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# Practical Significance of Rural Survey of the Communist Party of China after Reform and Opening up

Yan LI, Xiaoe LI, Peng YANG \*

School of Marxism, Northwest A&F University, Yangling 712100, China

**Abstract** Conducting rural social investigation is the excellent tradition of the Communist Party of China. Since the reform and opening up, the Communist Party of China has undertaken several times of rural investigation, fully grasped the first-hand data of rural development situation of China, and formulated scientific policies and measures. These promote tremendous changes in rural development. Rural investigation of the Communist Party of China covers a wide range of topics, including politics, economy, education, science and technology, health care, sanitation, and population. Undertaking detailed investigation in rural areas is of great significance for development of rural society, scientific administration of the Communist Party of China, and the construction of the socialist society with Chinese characteristics.

**Key words** After reform and opening up, Communist Party of China, Rural social investigation, Significance

## 1 Introduction

Investigation and study are work style and traditions of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and are precondition for the Party and the state making correct decisions. As Mao Zedong stated, no investigation, no right to speak, and no correct investigation, no right to speak. The older generation party leaders with Mao Zedong as the representative creatively combined the Marxist principles with China's specific situations, carried out field investigation in rural areas, and led the national people to find a road of encircling the cities from the countryside with Chinese characteristics. Since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, China welcomed the transitional period of development. In the new times, the CPC undertakes new historical mission. Rural social development becomes an essential part of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Detailed investigation of rural social situations and problems has become a necessary precondition and measure for formulating appropriate strategies for rural economic and social development.

## 2 Necessities for rural social investigation

**2.1 Basic national conditions** China has a long history of agricultural society. In the population size, land area, economic development, cultural development, education, health care, and sanitation, the solution to rural issues plays an important role in

promoting China's social development. According to China's urban and rural population ratio, the statistical data of the third national population census in 1982 and the six national population census in 2010 showed that China's rural population is much larger than urban population (as listed in Table 1). Under the huge population pressure, it is particularly necessary for the CPC to solve the problem of rural development and formulate scientific decisions and undertake pertinent rural social investigation. Through rural social investigation, it is expected to fully grasp basic conditions of rural economy, politics, education, medical care, health, science and technology and population. Practice has proved that every correct decision of the CPC is based on detailed social investigation.

**2.2 Profound historical origin** (i) Investigation and study of the CPC with Mao Zedong as the representative. Vigorous development of peasant movement started from 1927. Then, Mao Zedong undertook a 32-day field investigation in rural areas of 5 counties of Hunan Province, and made the Report on Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan. Taking this as the starting point, through the construction of Jinggangshan Revolutionary Base Area, Xunwu investigation, Xingguo investigation, the CPC former leaders fully grasped the first-hand objective data and made an overall analysis of problems of China and formulated scientific policies using Marxist views and methods on the basis of actual situations of China. Such valuable spiritual wealth has important reference for the CPC's rural social investigation since the reform and opening up. (ii) Investigation and study of Chinese Rural School with Chen Hansheng and Xue Muqiao as representatives. Chinese Rural School adhered to the Marxist position, views, and methods, made an overall analysis on China's agricultural, rural area, and farmer issues, and demonstrated China's rural semi-colonial and semi-feudal social nature with the first-hand agricultural investigation data, and pointed out China's agricultural development road [2]. The establishment of Association of Chinese Rural Construction Research not only provides detailed data for China's rural eco-

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\* Corresponding author. E-mail: 18821657725@163.com

conomic development, but also provides reference for general investigation and sampling investigation. (iii) The rural investigation organized by the National Government, such as Rural Revival Committee undertook the investigation in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Henan, Shaanxi, Guangxi, and Yunnan, and Xiao Zhengyu from

Central Political School carried out an investigation in 180 counties of 19 provinces<sup>[3]</sup>. In addition, there are rural investigations undertaken by research institutions such as Zhongshan Cultural Education Center and Beiping Social Investigation Institute, and scholars such as Fei Xiaotong, and some foreign research institutions<sup>[4]</sup>.

**Table 1 China's urban and rural population ratio since the reform and opening up<sup>[1]</sup>**

Year	1982	1987	1990	2001	2010
Percentage of urban residents to the national population//%	20.6	37.1	26.23	36.09	49.68
Percentage of rural residents to the national population//%	79.4	62.9	73.77	63.91	50.32

### 2.3 Scientific basis for formulating appropriate decisions

Before the foundation of new China, (i) *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* by Mao Zedong laid a foundation for the later resolution of the leadership of the new democratic revolution; *Report on Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan* was made on the basis of the first-hand data of peasant movement and proved reasonable and practical attribute of peasant revolution, and laid a solid theoretical basis for peasant movement. On the basis of investigation of counties in Jiangxi and Hunan, Mao Zedong wrote *Why Is It That Red Political Power Can Exist in China* and *A Single Spark can Start a Prairie Fire*, pointed out that Chinese revolutionary road of countryside encircling urban areas. Xunwu Investigation and Xingguo Investigation revealed the old land relation, land distribution, and revolutionary armed situation of rural areas. (ii) *Reform Our Study, Rectify the Party's Style of Work, Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing*, and *Decision of the CPC on Investigation and Study* stressed the importance of rural social investigation. Works such as *On Protracted War*, *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*, and *On New Democracy* guided constant development of Chinese revolution and success of new democratic revolution. (iii) *The Present Situation and Our Tasks*, *Speech at a Conference of Cadres in the Shansi-Suiyuan Liberated Area*, and *We Must Learn to Do Economic Work* further elaborated economic program of new democratic period and strategies and tactics and basic guidelines of the period of War of Liberation<sup>[5]</sup>.

