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Historical Evolution and Innovation of Supply of Rural Public Cultural Service in China

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Abstract Based on the analysis of main body, decision making and financing mode concerning the supply of public cultural services in rural areas, we divide historical evolution of rural public cultural services in China into three periods: (i) The period from the founding of New China to the period before "Cultural Revolution"; (ii) The period from "Cultural Revolution" to the period before the reform and opening-up; (iii) The period after the reform and opening-up. We analyze the defects in the supply of rural public cultural services in China: (i) Difference in the supply of public cultural services between urban and rural areas, caused by urban-rural "dual" structure; (ii) Insufficient supply of rural public cultural services, arising from unclear property rights and executive power of government at all levels; (iii) Structural imbalance in the supply of rural public cultural services, caused by top-down supply decision making mechanism; (iv) Single financing channels of rural public cultural services. From input, decision making, demand expression, financing and endogenous mechanism of supply of rural public cultural services, we put forward the recommendations for improving the supply of public cultural services in China.

Key words Supply of rural public cultural services, Historical evolution, Recommendations

Rural public cultural services refer to the non-profit and non-competitive public cultural products and services for rural areas, focusing on social benefits, corresponding to the operating cultural services^[1]. As a part of rural public goods, the supply mainly includes main body, decision making, financing, and other aspects^[2]. The specific forms are radio, television, theatrical troupe, film projection team, library, cultural centers, Internet, and many other public cultural goods and services related to cultural transmission. However, affected by the long-term urban-rural split of supply system of public cultural services, there are enormous differences in the level of public cultural services for residents between urban and rural areas, greatly hampering economic and social development in rural areas. Based on all aspects included in the supply of rural public cultural services, we analyze and reflect on the problems in historical evolution, and propose countermeasures and recommendations for improving the supply of rural public culture.

1 The historical evolution of supply of rural public cultural services

With China's economic and social development and reform, the existing supply system of rural public cultural services finally takes shape. By retrospectively its evolutionary process, we divide historical evolution of rural public cultural services in China into three periods: (i) The period from the founding of New China to the period before "Cultural Revolution"; (ii) The period from "Cultural Revolution" to the period before the re-

form and opening-up; (iii) The period after the reform and opening-up.

1.1 The period from the founding of New China to the period before "Cultural Revolution" (1949–1958) With the establishment of the people's communes, through the organizational form of "unification of the state and commune" and highly centralized economic management mode, the corresponding supporting system of rural public cultural services also took shape in this period. During the period, the supply of rural public cultural services had the following characteristics:

(i) In terms of the main body of supply, affected by the state strategy of using agriculture to complement industry and giving priority to the development of heavy industry, the main body of supply of rural public cultural services was still the people's communes, and there was no other main body of supply in this period.

(ii) In terms of financing mechanism, the supply of rural public cultural services was mainly dependent upon the funds owned by the people's communes, and the state budgetary expenditure gave appropriate subsidies. Specifically, the people's communes, by the accumulation fund and public welfare fund, realized the material costs of public cultural services; by increasing the total work points and decreasing the work point value, realized the human costs of public cultural services.

(iii) In terms of the supply decision making, since the rural residents were mobilized and organized by the government in an administrative order, the rural residents had a strong sense of revolutionary fervor, enthusiasm and cohesion. Rural residents' personal needs for public cultural services were ignored, and there was high homogeneity between the residents, so in this period, the supply of rural public cultural services was top-down uniform supply, determined mainly by the decision making of higher authorities and plan of the government.

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1.2 The period from "Cultural Revolution" to the period before the reform and opening-up (1969 – 1977) The main body of supply and the decision making mode in this period experienced no change, and the top-down decision making mode of public cultural services with the government as main body was still adopted. Farmers' expression of demand for public culture was completely missing, and the government strictly controlled the cultural communication channels and content. But there was an important feature in this period; the government's input to main public cultural services in rural areas at that time was unprecedented, which greatly promoted the popularization of broadcast, theatrical troupe, movies and other public cultural services.

For example, in 1969, the Ministry of Finance and the Central Radio Utilities Board jointly issued *Notice on Expenses for Rural Radio Network*, to include the cost of the broadcast station in cities and counties in the national budget, include the day-to-day costs of communes' broadcast station in the local budget^[3]. This greatly reduced the burden of farmers, greatly promoting the development of the broadcasting cause in rural areas.

1.3 The period after the reform and opening-up (from 1978 to now) After the reform and opening up, China's cultural undertakings started to recover, and the supply of rural public cultural services also began to enter the phase of institutional reform and legal construction, making great achievements. Since the beginning of the new century, this concept and problem has been drawing more and more attention. Now taking the fee-to-tax reform as a watershed, the development of supply of rural public cultural services in this period can be divided into the following two stages^[4]:

1.3.1 The period before tax reform (1978 – 2000). The rural public cultural services during this period were supplied under the absence of public financial system, and the rural public cultural services during this period had the following characteristics:

(i) In terms of the main body of supply, along with the improvement of farmers' income and the development of township enterprises, the main body of rural public cultural services shifted from the former people's communes to the township government, township enterprises, agricultural associations, and third-party organizations.

