

# The Party's Understanding and Enlightenment of Farmers' Subjectivity in Yan'an Period

Xingping Lu

School of Marxism, Yan'an University, Yan'an, 716000, China  
237615620@qq.com

**Abstract:** *The basic problem of the Chinese revolution is the peasant problem, especially since modern times, the key to the success or failure of each movement to save the nation for survival or revolution, and whether the main role of the peasantry has been brought into full play, has an inevitable connection. During the Yan'an period, the Chinese Communists represented by Mao Zedong not only deeply recognized the importance of the peasant problem, but also closely integrated the characteristics of the peasants, established and improved the peasant regime, and ensured the peasants' subjectivity. This has also provided good experience and inspiration for the victory of China's new democratic revolution, the many achievements made over the past 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the promotion of farmers' subjectivity in the new era.*

**Keywords:** *Yan'an Period; Peasant Subjectivity; Cognition; Experience.*

## 1. Introduction

During the Yan'an period, after the baptism of two civil revolutionary wars, Mao Zedong's peasant view was relatively mature and developed, becoming an important content of Mao Zedong Thought and an important ideological weapon for the victory of the New People's Revolution.

## 2. The Historical Distortion of Peasants' Subjective Status and the Explanation of the Concept of Change in the CPC's Cognition

From ancient times to the present, the peasant class has always occupied the majority of the total population of China. They are directly engaged in agricultural production and have also created agricultural material wealth. At the same time, the peasant class is also the group with the greatest potential social energy. As Huntington pointed out, "the role of the countryside is variable: it is either a source of stability or a source of revolution", and "once the countryside acts as an opposition The role of the political system and the government is in danger of being subverted" [1]. In particular, the thousands of years of peasant uprisings in China have repeatedly proved that the peasant class has always been the protagonist of "official forcing the people to rebel". However, whether peasants acted as the source of revolution, whether they became the main driving force for social progress and development, or whether they continued to enter the vicious circle of constant changes of feudal dynasties, fundamentally depended on the degree of mobilization and integration of the peasant class.

In the long feudal society, the identity and status of peasants changed constantly. These changes also contributed to the formation of "farm culture". Due to its huge audience and its influence on social life, it has formed a very common cultural force other than Confucian orthodox culture. However, due to the attributes of class and overall social status, coupled with the conservative, decentralized and closed nature of peasant groups, the source of cultural elements lacks systematicness and is generally in a weak position of subordination. This has directly led to the indifference and weakening of the peasants' subjectivity by the ruling class. Since ancient times, the Confucian scholar class has promoted the theory of ignorance of the people with the argument that "the people can be made to do so but cannot be made to know". Although this idea of "fooling the people" may not be the original intention of Confucius, the ruling classes of all dynasties are also happy to give it the meaning of "fooling the people" out of their own interests. It can be seen from this that not only did ancient China not pay attention to the subjectivity of farmers, but even propagating the idea of "people-oriented" would not substantially improve the social status of farmers. Even since entering modern times, revolutions led by government officials and the bourgeoisie have repeatedly ended in failure. The main reason is the political and cultural neglect of the

peasant class and peasant family culture, which has directly led to their A revolution cannot mobilize the broad masses of the people, especially the peasant class, who has an absolute advantage in population, to identify with its governing ideas and revolutionary ideas.

As the first-generation leadership core of the Communist Party of China, Mao Zedong attached great importance to the issue of Chinese peasants in his long-term revolutionary struggle practice. In his article "The National Revolution and the Peasant Movement", he put forward the famous thesis that "the peasant problem is the central problem of the national revolution". He not only made full use of the theory of the peasant problem in Marxism to guide the actual development of the Chinese revolution at that time, but also deeply integrated it with the subjectivity of Chinese peasants. It has been widely supported and actively participated in by the peasant class.

