Development of Land or of People?
Peasants’ Role in Land Reforms for Equal rights in Yangzi Villages, 1950s

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Case Villages (su, de) in the Yangzi Delta (blue core)
Abstract

Social movements feature China’s 1950s-80s transition, a crucial drive of which is the extrinsic conceptual modernity, firstly developed in western Europe. After the downfall of the Emperor- bureaucratic structure in 1912, Chinese peasants, as the principal member of “the People”, went up on the stage of world history, which put the land reforms at the center place of Chinese social revolutions. Due to the divergence on stakeholders’ value judgments, Chinese peasants experienced the variable rural land reforms in the three decades. To examine the role of peasants -- a passive (development of land) or an active existence (development of people) --in this process, we investigate two Yangzi Delta villages, where the western influence and inland Chinese impact met, from a waking-dreaming frontier perspective. The keywords include Waking, Dreaming, and Transition.

My point is interaction matters. The popular end-of-peasantry practice in China display the resistance and mislearning of core experience. Peasants are active in the Exodus of Chinese. The 1950s Maoist land reforms found the way out with a peasantry strategy. In 1920s-50s, Chinese Peasants’ land dream of Chinese Peasants waked the Soviet (superiority of state-owned property) dream, which led to the foundation of the People’s Republic. While in 1950s-80s, the waking-dream transition went into the next round. A reform is difficult in densely connected, directed intention nets that have many hidden layers (deep structure), which need a deep learning process focusing on frontier context and waking-dreaming actors. No matter how sophisticated a conceptual construction is, if beyond the historical stage, the local context and the global trend, it would turn out to be a fond delusion.

Keywords: Peasant, Transition, Land reform, Waking-Dreaming frontier, Equality

Water Web of the Yangzi Delta (Feng 2008)  Time Structure of Peasant Livelihood (Ibid.)
1. Introduction

A venerable question of Chinese economic history is why China did not achieve the sustained fast growth in late imperial period (1368-1912) when Europe made it. While a new question is why Chinese Economy was able to take-off in late 1980s. So what happened in the 1950-centered half century is worth noting when considering why the China’s transition is so viscous. The prevailing perspective is to find what China introduced from the West. However, as Vanhaute (2012) suggests, we had better consider if processes of the core can be copied and pasted in Chinese constraints, as well as the structure of world power game.

As a rarely huge-scale populous country, China, especially the the Yangzi Delta (YD) as a competitive proto-industrial center, had been benefited from the silk-silver convection (Suzhou, Huzhou, Jiaxing, Hangzhou) and cotton cloth trade (Suzhou, Shanghai (Songjiang, Jiading)) before incorporated into the western world system. The new game rule was disadvantageous for the social stability because the new world division of labor subverted the Yangzi peasant livelihood on land and led to continuous domestic conflicts since 1850s. On the other hand, the elites soon found it an opportunity of self-strengthening by learning from the West. The Western Europe became the prima rival and coach1 in the twentieth-century transition2 of China. The theoretical and practical progresses are made in the integration of learning (ins), forgetting (screening), and narrating (outs).

Since the western impact was so sharp and fundamental, China should have been modernized as soon as possible; however, the trajectory is not simply westwards. The advanced Shanghai (in the Yangzi Delta, YD) failed to change China, while the conservative rural China peasants changed the modern Shanghai after 1949. To date, China has not handled the relationship with the west world enough well. Ironically, as to the 1950s-rural land reform, the powerful Mao, who criticized his contemporary intellectuals’ “Greece” thinking (beyond context), also failed to insist on the “seek truth from facts”. These facts are somewhat embarrassing for the

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1 To struggle for the lost wealth, power or recognition in the world, China has to promote her technological and social capability. Mao Tse-dung (Jan.1940. On New Democracy) argues “China cannot possibly gain her independence without the assistance of the land of socialism and the international proletariat.” To gain competitive capability as to re-rise, China has to rebuild the matter incentive- information system (learning process) by new governing (state-building). To sum up, the evolution chain is governing- aim - policy process --social and industrial structure- productivity of man and land (resources and information).

