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# The Exploration to the Historical Origin of Differences between Urban and Rural Areas in China

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**Abstract** In order to understand the historical origins of encircling the cities from the rural areas implemented by the Communist Party of China and the current dual structures of urban and rural development, urban-rural differences are analyzed from the four aspects of production mode, management mode, culture and social division of labor. Industrial development in modern times has promoted the modernization of urban production in China. But the rural areas still maintain their traditional self-sufficient natural economy. After the Opium War, the process of modernization of city politics is promoted by more economic elements of capitalism and the formation of Chinese bourgeoisie. During the management of urban modernization, rural areas still adopt the traditional self-management mode. In the aspect of culture, city is the center of development, having large population, developed traffic, and prosperous culture. But the village is lack of information and its culture is relatively backward. In modern times, affected by the foreign capitalist, urban area has become the center of modern productivity. After separating from agriculture, handicraft industry has transferred into urban areas and the social division of labor in both urban and rural areas has shown great changes. Thus, a new pattern of "Urban Industry, Rural Agriculture" has formed.

**Key words** Urban and rural areas, Relation, Difference, History, China

The invasion of capitalism has changed the social formation of China, turning China into a semicolonial and semifeudal society and accelerating the process of city modernization in China. Thus, the urban-rural relationship has changed from the traditional urban and rural patterns into modernization. The difference between urban and rural areas shows a growing trend, which is a reflection of the social disharmony. To establish a harmonious socialist society, it is necessary to explore the historical roots of Chinese urban and rural differences. Modern urban-rural differences are analyzed during this research from the four aspects of production mode, management mode, culture and social division of labor, so as to further understand the historical origins of encircling the cities from the rural areas and the dual structures of urban and rural development implemented by the Communist Party of China.

## 1 Differences between urban and rural production mode

**1.1 Modern Industry promotes the process of city modernization** City is the political, economic, and cultural center, a product when the production level and human society develop into a certain stage. It develops with the social progress. The rise of modern industry in China started from the military civil industry established by the westernizationists bureaucrat. Westernizationists set up a new mode of military industry. Although its aim was to promote the politics and military affairs, it accelerated the process of early industrialization in city to a cer-

tain degree. Taking Tianjin Machinery Bureau as an example, it promoted the early industrialization and city modernization in Tianjin City. After the establishment of Tianjin Machinery Bureau, a new city was constructed based on the old Tianjin, which expanded the urban scale and activity area of Tianjin City, accelerated the development of population, transport, communication and education of Tianjin, and promoted the city modernization in Tianjin City.

After signing the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Qing government was forced to allow the private factories. Then, under the pressure of internal and foreign affairs, the Qing government had to implement the New Deal in the late Qing-dynasty in China, which aroused the climax of investment in enterprises for two times. Besides, affected by the First World War, western capitalist countries had no time to take care of China. There was a short-term golden period for the development of national capitalist enterprises in China. Industrial development requires substantial resources; and concentration of resources needs corresponding modern municipal utilities. The transportation radiates into all directions and the communication is rapid and convenient, which requires the development of other public utilities. They together have promoted the process of urban modernization.

Until the early 20th century, cities in China has reached several peak periods in history, which promoted the further development and modernization process of cities along rivers and seas, as well as the development of inner cities. Some inner cities, such as Chengdu, Xi'an, Lanzhou, Guiyang, and Urumqi, have gradually eliminated poverty and backwardness, and have begun the transition to the modern cities. However, the transition degree is relatively low.

**1.2 Traditional agriculture restricts the development of rural economy** Compared with cities which gradually realize

the modernization, rural areas in China are still at the stage of agricultural civilization. Under the traditional feudal economic system, traditional agriculture has not been completely separated from the handicraft industry. All sectors from production to consumption flow only within the peasant household, constructing a closed self-sufficient economic structure. After the Opium War, this structure began to collapse. Instead, modern Chinese rural handicraft industry guided by market forces had appeared, leading to the increasing proportions of handicraft income in peasant household income and total regional economy. Thus, the number of people engaged in handicraft production gradually increases. Due to the introduction of machinery and advanced technology, the seasonal and sexual restricting factors in handicraft production are eliminated. Handicraft gradually becomes an independent production sector and has been separated from agriculture. In some areas, handicraft industry even takes the place of agriculture and becomes the main industry. Although the position of handicraft has gradually improved, there is still no fundamental change in the economic structure of rural areas and agriculture is still the main industry in rural areas. Affected by geographical, political and other factors, rural areas have not participated in the early modernization of China. Although there appears mechanization and managing-type farm in rural agriculture, their level is still low and there are still no fundamental changes in the rural productivity and production relationship. Most farmers in China still use the traditional farm implements, adopting the self-sufficiency production. Agricultural economy grows slowly and the differences in production modes between urban and rural areas gradually widens.