However, the CPC's understanding of peasants' subjectivity also has a tortuous and complicated process. In the early leadership of the party, although Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao were able to discover the great power hidden in the peasant class, especially Chen Duxiu's "Two Manifesto" clearly stated It is pointed out that "China's 300,000,000 peasants are the biggest factor in the revolutionary movement." [2]. Li Dazhao even used "urgent" [3] to describe the urgency of developing rural power. However, the mainstream concept within the party is still inclined towards the workers' urban revolution, and the mobilization of peasant power is still relatively secondary to the solution of the peasant problem. Especially when the revolutionary situation changed, the balance of power between the two sides was very different, and the Comintern's policy towards the Chinese revolution changed repeatedly, all of which caused our party to fail to form a scientific decision on the subjectivity and status of farmers. After 1927, the Chinese Communist Party, which suffered heavy losses in the urban revolution, summed up its historical experience and gradually shifted the focus of the revolution from the cities to the countryside, and from the central area ruled by the reactionary groups to the relatively safe and easy-to-develop peripheral areas, so that the The main participants of the revolution extended from the knowledge group to the vast peasantry, mobilized the peasants with concise slogans, widely disseminated the Party's ideals, purposes and propositions among the peasants, and through the implementation of land reform, fully guaranteed the means of production of the peasantry, and The peasants' desire to meet the needs of life has sublimated into the ideological consciousness and action consciousness of transforming history, thus inspiring revolutionary energy like a huge wave and a torrent.

### **3. The Development of the Party's Understanding of the Main Body Status of Farmers in Yan'an Period**

During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the Party's understanding of the status and role of the peasants in winning the overall victory in the War of Resistance and realizing the great victory of the Chinese revolution has been further sublimated. During the Yan'an period, the main contradiction in China had become the contradiction between the Chinese nation and Japanese militarism. Our party's concept and thinking on the main position of farmers have also been completely adjusted. Mao Zedong published a series of treatises on the new-democratic revolution in late 1939 and early 1940, which fully reflected this sublimation of understanding. , is the peasant war under the leadership of the proletariat" [4] "The close relationship between the Party and the peasant war is the relationship between the Party and the peasantry" [5] "The steadfast ally of the proletariat is the peasantry"; [6] "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party" systematically divides the peasants into three categories, pointing out that the peasants are "Mainly refers to the poor and middle peasants", [7] holding that "the middle peasants can not only participate in the anti-imperialist revolution and the agrarian revolution, but also accept socialism", [8] while "(the poor peasants) are the most powerful driving force of the Chinese revolution" [9] and "the proletariat's The natural and most reliable ally is the main force of the Chinese revolutionary ranks." [10] For the rich peasants, he also changed the relatively "leftist" policy thinking in the past, believing that "the production of the rich peasants is still beneficial for a certain period of time. The rich peasants generally It is possible for the peasant masses to take part in the struggle against imperialism." While seeing the limitations of the kulaks, it also affirmed the progressive aspects of the kulaks' existence. "New Democracy" points out that "the politics of New Democracy is essentially empowering the peasants" and "to educate the peasants and other masses with socialism in a proper and step-by-step manner". the right to education. In 1945, when the Anti-Japanese War was about to be won, Mao Zedong pointed out in "On the Coalition Government" that the peasants "are the predecessors of Chinese workers", "the main body of the Chinese industrial market", "the source of the Chinese army" and "the mainstay of China's democratic politics at this stage". power" and "the main object of the Chinese cultural movement at this stage". The concept and conception of further strengthening the dominant position of farmers from the political, economic, military, cultural and other aspects are drawn up.

#### 4. The Development and Contribution of Farmers' Subjectivity in Yan'an Period

As someone pointed out, "It was under the correct guidance of Mao Zedong's views on peasants during the Yan'an period that the masses of peasants were mobilized, organized, and armed to become a powerful main force, which played an important role in the overall victory of the War of Resistance.". In terms of specific results, it is mainly reflected in the following four aspects:

The first is the political level. In the Kuomintang-controlled areas and the occupied areas, the peasants belonged to the ruled class and were subjected to Japanese puppet politics. Those who are discriminated and oppressed by the Kuomintang regime and the Kuomintang regime, regardless of political rights such as the right to vote and the right to stand for election, are nothing short of fantasy for them. In the border regions and other revolutionary base areas under the leadership of the Party, it is a different picture. The Party and the government regard farmers as the "main force" of China's new democratic revolution, and by guaranteeing their political rights, they can fully mobilize their enthusiasm, initiative and creativity, and enhance their sense of "ownership".

