in ethnic minority areas (Kun 2019, 46).

Fourth, agricultural cultural heritage is a characteristic of China's peaceful rise. From the perspective of production efficiency, Western intensive agriculture also has problems. Traditional agriculture in China requires a large amount of labor input and intensive farming, which makes it impossible for China's agricultural population rate to drop significantly. Of course, this will also constrain the growth of the urban population. But the problem is that intensive agriculture in the West uses high agricultural subsidies to maintain, and the state uses monopoly means to control food prices in the international market. Such investment, if viewed from another angle, is not profitable, but is politically necessary. Since China wants to adhere to the development path of peaceful rise, it should also reject the system and non-economic value of intensive agriculture. It should not use methods that harm others and benefit ourselves to damage China's national image.

As mentioned above, the profit margin of traditional agricultural production in China is irrational, and it is extremely low compared with developed countries in the world, and it has not even reached the average level of agricultural subsidies in foreign countries. Therefore, the current profit margins for traditional agriculture in China are too small, but it is not the problem of the traditional agriculture itself, but that while we are promoting traditional agriculture, the relevant institutional guarantees have not kept up. In the past, the market prices of agricultural products in China were not reasonably adjusted. And this kind of problem happens to be solved by adjusting the industrial structure. Such a solution can also be used as a fundamental means of rural revitalization. In fact, as long as China's traditional agriculture has a legitimate profit margin, the current rural areas of China can take advantage of their ecological agricultural products, use the rural ecological industry, increase farmers' economic income, promote the conscious return of lost villagers, and promote rural revitalization.

### **Innovative Agricultural Cultural Heritage: The Effective Way for Rural Revitalization**

All traditions require innovation and cannot remain unchanged. Between maintenance and innovation, a dialectical and unified relationship must be established. In fact, as long as the coordinated evolutionary relationship between the agriculture industry and the local ecological environment is valued to the development of today's society, then what needs to be done in innovative use is mainly to provide services for the tradition, rather than abandon or replace the tradition itself. Paying attention to the use of traditional

agriculture will help improve the livelihood of rural people and the economic benefits of biodiversity (Altieri 2014:35). At the same time, while carrying out efficient use, if the follow-up work on the inheritance and protection of traditional agriculture is improved, new investment, technology, talents and system support can be obtained. This will not only provide a stable path for the development of rural industries, but ecological maintenance can also be achieved. It can be seen that innovating traditional agriculture and increasing farmers' income should be the only way to revitalize the countryside. Here is an example of the *Camellia oleifera* industry in the Wuling Mountain area (武陵山区) to illustrate the role of innovative agricultural cultural heritage in rural revitalization.

Wuling Mountain is known as "the Hometown of *Camellia oleifera*" (油茶之乡) and has a long history of planting *Camellia oleifera*. "In my hometown, the poverty is getting worse. The production is not prosperous, and the land is barren. The mountains are large and the fields are scarce, ... but Tong Tea (桐茶) is one of the great benefits here."<sup>7</sup> "Tea" here refers to *Camellia oleifera*. "Yongshun County (永顺县) has lots of *Camellia*, and Baojing (保靖), Longshan (龙山), Sangzhi (桑植) counties have some of it."<sup>8</sup> "Tung oil and camellia are the major crops of forest and animal husbandry sideline and economic forests... The benefit of tung tea oil is the greatest, and the others are wax trees."<sup>9</sup> These historical data are sufficient to explain the wide area, large scale, and huge economic profits of *Camellia oleifera* in the Wuling Mountains. *Camellia* oil is used to be one of the world's four major woody edible oils, but compared with other woody edible oils, the development of the tea oil industry in the *Wuling* mountainous area has been stagnant for a long time. The reason is that we use other edible vegetable oils instead of *camellia* oil. The main purpose is that the cultivation and production of *camellia oleifera* takes up a lot of labor, and intensive agricultural production cannot be realized. But in fact, the edible vegetable oil in the West also has not realized the overall mechanized operation. In view of the special nutritional value of edible vegetable oil and the value of maintaining healthy food safety, other major edible vegetable oil producers have been relying on high subsidies to maintain this industry, and they have also used policy support and other methods to maintain the high market prices of these edible vegetable oils. This is obviously a bitter irony. Even Western developed countries that vigorously implement intensive agriculture are still using manual methods to maintain the production of their ecological agricultural products. Why do we have to cocoon ourselves on this issue and demand the mechanization and chemicalization of *camellia* oil production?