## 2 Differences between urban and rural management modes

**2.1 Political modernization in urban areas** Before the Opium War, China was a feudal central system country. Cities were completely under the control of feudal imperial power, which are the ruling base and fortress of feudal dynasties. After the Opium War, the political, economic and social structures in cities were changed, showing a significant tendency of modernization. In politics, the independence of city was strengthened; and the management mode of cities had taken great changes. The increasing economic elements of capitalism and the formation of Chinese bourgeoisie together promoted the modernization process of urban politics in China. In the year 1908, the Qing government promulgated the *Urban Local Autonomy Statute*. This is the first time for China to separate the cities from rural areas in the form of legislation, regulating that corresponding urban management organization should be established. Since management system of urban politics has institutional and legal safeguards, urban management mode gradually becomes perfect. This mainly reflects in the increasing political and social organizations, such as the political party, social group, and other organizations. In the early 20th century, the Qing government issued the *Outline of Imperial Constitution*, affirming the freedom of assembly and forming associations.

Therefore, various community organizations have established, causing the adjustment and differentiation of urban political order and political force. Political consciousness of the public is enhanced, which speeds up the political modernization of the city.

The ancient city in China was the center of culture and politics, where governments located. Thus, its management was relatively strict. The ancient cities, such as Xi'an, Beijing, Luoyang, and Nanjing, were the cultural, political and economic centers. After the Opium War, there were many coastal and port cities in China. But most of these cities adopted the management mode of western countries. And there were International Concessions in these cities, the management mode of which was representative. Taking Shanghai as an example, there was Shanghai International Concession in the Bund, which was an independent kingdom for imperialist countries integrating the administrative power, legislative power, judicial power, policing power, and military power, where China had no power to interfere. The concession had a different management mode from the other areas in the city, which was known as the "Double-track System". After the Opium War, Britain, France, the United States, Japan, Germany, Russia, Italy, Belgium and Australia seized concessions along the rivers and oceans of Tianjin City. The overall area of concessions of the nine countries reached 1 555.7 hectares, about 8 times of the area of the old cities (196 hectares)<sup>[1]</sup>. Imperialist countries set up buildings within the concessions, and established a new Tianjin City, which formed a strong contrast with the old city. Thus, a new political, economic, and cultural center was formed in Tianjin City.

Concession management system is relatively perfect in the urban management mode in modern China. Management systems implemented in Shanghai, Tianjin and Hankou were in accordance with the systems of lease countries. Among these countries, Britain had the most advanced system. Its management system was that the consul convoked the voters to select the board of directors with legislative and executive power. And the board of directors established the municipal council, where finance, taxation, engineering, and police departments were responsible for the management of concession. This operation system was similar with the administration system of autonomous city in western cities. The concession also promulgated the municipal regulations, such as different roads for car and walking people. The police system was firstly implemented in the concession in order to keep order and ensure public security, which made the urban management more efficiency.

**2.2 Self-management mode in rural areas** When modernization management was implemented in urban areas, rural areas adopted the traditional self-management mode. There were grassroots organizations in rural areas, which were religious organizations under the control of traditional gentry power and clan power. Their function was to coordinate the internal relationship within a village, contact with the outside world on behalf of the village, and protect the overall interests of villagers. The management thought of rural grassroots organizations was

based on the Confucianism and religious thought, the aim was to safeguard the overall interests of the village, but not to pursue personal gain. The organizations were established by villagers themselves to realize the effective negotiation between the farmer and the state. The double-track politics mode with distinct Chinese characteristics had maintained the long-term stability of rural society. The implementation of political reform in the late Qing Dynasty had changed the original management mode of villages. China began to implement the single track system, which destroyed the original management structure of villages. Government began to intervene rural organizations. For instance, the selection or appointment of members in rural grassroots organizations must be approved by the governments of higher levels. Otherwise, it was invalid. Thus, rural grassroots organizations changed from autonomous organizations to authorized organizations. And the organizational power also changed from villages into the governments of higher levels. This kind of authorized system indicated the disappearance of independent autonomy in rural areas. And the village autonomy and the Bao-jia System in the period of the Republic of China were the best embodiment of this system.

Village autonomy in the period of the Republic of China was a local self-government system with administrative village as the basic region implemented by the state. It was operated under the framework of the decentralization of state and society, which was an institutional form in the process from tradition to modern style promoted by the state<sup>[2]</sup>. In the years 1927 – 1939, the National Government at Nanking initiated a campaign to pursue a modern grassroots self-government system. During this period, the National Government once took a county as the unit to realize the modernization of local autonomy, introduced the modern autonomous factors to make the grassroots management system has modernization functions. For instance, Mi Digang initiated the "Villager Autonomy" in Zhaicheng Village. The Village autonomy system implemented Chiang Kai-shek was to realize the "Revitalization of Rural Areas" on the surface, but was in fact a fake democracy under dictatorship. Just like Lu Zhengyu said: Villager autonomy completely relies on the force of the state and can not exert its autonomy spirit, which is not the real villagers' autonomy, but a behavior village management by village autonomous organs on behalf of the state<sup>[3]</sup>.