2 I define transition as the process of migrating concepts, technologies, social capabilities by imitating or innovation (knowledge) from outside to change inside. Knowledge that can make difference are information (on context); while applying information in the construction of inner environment is capability (in actor). It refers to changes in (social and individual capability) structure and processes from the current state to the more desirable state; At individual level, it means the learning of new way (thinking, working, and living), especially the price determination process. At macro level, it implies development. While the waking-dreaming game bridge the individual learning and social development.
end-of-history followers, but interesting for the end-of-modernity\textsuperscript{3} post-modernists. This paper is to discuss why the transition is so viscous and how the viscosity is diluted. Or what tension exists among the west-east chain (UK/DE - USA /USSR -JP/CN) and the elites (influenced by various west ideologies) -peasant context, and how it is alleviated. What is the historical role of peasants in this restructure process? To analyze this question, we investigated the peasants livelihood by examining land reforms, since land problems are the central concern of peasant movements, in 1950s-80s Yangzi Delta. As mentioned above, the YD is a crucial confluence of China and the West, where both the physical and conceptual rivers surging and tossing. Under Mao, the rural Yangzi was blocked from the outer world to a large extent. This is helpful for us to distinguish the Chinese inertia and the west influence, and to observe the complex interaction of them. Besides that, the rich data and previous studies about the Delta are beneficial to keeping this case study “seeking truth from facts”.

Following Vanhaute (2012), we define peasants as members of rural, agricultural households who a) control and work on the land, either as tenants or as smallholders (land use|tech-, eco-constraints); b) are organized in household-based communities that meet a large part of their subsistence needs (production, exchange, credit, protection); c) pool income flexibly from land, labor, and exchange; and d) are ruled by outside social groups (land governance, power structure, or who matters in transition) that extract a surplus either via rents, via (unbalanced) market transfers, or through control of state power (taxation) (interest groups, who get what).

Recap: Peasant Yangzi Delta is a Deep Structure

A deep structure is a multi-layer construct to unify several related structures. Chomsky (cfr. Carlson, Buskist, Heth and Schmaltz 2005: 310-311) notes one could understand "slip of the tongue" moments (where someone says something that he himself did not intend) as instances where deep structures do not translate into the intended surface structure. H.-J. Chang (2002) criticizes it is not rare to hear “do what I said, not what I did”. Our main line is the YD-peasants’ role\textsuperscript{4} in the 1950s-1980s land reforms, an societal restructure process participated

\textsuperscript{3} Zhao Tingyang analyzed in his speech Modern Time is Ending, Global Time is Starting (May 2013), though modernity (market-based economic growth, mature democracy, social security /welfare, formal protection system) has been called the end of history (Francis Fukuyama, 1992. The End of History and the Last Man), we still need to be vigilant. The secular benefits of modernity, including the half-truth market /democratic equality, are obvious, while the painful and harmful effects from it are chronic and abstract. For instance, the solidified interest groups dislike changes, especially in the end of modern time. They skillfully parry the global problems by modern narratives, which cannot handle the globality. He thought “facio[I do] ergo[then] sum[be]” is more fundamental than “cogito [I think] ergo sum” in forming ideas. Facio consists of the interaction between people, between possibilities, between now and future. Existence is meaningful due to possibility, not necessity.

\textsuperscript{4} Hannah Arendt (1963) pointed out it was the equal liberal consciousness that weakened the resistance to (political and economic) oppression, then social economic problems became one of the causes of modern revolution. Without a bourgeoisie or a proletariat capable of carrying the peasantry along after
by Chinese domestic parties (KMT, CCP, and parties in between) and outer forces (at least, the Comintern/ USSR, Japan, USA). All the ins and outs of the events are crucial to the actors’ interplays round after round. Ignoring the western influence will make it impossible to interpret the micro mechanism of the structural changes, let alone the systemic transition. On the other side, the bumbling and torturous process of land and social reforms in 1950-1980s, clearly displayed the Chinese problems⁵, while the imported Marist “class” concepts (class status, class struggle/enemy, one-class dictatorship, etc.) might be a catalytic agent.