If the above-mentioned unreasonable concepts and practices can be thoroughly liquidated ideologically, the people in all ethnic regions of our country only need to vigorously promote the innovation of agricultural cultural heritage, and rural revitalization can be a matter of course. The author found in the research that the current price of tea oil in the domestic market has reached 50-70 *yuan/jin*. Even if the *Camellia oleifera* forest is operated in accordance with the traditional folk methods, the output of *camellia* oil per mu can reach nearly 100 *jin* (斤). In this way, the income level can also support farmers to get rid of poverty and become rich. In this sense, China's traditional agriculture can actually be upgraded and innovated in an all-round way only by giving fair treatment in its industrial positioning, and then it can play its role in economic development and ecological maintenance.

Based on this kind of thinking, if we encourage and support farmers to develop traditional agricultural cultural heritage such as *Camellia oleifera* in the Wuling Mountain area, it should be an extremely effective way of thinking and decision-making, not to mention the historical and cultural accumulation of *Camellia oleifera* planting in the Wuling Mountain area. Farmers not only have practical experience in planting and managing *Camellia oleifera* forests, but also have traditional technical skills for oil extraction. For example, in Yongshun County of Xiangxi Prefecture, there are still some oil mushroom workshops that use traditional techniques to squeeze tea oil. Therefore, in the process of developing the *Camellia oleifera* industry, we

<sup>7</sup> Guangxu "Guzhangping Hall Records", Volume 16, "Art and Wenzhi, Part 2" (光绪《古丈坪厅志》卷十六《艺文志·下》)

<sup>8</sup> Tongzhi "Yongshun Fuzhi", Volume 10, "Product Record" (同治《永顺府志》卷10《物产志》)

<sup>9</sup> Guangxu "Guzhangping Hall Records", Volume 11, "Products Record" (光绪《古丈坪厅志》卷十一《物产志》)

only need to innovate the *Camellia oleifera* forest and adopt a compound planting model so that in addition to obtaining higher profits from the camellia oil, it can also achieve economic benefits in the forest. The specific method is to raise chickens, ducks, rabbits, sheep, etc. in the *Camellia oleifera* forest. In addition to being used as natural fertilizers, the manure of these animals can eat the insects in the forest and reduce the pests and diseases of the *Camellia oleifera* forest, rabbits and sheep. It can eat the weeds in the forest, and the sheep can also eat the old leaves under the *camellia oleifera*, which is beneficial to the renewal of the *camellia oleifera*. Compared with simply operating a certain crop, this mixed economy compatible with *Camellia oleifera* and animal husbandry has a much larger output value and has better ecological and economic benefits. In addition, this ecological planting and breeding model can effectively promote rural leisure tourism and promote the development of new rural service industries. Obviously, the result of this innovative traditional agricultural cultural heritage will effectively ensure that farmers can obtain stable economic income by staying in their hometowns, which in turn will promote the conscious return of farmers abroad and ultimately realize the revitalization of the countryside.

## CONCLUSIONS

The countryside contains the genes of China's 5,000-year culture and is the carrier of traditional culture. In terms of rural revitalization, we should explore the outstanding parts of traditional culture, pay attention to the cultivation and utilization of local talents, attract intellectual youths to return to their hometowns, and retain people. In addition, it is necessary to make full use of resource advantages based on local characteristics to achieve integrated development of related industries. Moreover, we need to implement villagers' autonomy, and effectively use township regulations and folk agreements. To realize the sustainable development of industries in a particular village, the villagers must develop themselves. The villagers need to organize themselves and thus require a set of rules to operate. These rules are embodied in the rural regulations and are also a manifestation of culture. In the past, it was not that we did not pay attention to rural revitalization, but that policies and programs were based on the state and enterprises, thus neglecting the main body of the village and the needs of rural society. This led to the lack of good intentions and lack of communication mechanisms. Participation includes forced participation and conscious participation. For the revitalization of the countryside the state support is not enough and blind fight for projects is also not recommended. You must be self-reliant, exercise your will, do it by yourself, and discover existing problems. The common people shoulder their own missions, their own right to choose, use, and develop their own assets, and the improvement of their own organizational capabilities will make rural construction valuable.

People are the key to rural revitalization. Affected by the thought of industrialization and urbanization in the West, the problem of the weakening of China's agriculture has become prominent. A large-scale peasant flocking to cities has caused a large loss of rural population and created many "hollow villages" (空心村). Therefore, it is necessary to fundamentally consider the issue of industrial adjustment, especially the issue of agricultural organization. In addition, the adjustment plan must consider the integration of ecological issues with the long-term planning of primary industry agriculture, so that the adjusted traditional agricultural industrial structure can adapt as much as possible to natural and ecological environment in which it is located, and at the same time, it can form sustainable production ability. Such an effect can not only promote poverty alleviation in rural areas, but it can also promote the return of rural lost population to rural areas, build rural areas, and ultimately realize rural revitalization.

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