(ii) In terms of financing mechanism, the financing channels of rural public cultural services during this period still included two modes (within the system and outside the system). This financing mechanism was not essentially different from that in the period from the founding of New China to the establishment of people's communes, rural residents still continued to bear great responsibility of public cultural services.

(iii) In terms of decision making mechanism, on the one hand, the township government inherited the authority of the original commune; on the other hand, the rural residents' awareness of personal appeal and sense of power were still relatively weak, making the rural public cultural services during this period still be the top-down government decision making.

1.3.2 The period after tax reform (2000 to now). The rural public cultural services during this period had the following characteristics:

(i) In terms of the main body of supply, there was a diversified pattern (dominated by government, complemented by individual, third-party organizations, charitable organizations and other main body of supply).

(ii) In terms of the supply form, there were not only the sharing of cultural information resources as the focus, radio and television coverage, the rural film screening, rural library and other projects, but also the township cultural stations, community cultural centers, village cultural activity rooms and other basic projects.

(iii) In terms of the financing channels, since the central financial investment was intensified, the financing within the system became the main source of funding for rural public cultural services, and even became the only source of funding for major projects; although the financing outside the system existed, the proportion of it gradually declined.

(iv) In terms of the decision making mechanism, the top-down decision making mechanism still occupied a major position, but various needs of rural residents began to receive attention, and the corresponding appeal expression mechanism was established and developed. Rural residents' consciousness of rights was gradually strengthened, who began to participate in decision making in some cultural activities.

2 Defects in the supply of rural public cultural services

Throughout the evolution of supply of rural public cultural services in China, with the gradual weakening of the government decision making, the government gradually assumes major responsibility in terms of the main body of supply and financing; the burden of rural residents is gradually reduced; the overall situation of supply of rural public cultural services is gradually improved^[5]. However, there are still great defects in the current supply of rural public cultural services.

2.1 Difference in the supply of public cultural services between urban and rural areas, caused by urban-rural "dual" structure After the founding of new China, with the implementation of strategy of using agriculture to complement industry and giving priority to the development of heavy industry, the urban-rural dual structure in China was gradually formed, and the urban-rural "dual" public cultural services was thus formed based on this.

In urban areas, the government used the financial investment and subsidies, to build public cultural facilities (such as radio and television, libraries, museums, cultural centers) and cultivate the cultural human resources, so as to meet the cultural needs of urban residents. In rural areas, a variety of facilities and human resources needed by the public cultural services were mainly solved by rural residents to share the funds and human cost, and the government only offered appropriate subsidies. This situation was not significantly improved after the reform of rural taxes.

Taking the case of 2008, all levels of financial investment in urban culture accounted for 74.8% of the national cultural cause expenses, while all levels of financial investment in rural culture only accounted for 25.2% of the national cultural cause expenses^[6]. In this system of urban-rural "dual" public cultural supply, there are enormous differences in the level of supply of public cultural services between urban and rural areas, and the difficulties in the coordinated urban and rural development are increased.

2.2 Insufficient supply of rural public cultural services, arising from unclear property rights and executive power of government at all levels In order to implement the strategy of giving priority to the development of industry and city, the major financial resources are concentrated in the higher levels of government, which can concentrate the power to do great things. Accordingly, the grass-roots government should provide public cultural services for the majority of rural residents under the conditions of less financial allocation. The public cultural services, such as radio, television, and film teams, needing to be coordinated and provided by some governments at all levels, are mainly left to the grass-roots government to solve, after mutually shuffling.

After the implementation of the system of dividing taxes, the supply situation of rural public cultural services is not fundamentally changed. The property rights are turned over level by level, ultimately to the central and provincial governments, while the executive power devolves level by level, and the supply responsibility of public cultural services is mainly assumed by the grass-roots government, especially the county and township governments. Compared with the great supply responsibility of culture, the county and township government's financial resources have too many difficulties to cope with, directly resulting in the insufficient supply of rural public cultural services. The fundamental reason is incoordination between property rights and executive power of government at all levels.

2.3 Structural imbalance in the supply of rural public cultural services, caused by top-down supply decision making mechanism Throughout the evolution of public cultural services in China, the decision making mechanism is not changed, still the supply of rural public cultural services determined by the government from top to down^[7].

On the one hand, rural residents can not participate in the decision-making process of the supply of rural public culture, so that their needs and preferences are difficult to be expressed. The content and structure of supply of rural public cultural services is mainly determined by the higher level of government's administrative order, and the grass-roots government's interests needs, a far cry from the real needs of rural residents.

On the other hand, with the socio-economic development in China's rural areas, and the strengthening of the rural residents' sense of rights, the rural residents have increasingly shown the characteristics of diversification and differentiation for public cultural services. In this case, the top-down decision making mechanism has been unable to meet the practical needs of socio-economic development in rural areas and rural

residents' needs for diverse public cultural services, which will inevitably lead to structural imbalance in the supply of rural public cultural services.