Since the reform and opening up: in April 1978, Xiangxiang County party committee made the report *Carefully Implementing Rural Policies of the Party and Making Effort to Reduce Farmers' Burden* on the basis of the investigation of Xiangxiang County. In June 1978, Provincial party committee of Shaanxi made a report of the investigation and treatment opinions of coercion and command and violation of laws and regulations of some cadres of Xunyi County. These two reports attracted attention of central government to rural issues and laid foundation for production contracted to the team and production contracted to household. Wan Li, Zhao Ziyang, Hu Yaobang and other national leaders carried out in-depth investigation of areas implementing the production contracted to the team and production contracted to household, and studied the effect. Later, the issue of the five "No. 1 documents" marked the establishment of the household contract responsibility system and collective ownership of land in China. In 2005, China cancelled the agricultural tax and implemented the policy of three rural issues, and constantly explored a new road suitable for China's rural reform development.

### 2.4 New situation since the reform and opening up

Since the reform and opening up, the establishment of ideological line of seeking truth from facts attracted attention of excellent tradition again. (i) From the ideological point of view, the discussion about the standard of truth liberated the ideology of national people. (ii) From main points of work since the reform and opening up, the establishment of the line centered on economic construction urgently requires the CPC to make in-depth investigation, so as to formulate scientific decisions. (iii) Rural issues of China urgently need to be solved. The long-term rigidity of rural economic system left by the Cultural Revolution, communist wind, and serious equalitarianism, as well as strict unified and fixed state purchase, led to lingering of agricultural production in a long time. "Left" dogmatism and "taking the class struggle as the key link" made the CPC and the state lack understanding and grasp of actual situations of rural areas.

## 3 Contents and characteristics of rural social investigation of the CPC since the reform and opening up

### 3.1 Contents of rural social investigation of the CPC since the reform and opening up

**3.1.1 Rural economic investigation.** Since the reform and opening up, China has formulated the basic line centering on the economic construction. At that time, faced with the situation of backward economy and culture and 800 million farmers in 1.1 billion people, it was particularly necessary to carry out comprehensive and detailed economic investigation. The contents of the rural economic investigation include: agricultural production investigation, agricultural market investigation, agricultural economic structure investigation<sup>[6]</sup>. China's nationwide agricultural census started in 1997 and was scheduled to be conducted every 10 years. Through the national agricultural census, China got a comprehensive understanding and grasp of the operation of China's rural economy, which provided a lot of scientific basis for formulating agricultural and rural economic policies. In addition, there are provinces and cities carrying out regional agricultural economic investigation, there are also investigations of agricultural production structure, agricultural commercialization, agricultural economic resources, and rural economic organization form.

**3.1.2 Rural political investigation.** Rural political investigation includes rural policy investigation, rural social security investigation, and rural villager political life investigation. Rural political investigation plays a vital role in rural investigation. Through the rural policy investigation, it is able to make scientific feedback and

timely grasp of policy implementation, policy implementation effect, and policy improvement space, so that the state can promptly adjust rural policies.

**3.1.3 Rural education investigation.** If the education is strong, the country will be strong. For rural areas, the education development is always a priority work of the CPC in rural areas. According to the third national population census data in 1982, China's illiteracy accounted for 23.5% of the total population of the country; Institute of Population and Labor Economics of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Social Sciences Academic Press jointly published *Green Paper on Population and Labor in 2009*, and China's nine-year compulsory education popularization rate has realized that the illiteracy rate of 95% of young and middle-aged dropped to below 5%<sup>[7]</sup>. Since rural areas are backward in economic development, China should provide support in funds and teachers, to promote development of rural education.

**3.1.4 Rural science and technology investigation.** Agricultural modernization is the current trend of China's agricultural development, while science and technology is the first productivity. The development of agricultural science and technology is an important engine promoting transformation of China's extensive agriculture to intensive agriculture. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out agricultural science and technology investigation, get a comprehensive understanding and grasp of development and application of agricultural science and technology, formulate proper rural scientific research policies, and promote reform of rural science and technology, so as to effectively save labor and material and promote development of China's agricultural mechanization, agricultural modernization.