After establishing the frontier perspective (Part 2), I will introduce the land reforms practice in a few Yangzi villages to depict the inconsistence in evolution chain (footnote 1) along historical timeline (Part 3); next step is to analyze the gaps’ deep structure by the waking-dreaming frontier perspective (Part 4); and end up with a further thinking on social economic development route (Part 5).

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⁵ Pomeranz (2000:106). “…the use of labor in China, like that of land, conformed to the principles of ‘market economy’…” In the old society, the majority of Chinese peasants, usually controlling a small land, was not personally bounded to landlords. A land asset was marketable and a peasant was free to migrate. Most of the landlords are small farm operator; even big landlords did not have jurisdiction over tenants. This typical “agrarian individualism” (Marc Bloch 1966:197-8) led to an poorly-organized or atomized social structure, in which peasants were tightly connected with household, but little involved with nation-state. The impact on social capability of local community was the lack of local autonomy experience. The emperor bureaucratic system re-created the necessity of its existence.
2. A Frontier Analytic Perspective into the Deep Structure of Development

Although this research is mainly at village level, the stage for the peasants is a global one. Fan Shuzhi (2005: 374-382) pointed out the European Industrial Revolution turned northeast YD from a worldwide cotton cloth industrial center to a rice production area in 1843-67. Liu (1939) attributed the 1850-1920 zenith of Huzhou (southwest YD) silk industry to the increasing European demand. He found 90% of Huzhou peasants keep silkworms and 34.86% of the taxed land is the mulberry field. Around 1921, the income structure of common Huzhou peasant households is about 30% rice and 70% silk. While in 1934, the great depression has reversed the structure as 70% rice and 30% silk. Here the processes of de- and re-peasantization became the outcome of changing strategies of peasant livelihood diversification: decrease of the margins of survival. While the peasant livelihood of the (mountainous) inland area became more vulnerable as well, which sharpened the class conflicts and led to the continuous civil wars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Therefore, to perceive the role of peasantry in global history, I exploited the frontier perspective in my rural community study. Frontiers refers to zones of sustained contact between different world systems. Because China’s transition has been under the pressure of inside and outside environment, which are two different social systems. Due to the same reason, I zoom in the YD, where we can observe the interaction of the Eurocentric world system and the China world clearly. The following literature review is a brief explanation about my choice. As to the development of late countries, progress theories, e.g., institutional and technological analyses are prevailing. Instead of arguing back, my work is complementary to them, therefore, I merely mentioned the related points, not a comprehensive summary.

2.1. Debates on Technological Routes

More on man’s land use productivity, the scholars often zoom in the specific micro problems of peasants’ livelihood. Mao’s development programme, related to the Soviet Marxism, as well as many studies influenced by development economics, accredit the “end of peasantry” can promote the agrarian productivity. While studies on the inverse relationship of the productivity/technical efficiency and farm size challenge the theory of economies of scale.

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6 Vanhaute (2012) argued, peasantries have always been a vital frontier zone. The process of incorporation created flows of surplus extraction, without necessarily dispossessing rural producers of their land and other means of production. The expansion of the capitalist world-system has been fueled by the creation of new social and ecological frontier zones (Hall 2000, Moore 2010). Incorporation in the YD had a significant shock on the rural systems, redirecting them for the aims of extractors. This process was hierarchical/unequal, gradually diminishing the community capacity and peasant livelihood diversification, but also creating new frontiers of interaction and survival.
Environment researchers noticed the externalizing **social and ecological fragility increase** during the modernization or incorporation processes. Fei Xiaotong (1939) considered the **village-town enterprises**, which means peasants can pool diverse incomes at their village, create an inclusive growth route in the Yangzi Delta.

In a global context, Liu Dajun (1939) pointed out the 1930s industrial depression in rural YD was caused by the Great Depression through the world market; and the west competition had turned the YD from a manufacture center to a raw material supplier before the depression. Quan Hansheng (1972, 1986) supported Liu’s points by his studies on China-West trade. Pomeranz (2000) took advantage of these studies in *the Great Divergence*, concluding the Yangzi economic development was not lower than British before 1800. This launched the **involution debates** with P. Huang (1990)\(^7\), which accredits the Yangzi peasants did not find a way out of the high-level equilibrium trap (Mark Elvin) until they started the 1980s rural industrialization. The facts of fertility /demography, land constraints, luxury, interregional trade was discussed to approach the historical truth.