2.4 Single financing channels for rural public cultural services Before or after the reform of taxation expenses, the financing channels for rural public cultural services are single in China. Discount interest loan, financing, fund raising, social donations, sponsorship, fund and other financing modes have not yet been combined widely; the socialization of funds for rural public cultural services has not been achieved. In this case, it is bound to increase fiscal pressure in China, increase the risks in long-term effective supply of rural public cultural services, and indirectly lead to insufficient supply of rural public cultural services.

3 Recommendations for improving the supply of public cultural services in rural areas

There are many problems in China's existing supply of rural public cultural services, such as insufficient supply, single supply type, irrational supply structure and lack of effective long-term financing mechanism. In order to improve the current situation of supply of rural public cultural services in China, it is necessary to develop appropriate countermeasures to further improve the supply of rural public cultural services, and promote the social and economic development of rural areas in China.

3.1 Establishing coordinated urban-rural supply system of public cultural services, increasing input to rural public cultural services The former urban-rural "dual" public cultural services in China burgeoned under the strategy of giving priority to the development of industry and city, with strong responsiveness of social and economic development. China's economic aggregate now ranks second in the world, having entered the stage of "using urban development to drive rural development, nurturing agriculture"; the former supply system of public cultural services has been unable to meet the practical needs of China's social and economic development.

It is necessary to establish coordinated urban-rural supply system of public cultural services, ensure investment in the city's public cultural services, increase financial input to rural public cultural services, and increase input to cinema, theatrical troupe, library, cultural center, and other cultural carriers. In particular, it is necessary to strengthen the rural grass-roots financial transfer payment, to ensure the sources of funding for public cultural services, and thus achieve the goal of equalization of public cultural services in urban and rural areas as soon as possible.

3.2 Clearly defining the property rights and executive power of government at all levels in the supply of rural public cultural services With the implementation of the administrative reform, it brings a good opportunity for clearly defining the property rights and executive power of government at all levels in the supply of rural public cultural services. Specifically, based on the principles of "benefit, efficiency, conven-

ience, technology and dynamics", the major national projects should be put under the investment, management and supervision by the central government; the local supply of public cultural services should be put under the investment, management and supervision by the local government.

In particular, the grass-roots government should be responsible for the implementation, management and supervision on the provision of financial transfer payment for rural public cultural services. For the cross-regional supply of public cultural services, the central and local governments should carry out joint investment, management and supervision.

Through the above measures, we can establish a jointly shared mechanism of supply of public cultural services, so as to clearly defining the property rights and executive power of government at all levels in the supply of rural public cultural services.

3.3 Improving the decision making mechanism for rural public cultural services On the basis of improving the decision making mechanism for rural public cultural services, we should first ensure rural residents' right to know and make decision in participating in public cultural services, to promote the equalization of public cultural services from the source of public cultural services.

Secondly, we should establish the demand expression mechanism of rural public cultural services. By system, we should ensure that the rural residents' cultural needs can be effectively expressed, so that the main body of supply of rural public cultural services can grasp the size and structure of rural residents' needs, thereby providing targeted public cultural services.

Thirdly, we should try to create top-down and bottom-up supply mechanism of rural public cultural services.

3.4 Building diversified financing mechanism for rural public cultural services With the socio – economic development of China's rural areas, the rural residents' needs for public cultural services become increasingly diversified and differentiated, so using government's limited financial resources to meet the increasingly diversified, differentiated, and complex needs for public cultural services, is impractical. Therefore, it is necessary to establish diversified rural public cultural financing mechanism, to ensure long-term validity of rural public cultural services in terms of capital. When constructing diversified financing mechanism, we should first ensure the domination of the government's financial investment, thereby ensuring the stability in the supply of rural public cultural services^[8].

Secondly, it is necessary to introduce the market mechanism, and attract many other sources of funding for rural public cultural services, by cultural institutions, enterprises, social organizations and other entities.

In addition, it is necessary to actively introduce non-governmental organizations, as the complement to the above two. Through donation, the non-governmental organizations can also provide necessary and timely funding sources for public cul-

tural services in rural areas, especially the remote areas.

Mutual complement and support among the above three can help provide funding for diversified rural public cultural services, so as to long and effectively ensure the supply of rural public cultural services.

3.5 Establishing the endogenous cultivation mechanism for the supply of rural public cultural services For a long time, the supply of rural public cultural services is mainly focused on "input", neglecting the development and nurturing of local rural culture^[9]. This supply mode that is incompatible with traditional rural culture, on the one hand, is difficult to meet farmers' preferences and needs^[10]; on the other hand, will result in the shortage of rural local cultural talents, so that the "alien" culture is difficult to take root in rural soil and long-term rural cultural development mode is difficult to take shape, not conducive to the protection of the cultural tradition and cultural heritage with local characteristics.

So, to fundamentally promote the level of rural public cultural services, there is a need to establish endogenous mechanism of rural culture, and vigorously develop the local culture with characteristics. In the long run. It is very necessary to establish the supply mechanism of rural public cultural services combining endogenous nurturing and external "input".

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