### 3 Cultural differences between urban and rural areas

Affected by the geographical environment, the imbalance in urban and rural social and economic development, and the urbanization transfer of rural culture in modern times had together led to the prosperity of urban culture and the degradation of rural culture, forming great differences between urban and rural cultures. The urban and rural culture in modern times showed binary features of the tradition and modernization, the industrial civilization and agricultural civilization, and the foreign culture and local culture<sup>[4]</sup>.

#### 3.1 Prosperity of urban culture

With the acceleration of

modern urbanization, the cultural landscape and municipal infrastructure had changed completely in modern cities of China. As early as the 1870s, Shanghai already had high buildings, coal lamp, and electric wire, as well as many foreign goods, restaurants, opium dens, more tearooms, wine shops, and theaters<sup>[5]</sup>. At the same time, Tianjin had many wide and flat streets, foreign-style houses, street lamps, and green trees along the streets. In the early 20th century, Shanghai grew into a metropolis<sup>[6]</sup>. The change of modern urban infrastructure reflected the variation of external cultural landscape of China. However, in the early 20th century, roads in Beijing were mainly the earth roads with excrement anywhere. It was muddy in rainy days and there were blowing dust in sunny day<sup>[7]</sup>. Taiyuan had a lot of electric lights, gravel roads, cross streets, public gardens with small lakes, music halls, theaters, kindergartens, boulevards, squares, matches factories, military schools, policemen, and correctional facilities. However, if going south for two days, all the impact of foreign countries disappeared. The areas were still at the Middle Ages. The only illumination at night was the cottons burned in an iron cup with rapeseed oil. Besides, there were no circulation of metallic and silver coins<sup>[8]</sup>.

Affected by the economic development of modern cities, the forms of urban culture gradually increased in China. Firstly, popular transmission ways and entertainment ways of cultural life appeared. The popular transmission ways in modern times are mainly the translation of foreign books, the publication of Chinese and foreign newspapers, and the creation and development of telephone and telegraph means. At the same time, slide, film, drama and other entertainment modes in modern times became popular in the cities of China. Taking Shanghai as an example, after the year 1860, there were many press and publication institutions, and some Chinese publications established by missionaries. Secondly, the rise of the Church School indicated the emergence of modern education. The Opium War provided conditions for the development of western missionaries in China. According to the statistics, the American missionaries Brown started the first Morrison School in the year 1839. Until the year 1875, there were in all more than 800 missionary schools with more than 20 thousand students. Before the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, there were 30 colleges and universities in China established by the western missionaries. In the years 1920 – 1921, the Catholic system had in all 6 599 schools and 144 344 students in China; the Christian system had 7 382 schools and 214 254 students in China<sup>[9]</sup>. All these schools were mainly distributed in the cities and towns with convenient transportation.

#### 3.2 Poor cultural information in rural areas

Restricted by the physical geography and economic condition, entertainment life in rural areas was depressing at the same period of time, compared with that in urban areas. Culture information was still poor in rural areas due to the underdeveloped rural economy and the inconvenient traffic. In many rural areas, there were few people with literacy. People having talents usually went to cities to find new development opportunities. Thus, new cultur-

al information could hardly be spread among rural people. For instance, in the Dao-guang period, people in Yunnan area usually stayed at home, was engaged in agriculture, and rarely went out<sup>[10]</sup>. The American missionary Arthur · Henderson · Smith described that villagers obtaining some cultural knowledge would like to read books and go to the theatre, the leading role of which were usually great men at the Three Kingdoms Period. They sometimes told us the achievements of these leading roles, but were not interested in the modern or contemporary history, because the cultural affairs had little to do with their business<sup>[11]</sup>. Secondly, the cultural entertainment is single and out of date. In the 1870, especially after the 80s and 90s, entertainment activities still maintained the old ones in rural areas without any modern characteristics. As is mentioned above, there were poor cultural infrastructures in rural areas, and the programs stayed unchanged for a long time. Most of the time, people had a dull monotonous life, basically had no decent cultural and leisure activities. And except the harvest time, they just sat around and did nothing. In each village, crowds of men chatted under the sun in winter and in the shade in summer in public places in China. Even in midwinter, they crowded together to chat and chat until dinner time<sup>[12]</sup>. They talked about the whether conditions in the past, at present and in future, the market situation, the hearsay, and the details of the latest lawsuit<sup>[12]</sup>. Thirdly, traditional private schools were closed due to the rise of modern education. Thus, the rural education was lacked. Since modern education needed a large amount of money and new teachers, rural areas had no condition to set up modern schools, which widened the gap with urban cultural development. Moreover, the wealthy and capable people in rural areas went out to cities to seek development opportunity, so the rural areas in modern times stayed at the feudal culture.