The debates diverge at (under the local constraints, ) how much China can copy the European experience of industry upgrading. The more close to the Chinese context, the less simple imitation of the West. For instance, Li Bozhong (1998) discussed the particularity and reasonability of the YD agriculture (labor-intensive **cropping structure**: rice, cotton, silk), which was supported by Cao Xingsui (1990), Chen Xuewen (1989), Fan Jinmin (2002), etc. Only when the local peasants’ wisdom is respected, eyes to the local context can be sharp and penetrating.

### 2.2. Debates on Institutions Evolution

Institutionalists usually take a (good) market structure (open-access order /capitalism) as an end of societal evolution-- an ever-growing economy. The auxiliary hypotheses are built on **contract** (Coase 1937; Williamson 1985; Milgrom and Roberts 1992; Grief 2005; Cheung, [7]

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\(^7\) In *the European Miracle, Environments, Economies, and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia*, E. L. Jones(1981) argues the 16th -18th Europe had been far ahead of the rest in the accumulation of both physical and human capital. For example, various customary checks on fertility allowed Europe to increase its per capita capital stock over the long haul, which enforced the processes of de-peasantization and capitalization. Pomeranz (2000:11) pointed out such stories often internalize the extraordinary ecological bounty that Europeans gained from the New World, which eased European resources constraints and so made innovation along particular (land-using, energy-using, and labor-saving) paths a fruitful, even self-reinforcing, process -were significant.

\(^8\) Huang’s Yangzi village investigation and methodology is influential and triggered numerous rural investigations in China. More early investigations include the Chinese nationalist, Communist, Japanese invaders, American scholars, etc. For instance, the Economic Survey Institute of Construction Commission (1935), John L. Buck (1937), Japanese South Manchuria Railways Co.(1940), Land Reform Commission under the East China Military and Political Committee (1952).
1969, *The Theory of Share Tenancy* stressed on information and risk; government (North 1981; 1990; Olson 1982; 1993; Levi 1998; Barzel 2001); and cognition, beliefs, and institution (North 2005; Grief 2005). It emphasized the “real-world observation” and has been applied in economic history studies. Social trust (Levy and Spiller 1994), patronage network (Scott 1972), democratic (Barron 1997; Diamond 1992) and governance are also connected with growth. Moreover, Engerman and Sokoloff (2005) emphasizes the persistence of institutions. Acemoglu and Robinson (2005) focuses on elites’ power-sharing, which is related to the North’s limited-access/open-access order; furthermore, in *Why nations fail* (2012), they criticize the extractive state capitalism, though important for the social stability, was inclined to destroy the inclusive social institution because the private sector could balance the state planning if it was strong enough. If a state, either too strong to be balanced would be hostile to private property or too weak to protect rationalizing entrepreneurs (clashed with local customs, clergy, or strongmen), the economic development cannot be achieved.

K. Marx and his school consider capitalism is just a transfer station to communist society, according to the scientific socialism. Class struggle plays a central role in Marxist understanding society's allegedly inevitable development from bourgeois oppression under capitalism to a socialist and ultimately classless society. Lenin's auxiliary theory of colonial exploitation was proved by the arrival and structure of monopolies and other facts (Feyerabend 1976). As well, Rosa Luxemburg's and Trotsky's exploration were close to be “Lakatos-scientific”. Though the 20th century Soviet Marxism in Russia and China was turned out to be a harmful pseudoscience, the wealth of Marxist insights are still helpful for learning from history. For instance, Rober Brenner (1985) interprets divergent development paths within Europe is shaped by class struggles that altered property-rights regimes and

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9 The basic question is Why Europe developed firstly. E. Jones (1981) attributed it to the inter-state competition, Rosenberg and Birdzell (1987) pointed out the autonomy capability of European economic organization. North, Wallis and Weingast argued in *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (2012) that the open-access order is the key, which was advocated by A. Smith in *Wealth of Nations*, and called “capitalism” by Marx in *Kaptial*. On the other side, Goldstone argued back these interpretations in *Why Europe?: The Rise of the West in World History, 1500-1850* (2009). He and R. Bin Wong (*China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience*) stressed on the role of causal factors and suggest we should realize the limit of European experience, which is frequently advocated as the universal route, and respect the diverse and specific local constraints and choices.