To protect and enhance the political enthusiasm of farmers. In response to the low cultural level of most farmers and the closed and difficult living environment, the Party has carried out extensive propaganda, mobilization, and organization through various channels. Social drama, storytelling and other popular methods and methods to guide farmers to continuously improve their political awareness, political consciousness and political enthusiasm, so that they can gradually understand their own destiny and future, and the domestic and international situation at that time. The route policy is closely related. Further education guides the vast number of farmers to feel that the question of running for election and who to elect is not optional.

While arousing the enthusiasm of the public, the Party and the government also formulated election conditions and rules in line with the characteristics of farmers. In November 1941, at the second session of the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region Council, the new "Regulations on the Election of Councils at All Levels in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region" were passed. The new electoral regulations have made provisions that are more in line with the characteristics of farmers in terms of electoral principles, electoral qualifications, and electoral methods. In addition, the party and government actively mobilized farmers to participate in elections directly. In order to facilitate farmers' participation in elections, the Party and the border area government have thought of many election methods, such as allowing farmers to participate in elections by using the red and green ballot method, the bean voting method, the arm-first method, the drawing circle method, the drawing bar method, and the cigarette butt burning method. , and some adopted the method of voting in turns, the method of voting from door to door, and the method of voting by door-to-door to encourage farmers to participate in elections. Among these methods, the red-green vote method and the bean voting method are more commonly used.

In addition, the party and government encouraged farmers to supervise the work of cadres. The "Regulations on the Councils of Senators at All Levels in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region" mentioned above stipulates: "If senators at all levels are incompetent during their term of office, more than one-tenth of the legal residents may be elected by the senators at all levels. It is proposed to remove him through voting by the electoral unit. For example: The county councillor election is based on a township. If the county councillor is not good, and one-tenth of the voters who have the proportion of the original residents of the township propose to remove him, an election meeting can be held to vote. Decide whether to remove or not, and if the majority approves the removal, the replacement member will be succeeded." [7]

The above-mentioned measures have accumulated a lot of experience in our party's ruling process, and also provided a rich practical basis for the establishment and improvement of the political system and supervision system after the founding of New China.

The second is the military level. During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, especially after the Lugouqiao Incident, the national war of resistance entered a stage where the frontal battlefield echoed the battlefield behind the enemy. The peasants continued to replenish the army with troops. No matter in frontal battlefield or in the battlefield behind enemy lines, peasants continued to replenish troops for the army. During the Yan'an period, the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army under the leadership of the party continued to grow. As Commander-in-Chief Zhu De said, "There are thousands of troops and thousands of people with guns. Who are they? They are the people, and most of them are peasants." [5] From less than 30,000 people in northern Shaanxi, the main force of the Red Army, to the end of the Anti-Japanese War, the number of people's armies (the Eighth Route Army, the New Fourth Army, and the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla in South China) led by the Party increased to more