## 4 Differences in the social division of labor between rural and urban areas

Before the Opium War, China was still under the dominance of self-sufficient peasant economy. Social divisions of labor in both urban and rural areas were backward. Marx pointed out that Asia was an undifferentiated unity of urban and rural areas, which reflected the coidentity of urban and rural areas and the backwardness of social division<sup>[13]</sup>. Under this situation, rural areas became the center of social and economic activities, farming was predominant, and the whole society showed a significant county characteristics. Farmers engaged in agricultural production carried out the processing of agricultural products within families, and did not have to exchange goods with the outside. For thousands of years, there were no fundamental changes in the agricultural patterns and handicraft industry in China. The two still had close correlation. Cities were only the center of ruling power. People who lived in cities were mainly the merchants, landlords, and bureaucrats, as well as their servants, slaves and other consumption population. For a long period of time, cities in China were consumption cities with poor productability, which mainly relied on the production of rural areas. Although commerce and handicraft achieved certain de-

velopment, they were mainly used for urban consumption and services and had no significant marketability. Cities were still not the independent economic center. This kind of social and economic structure in China combining the small-scale agriculture with cottage industry had seriously hampered the development of Chinese urban and rural social division of labor.

Since the modern times, cities were firstly affected by the foreign capitalist, becoming the main focus of modern productivity and greatly changing the urban and rural social division of labor in China.

The nature of city had changed into modernization. The new port cities were developed according to the development mode of foreign capitalist with strong modern characteristics. There were industry and commerce in some traditional cities, which showed the modern characteristics. Population structure of a city was an important symbol of city modernization, where the proportion of agricultural population declined and that of non-agricultural population increased. Feudal military population was replaced by the population engaged in commerce, industry and other economic activities. There were also new population groups, such as the capitalists, industrial workers, and new intellectuals. Taking Beijing as an example, population in secondary industry accounted for 21.2% of all the employees in the year 1946, 2.3 times of that in the year 1912. Number of enterprises increased from 6 895 in the year 1936 to 13 286 in the year 1948. And the number of employees also increased from 50 997 to 55 178<sup>[14]</sup>.

A new pattern of social division of labor in urban and rural areas has formed. Urban machinery industry in modern times has taken the place of rural handicraft industry. Resource allocation has transferred from villages into cities. Villages have become the raw material suppliers and products consumption areas. Cities' dependence on the villages gradually decreases. Although the process of urban and rural division in China in modern times is slow, it reflects the tendency of the progressive collapse of the self-sufficient natural economy in rural areas, the separation of handicraft industry from machinery industry, and the replacement of handicraft industry by machinery industry. Thus, the urban-rural division of labor gradually enlarges, forming a new pattern of the "urban industry, rural agriculture".

## 5 Conclusion

The formation of urban and rural differences has a long history time. We analyze the differences in modern times mainly from four aspects of production mode, management mode, culture and social division of labor, which provides a historical basis for the understanding of the historical origins of encircling the cities from the rural areas and the dual structures of urban and rural development implemented by the Communist Party of China. The aim to analyze the differences between urban and rural areas is to learn from the historical experience and lesson, to coordinate urban-rural relations, and to make the past serve the present. It is true that there are still differences between urban and rural areas in the modern society. Thus, strengthening

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in the gross national economy is increasing, and the environmental problems caused by the rapid development of it, especially, commerce, food and restaurant service industry, real estate, transportation and tourism, become more and more serious. For example, at present, the total discharge of domestic sewage has surpassed the total volume of industrial waste water discharge. It can be seen that the environmental pollution problem of the tertiary industry has become another environmental pollution that can not be ignored after the industrial pollution, so it is urgent to strengthen the ecological construction of the tertiary industry.

**3.2.4 Actively developing recycling economy.** From the perspective of industrial ecologicalization, the sector of recycling economy is the decomposer of the whole industrial ecological system. In the industrial ecological economic development, there is no decomposer (such as waste recycling companies, resource recycling companies and so on) to handle, transfer and reuse the by-products and wastes caused by industrial enterprises and companies. Therefore, the recycling and reuse of waste materials in the production process should be strengthened to realize the reuse of waste materials in the enterprises and change the wastes to resource, and then promote the more harmonious relations between industrial production and the environment.

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the rural development and minimizing the gap between urban and rural areas are important historical issues of constructing the new socialist countryside and the harmonious socialist society.

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