10 China is often criticized as a state for profits by land and capital “management” in a capitalist manner, sacrificing workers’ and peasants’ interests. Hu Jintao used “inclusive growth” in his speech at the Fifth APEC Human Resources Development Ministerial Meeting (2010), which implies pro-poor growth, an equitable allocation of resources with benefits incurred to every section of the society, including people access to necessary goods, employment opportunity, capability promotion etc. It focus on decreasing the inequality by structural transformation of the society, meanwhile on the sustainable growth of the economy. [http://www.gov.cn/english/2010-09/16/content_1704109.htm](http://www.gov.cn/english/2010-09/16/content_1704109.htm)
market institution. His arguments led to the “Brenner Debates” (what were the social factors that brought about the major economic transformations of the European economy since the decline of feudalism?).

The ideas mentioned above take European experiences as the compass and depict convergent processes to some “modern end” of history, either the capitalist or the Communist structure. However, Pomeranz (2000:17) argues the YD “circa 1750 seem to resemble the most advanced parts of western Europe,” but up to date, the Europe-China institutional difference is still significant. This fact requires us to think what make the convergence so difficult, or should we expect the convergence at all. It is not a realistic attitude to take the European experience as the only one benchmark, meanwhile ignore the actual local context and stage.

Furthermore, I. Wallerstein (1974, 1989), though also emphasizing the modern European institutions (efficient markets and property rights system) opened an access (for those who found more productive ways) to land, labor, and capital, argued that continued accumulation of profits in the free-labor core of that economy has required the continued existence of poor, generally unfree peripheries. This worldview makes it a possibility to transcend beyond the modernity with an open ending (glocalization). On the basis of world-systems analysis, frontier approach is developed, which emphasizes the interaction of systems, as well as the limits of European experiences.

2.3. Debates on Peasants’ Role in China’s Transition

The dilemma of Chinese transition is, when the old way has been proved as lifeless and incompetent by the West way, the Chinese actors did not know where to start the latter in a

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11 For instance, Lin Yifu (2012) applied the neoclassical approach to study the determinates of economic structure and how to turn the Due- Sector economy (A.W. Lewis 1954) to the developed pattern. This theory is developed from critiques on the Import substitution industrialization (1950s-80s, Latin America), the Export-oriented industrialization (with strong barriers on imports, 1960s -80s, East Asia), the one-size-fits-all Washington Consensus. Another example is Hernando de Soto(2003).

12 Wallerstein systemically thought it was the unique combination (relatively free labor, large and productive urban populations, and merchants and governments that facilitated long-distance trade and the reinvestment of profits), not some factors, contributed the European growth. The international division of labor from the worldwide led to the rise of the West and the fall of the rest, because peripheries increasingly specialized in those primary goods. Though labor was thought as more important than the tools and institutions needed for high productivity, it was the preexisting socioeconomic differences that raised the position of western Europe.

13 Hong and Song (2010) argues as an integration of local and global forces, glocalization implies protection against the more negative effects of globalization (an individual, social group, or state follows not only global standard but also local one). On the other side, social science theories that focused on Europe experience should surpass the local level, since transition is influenced by globalization.