than 1.31 million, which fully demonstrates the broad peasants' national united front against Japan. Consistent with the strong leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, while directly participating in regular army operations, a large number of county brigades, district teams and other armed peasants cooperated with the regular army to fight. The army, the militia and the anti-Japanese guerrillas were soldiers who defended their homeland and the country in wartime, and they were the bearers of agricultural production in peacetime, making the vast peasants in the base areas the builders and defenders of the anti-Japanese base areas. In November 1941, Commander-in-Chief Zhu De fully emphasized the huge role of the peasant armed forces when summarizing the experience of the Anti-Japanese War, and affirmed that the militia was a "broad mass armed organization" and "is to cooperate and supplement the regular army in the war of resistance behind the enemy, defend and The important foundation for consolidating the base areas is the strongest reserve army to support the long and massive war behind enemy lines." [6] Comrade Deng Xiaoping also pointed out, "Without the local mass armed forces, the basic guerrillas will "dance naked" and finally cannot exist." [7] It is worth mentioning that the peasant-based militia team sometimes engages in production and sometimes participates in battles, simultaneously undertaking tasks such as production, reconnaissance, harassing the enemy, and covering the masses, and pays attention to independent operations and their cooperation with the main force to fight and blockade. With siege enemy strongholds, fight against small groups of Japanese troops and traitors. It can be said that the militia is a major innovation of our party in the military field of the Yan'an period to highlight the subjectivity of farmers. It also inherited the military philosophy of Sun Tzu's "Taoist makes the people agree with the superior. So, you can die with them, you can live with them, and you are not afraid of danger", which also reflects our party's "soldier and people are the foundation of victory". The conclusion is the product of our party's combination of the excellent history and culture of the Chinese nation and the reality of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. From 1941 onwards, the number of militias behind enemy lines developed rapidly. By August 1944, the total number of militias had grown to 2.13 million in only two battlefields behind enemy lines in North China and Central China. This fully shows that the subjectivity of the peasants guarantees the unity of the soldiers and the people, which is not only the foundation of victory in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, but also lays a solid mass foundation for the liberation of the whole country.

The third is the economic level. In the early days of the Yan'an period, our party made a preliminary exploration of farmers as the main participants of the social economy. Edgar Snow visited Yan'an and the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region as early as 1936. The socio-economic platform is the key to the close relationship between the revolutionary party and those peasants who put land, food and survival first because of extreme poverty. When Snow came to Yan'an, it was before the Lugouqiao Incident. At that time, the agricultural economy in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border area was extremely backward. Harsh environments such as warlord melee over the years have caused great damage to productivity. After the "July 7th Incident" in 1937, under a relatively peaceful environment for more than a year, the Party Central Committee implemented a policy of recuperating and recuperating people's strength, encouraging the development of productive forces, and improving the agricultural situation. However, due to the harsh natural conditions and the relative lack of production tools, the quantity and quality of agricultural products are not high, and the overall level of agricultural economy is limited. With the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the agricultural development in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border area was led by the rationalization of rural production relations. The implementation of the policy of "reducing rent and interest" greatly aroused the enthusiasm of farmers for production activities, and also protected the landlords and rich peasants. The interests of the peasants eased the contradictions between the peasants and the landlords, the productivity was improved, and the peasants' enthusiasm for production was high. Second, mutual assistance and cooperation were carried out to integrate the labor force. At the same time, the central government also implemented policies such as developing animal husbandry, promoting cotton planting technology, developing wasteland, increasing agricultural loans, and improving production efficiency, which ensured a great improvement in farmers' living standards and produced positive results. After visiting Yan'an in 1944, American Xie Weiss also believed that the basis of farmers' support for the CCP was that the CCP's social and economic platform was democratic, that is, to take care of the interests of the majority.

The fourth is the level of ideological education. During the Yan'an period, the internal and external situations caused the party to face many practical difficulties and problems that needed to be dealt with urgently. During this period, the party's ideological and political education work for peasants must highlight the main line of the party's revolutionary task, so as to better adapt to the severe and complex revolution. Struggle situation and realistic environmental requirements. This also led directly to the fact that the Party's ideological education work for farmers during the Yan'an period was fully embodied in the characteristics of political, people and pertinence.

As the primary characteristic and fundamental principle of the party's education for the masses, especially the vast number of farmers, political nature can be fully reflected in the ideological and political education work carried out by the party for farmers during the Yan'an period. The Yan'an period was the entire period of the full-scale Anti-Japanese War, and it was also a critical period for the Chinese Revolutionary War to achieve victory. Victory in the Anti-Japanese War and the War of Liberation was the revolutionary goal of the Chinese Communists leading the broad masses of peasants to fight bloody battles during this period. Politically educate and guide, and mobilize the broad masses of peasants, arming their minds with the standpoints, viewpoints and methods of Marxism and scientific materialism, so that they deeply realize that the party's revolutionary cause is connected with their interests, let them identify with ideology, accept emotionally, and support the party's leadership and the party's political program in action. Through in-depth and meticulous peasant ideological and political education work, the Party continuously and repeatedly educates the peasant masses, cultivates their class consciousness, awakens their political consciousness, and then stimulates their revolutionary enthusiasm and promotes the success of the revolutionary cause. Activities are necessary for the times, we must adhere to the correct guidance of Marxist theory and carry out general ideological and political education activities. from the perspective of the party's method of ideological and political education for farmers during the Yan'an period.