**3.1.5 Rural sanitation investigation.** Medical care and sanitation concern the people's livelihood. Sanitation conditions in rural areas and the construction of medical facilities are relatively weak. It is necessary to investigate medical care and sanitation, medical devices, and professional personnel, and diseases in rural areas, to grasp basic situations of medical care and sanitation conditions in different regions of rural areas. On the basis of full investigation, China established a new rural cooperative medical system mainly based on comprehensive arrangement for serious diseases in October 2002, to realize basic coverage of new rural cooperative medical system in all rural residents in 2010.

**3.1.6 Rural population investigation.** The investigation of the rural population includes the investigation of the birth rate of the rural population, the investigation of the rural labor force, the investigation of the rural population quality, the investigation of transfer of rural labor, the investigation of rural aging, and investigation of rural social hollowing. China's first and second population census was carried out before the reform and opening up. From the third national population census in 1982, China has established a periodical census system. As of the sixth national population census in 2010, China's rural residents living in rural areas were 674149546, accounting for 50.32% of the total population<sup>[8]</sup>. It is of great significance to investigate the rural population for reflecting the development of urbanization in rural areas, marriage and childbirth in rural areas, and the development of rural society in rural areas.

## **3.2 Characteristics of rural social investigation of the CPC**

**3.2.1 Special characteristics of investigation subjects.** (i) Dis-

tinctive ideology. The Communist Party of China itself has a distinct class attribute and always represents the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people. This determines that the rural investigation carried out by the CPC has distinctive class attribute. Different from rural investigation carried out by other social organizations, such investigation is intended to satisfy benefits of vast majority of people, to get overall understanding and grasp of rural social development situation, so as to formulate scientific policies or regulations benefiting rural areas and farmers, to realize the grand objective of building a moderately prosperous society, and promote the development of socialist society with Chinese characteristics. (ii) The continuity and inheritance of history. The Communist Party of China has a long history of rural investigation and has accumulated wealth of experience in the investigation process. In the principle of investigation, it is required to adhere to the guiding ideology of Marxism and the principle of seeking truth from facts, stick to the mass line and mass viewpoint, and stick to proceeding from the reality. In the purpose of investigation, the CPC insists on applying results of investigation into actual work. (iii) The investigation is gradually institutional and legalized. Periodic census system: since 1997, China's agricultural census was carried out every 10 years. Later, it was carried out in the year with the single figure of 6. The periodical investigation is helpful for comprehensively understanding the basic situation of agriculture, countryside and farmers. Besides, it is also able to give consideration to huge task of national census, and maximally save manpower and material resources. Gradual improvement in the legal system: organizations with State Statistics Bureau as the lead have established a complete set of legal system framework, including social investigation law, statistical laws and regulations, local statistical regulations, statistical investigation. Scientific statistical indicators and data processing methods are also gradually applied in rural investigation.

### **3.2.2 Special characteristics of investigation objects.**

(i) The complexity of rural regional distribution. First of all, from the distribution of rural areas in China, there are obvious differences in natural conditions and social conditions between China's eastern, central and western regions. Therefore, when conducting rural investigations, it is necessary to adopt different investigation methods according to local conditions. (ii) Rural investigation is highly seasonal. Agricultural production is highly seasonal, which requires investigators to fully grasp and understand the maturity of crops in rural society, make full use of the slack season, detail the investigation tasks, make reasonable arrangements to greatly improve the investigation efficiency. (iii) Rural investigation is long term and arduous. The contents of the rural social investigation are different, such as investigation of urbanization rate, the destruction of ecological environment in rural areas, and investigation of rural hollowing. These investigations are not carried out overnight, but rather shall be carried out in a long time. Therefore, it is necessary to make long term preparation before rural investigation. The differences in the cultural quality of the investigation objects, backward communication services and data processing equipment in rural areas, as well as rejection of farmers to investigation, make the rural investigation become more and more difficult.

#### 4 Significance of rural investigation by the CPC

(i) Developing rural social investigation is a concrete manifestation of the basic principles of historical materialism. There is no right to speak without investigation. Since the reform and opening up, China has established the guiding ideology of seeking truth from facts, and adhering to the Marxist historical materialism is the basic precondition and necessary basis for ensuring scientific practice. (ii) Rural investigation is an important basis for the Chinese Communist Party to formulate scientific decisions and promote rural social development. Since the reform and opening up, there have been enormous changes in rural areas of China. The investigation of new situation of rural social development is a basic precondition for formulating rural policies and solving three rural issues. The establishment of the household contract responsibility system has greatly promoted the development of rural social productive forces and summoned the enthusiasm of farmers. Practice has proved that strengthening investigation and study is a fundamental way for formulating policies for promoting rural economy and social coordinated development<sup>[9]</sup>. (iii) Carrying out rural social investigation is an important engine for promoting the development of rural sociological theory. Since the introduction of rural sociology in China in the 1920s, the development of its theory has undergone a long process of development. A lot of practice has proved that rural social investigation is the source of rural sociology theory and the only way for

testing the theory of rural sociology, and also provides an important theoretical support for other disciplines.

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