14 See Fan (2005), Liu (1939). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, elites’ attention turned from the technical factors to institution concepts. The gentry’s social control over peasant community in the Yangzi Delta was debilitated by the abolition of the imperial Examination system and the incorporation
peasant context. For example, in *Chiang Kai-shek Diaries* (Feb. 3, 1949), the leader of Republic China and the Kuomintang (KMT) sighed, “everything in the villages (at Fenghua, Zhejiang, his hometown) looks the same as it was four decades ago. The foguish and corrupt cadres must have done nothing in social transformation and people’s livelihood. This is because the education of party, governance and military only focuses on (how to reach) high rank in the bureaucratic system, not on the implement of "Three People's Principles (nationalism, democracy, people’s livelihood / welfare)". While the Communist Party got peasants (i.e., soldiers)’ support to establish the People’s Republic in 1949. It is dynasty succession story, because the mobilization of resource was a normal Chinese maneuver, centered on peasants’ land dream15 (security) in social upheavals.

From their immersive French experience, Marx and Engels considered peasantry as disorganized, dispersed, and incapable of carrying out (structural) changes. A peasant simply wants to own his/her land, this is, land reform is the final goal of their revolutionary motion. Since the peasantry can form a class only when they are in opposition to other classes as a group, this class would tend to disappear, with most becoming displaced from the land and joining the proletariat. Then the **agrarian question** (the paths and methods of the elimination of precapitalist) would be solved by “end of peasantry (Britain-way Enclosure )”. This probe is too short to reach the peripheries’ (internal frontiers, like Russia; outer frontier, like China) deep structure from the Europe core.

However, the transition path of China is determined by whom the peasants follow. As Mao has shown, peasant consciousness can indeed be raised to revolutionary levels in conditions where peasants are indeed an oppressed group: they can, and in certain circumstances do, understand that socialist revolution is the only way to get rid of their oppressors. Meanwhile, “China cannot possibly gain her independence without the assistance of the land of socialism and the international proletariat.”-- obviously a frontier tragic, survival in the crack of powers.

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15 For a peasant, landless usually means hopeless (in marriage and in employment opportunities). Mao (1940) declared the republic (P.R. China) will take certain necessary steps to confiscate the land of the landlords and distribute it to those peasants having little or no land, carry out Dr. Sun Yat-sen's slogan of "land to the tiller", abolish feudal relations in the rural areas, and turn the land over to the private ownership of the peasants. A rich peasant economy will be allowed in the rural areas. Such is the policy of "equalization of landownership". "Land to the tiller" is the correct slogan for this policy. In general, socialist agriculture will not be established at this stage, though various types of co-operative enterprises developed on the basis of "land to the tiller" will contain elements of socialism.
Recap: A Theoretical Progress is a Deep Learning Process

Both the institutional and technological analyses conceptualize the transition with an intension (the end structure of processes, or a belief). The historical facts and timelines were narrated in orders, generating respectively particular explanation capability for some “hard core” phenomena. To prove the hardcore, a set of concepts was developed as tools to build the conceptual structure. It resembles a map connecting the half-physical half-conceptual reality with a desirable possibility, moreover, showing the route of policy practices, whose effects determines if a theory is progressive or degenerate\(^\text{16}\). The “question shift” from “end of history” to “end of peasantry” does not change the hard core of modernity. The technical research produced new facts, in the form of predictions or additional explanations (Lakatos ed., 1970:118), are somewhat fragmented and need to be complemented by system analyses as follows. A hard core, though not always falsified, can be checked by the explanation capability of its auxiliary concepts. The analysis framework will reach its limits when the concept set goes beyond the core’s life experience. In other words, my findings in this research is the European experience has been weakened by the frontier context, where the western “universal” influence is diluted by the local particularity.

So the evolution of society is an outer reflection of the deep learning\(^\text{17}\). The difference is transition (footnote 2) in a world-system structure, the core-peripheral structure is physical and centralist, subsequently, the social development is of land (position struggle); while that in a learning process, the numerous self-centered individuals communicating in a poly-centric world, hence the social development is of people: pool the individual intelligence into social capability. Then the spirit of equality is indispensable for the dependent origination of human life. Peripheries’ problems transition are also the core’s, not only because it results from the incorporation, but because it feedbacks to the structure by increasing the fragility of the world.