During the Yan'an period, the Party went deep into the vast rural areas, adhered to the mass line and the masses' viewpoint in its work methods, and resolved their practical difficulties from the immediate interests of the broad masses of peasants, reflecting the people's nature of the Party's work methods. In view of the severe revolutionary situation in this period, the ideological and cultural level and spiritual outlook of the peasant masses, and to achieve the goal of mobilizing the broad masses of the peasants and awakening the masses' consciousness of resistance and class consciousness that have been gradually dormant due to long-term oppression, the Party adopted the methods that the peasant masses liked and heard. For example, through film propaganda, yangko, speeches at gatherings, song lyrics, etc., the Party's policies and spirit are instilled into the vast peasant masses. During this period, the Party helped the peasant masses to clearly understand the severity and urgency of the revolutionary situation through the ideological and political education of the masses, analyzed the vital interests of the broad masses of peasants involved in the revolution, and made them clearly realize that only the Communist Party can Only by saving the nation from peril can we defend the material interests and political rights of the broad masses of peasants and help them be their own masters.

## 5. The era requirements of promoting farmers' subjectivity in the new era

Since the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, the level of economic and technological development has been greatly improved, and the ideological and moral level, social morality, professional ethics and cultural quality of the people have been significantly improved. Compared with the past few decades, my country's agriculture, rural areas and farmers have long since changed their appearance. The material life and economic conditions of the countryside have been greatly improved. The ideological and moral concepts and spiritual outlook of farmers, as well as their yearning and desire for a better life, have also changed. However, with the development of society, there are still unbalanced and insufficient regional development in rural and peasant areas of our country, relatively weak political awareness and concepts, and bad habits such as local clan concepts, feudal old-fashioned ideas and superstition in some places. Therefore, in order to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, promote and realize rural revitalization, and consolidate and expand the achievements of poverty alleviation. We must pay attention to the subject status and subject consciousness of the contemporary peasant groups, learn from the rich experience of the Communist Party of China in peasant education, mobilization and guidance work during the Yan'an period, innovatively inherit and creatively develop the farmers' subject consciousness education and work experience in the Yan'an period, in order to solve the contemporary "three agriculture" issue, promote rural revitalization and ensure sustainable development, give full play to the leadership and role of politics in the party's work on "agriculture, rural areas and farmers", continuously strengthen the ties with the peasant masses, and consolidate and expand the party's grassroots level, especially in rural areas. To achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, we will accumulate vigorous power.

## References

[1] Huntington: *"The Political Order in a Changing Society"* [M], Huaxia Publishing House, 1988

edition.

[2] *“Selected Works of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (1)”* [M], Central Party School Press, 1989.

[3] Li Dazhao: *“Selected Works of Li Dazhao”* [M], People's Publishing House, 1959.

[4] Literature Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong (Volume II)* [M], People's Publishing House, 1991.

[5] Literature Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong (Volume III)* [M], People's Publishing House, 1991.

[6] Gao Zhenyang: *“Research on Mao Zedong's View on Peasants in Yan'an Period”* [D], Henan University of Science and Technology 2015 Master's Thesis.

[7] The Literature Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Central Archives: *“Selected and compiled important literature since the founding of the party (Volume 19)”* [M], Central Literature Publishing House, 2011.

[8] The Literature Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China: *“Selected Works of Zhu De”* [M], People's Publishing House, 1983, p. 157.

[9] The Literature Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China: *“Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (Volume 1)”* [M], People's Publishing House, 1994.

[10] See Mark Selden: *Why Did They Win? —Reflections on the relationship between the CCP and the peasants*, edited by the Department of History of Nankai University: *“Chinese and Foreign Scholars Discuss the Anti-Japanese Base Areas”* [M], Archives Press, 1993 edition, p. 608.