\(^\text{16}\) For I. Lakatos, a research programme is based on a hard core of theoretical assumptions; while auxiliary hypotheses are formulated in order to explain adverse evidence and may be altered to 'protect' the 'hard core'. An intention (problem consciousness) shows the way of integrating fragments to construct a necessity, or causal relationship as to deduct the complexity. Phenomena mix the physical reality and the psychological reality. Under the assumption (“institution matters”, “fertility is influential”, etc.), the chosen phenomena are considered as reality, while the neglected as occasional. Although one can always protect a cherished theory (or part of one) from hostile evidence by redirecting the criticism toward other theories or parts thereof (Pierre Duhem Thesis), a progressive scientific theories have their novel facts confirmed and degenerate scientific theories are those whose predictions of novel facts are refuted.

\(^\text{17}\) Bengio, Y. (2009. Learning Deep Architectures for AI) notes it is to learn layered models of inputs, commonly neural networks. The layers in such models correspond to distinct levels of concepts, where higher-level concepts are defined from lower-level ones, and the same lower-level concepts can help to define many higher-level concepts. Ronan Collobert (May 6, 2011. Deep Learning for Efficient Discriminative Parsing) defines it as “neural nets, a stack of matrix-vector multiplications, interleaved with some non-linearities”.

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system (as a whole). In **modern** time, the ethnic groups turned up in the historical stage as the “imagined communities”, while in **global** time, the equal individuals go up on the stage to face the “common destiny”. Therefore, a frontier perspective is helpful to conduct this task, if we expand it to include the interaction of conceptual and practical processes.

The photos above were taken from Changshu and Deqing Archive.
3. Findings in Yangzi Land Reforms Practice: Land, Peasant, and state

When investigating in the 1950s-villages, I kept the frontier perspective: How did the trajectory of incorporation (changes in the world division-of-labor system) shape subsequent frontier dynamics (3.1)? How this affected both frontier processes (and reactions in the core) (3.2)? How did Chinese peasants responded to the incorporation of the capitalist system (3.3)? etc. (Hall, 2001: 263) Therefore, this delivery is unlike the quantitative survey reports mentioned in part 2. My findings in field work is a series of inconsistency with archive work, though it is not all. The consistence will be presented in the next paper. The conflicts of the 1950s land reforms were generated in resisting the incorporation (3.1); imitating a world-system in China (3.2); and negotiation of the state and peasants (3.3). The material is from local chronicles, county-level archives, villager interview, memoirs about Village su, (Changhsu, Jiangsu) and village de (Deqing, Zhejiang), etc.

3.1. Overall Crises and Huge opportunities Created by Incorporation: 1950-51

The incorporation narrowed the survival margin of the Yangzi Peasants and led to chaos. Peasants were forced to work in less advantageous industries and accept the CPC as to escape from the world system. Redistributing land property, though useless in rerise (wealth and power) of China in the world system18, is useful to catch the huge political opportunity (governance capability competition) by alleviating peasants’ subsistence crisis.

The two YD case villages, su (at Changshu, Jiangsu) and de (at Deqing, Zhejiang), are both densely populated and well-connected with near towns and cities. The local commercialized agriculture and (related) labor-intensive industries displays a specialized tendency on the basis of economic and ecological geography.

The Delta is crucial for revenue of Chinese government (Ming-Qing, circa 50%; PRC. circa 20%) Therefore, central governments always attach great importance to this this region. The local autonomy was not developed, though the gentry had great informal power which is important to the local governments’ fiscal and judicial function. The trend of agrarian individualism (nuclear household-based) was accompanied with the income-pool strategy.

However, this market economy did not lead to a capitalized agriculture (commercial farms and wage labor). According to Chao (2006: 167-68), the land property segmentation trend was supported by Chayanovian “self-exploitation” of peasants (internalizing the population

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18 Dong Shijin (1948) notes the British way proved the equally distribution of land property rights is unnecessary for China’s industrialization programme. The land Gini coefficient in Britain was higher than that in China at that time, but Britain is much wealthy, democratic, and developed industrial and commercial country. (Problems of Land Distribution).
pressure) and off-land landowners (for emergent industries in cities, Cao Xingsui 1990). The big farmers would prefer to rent their land out than self-operation (late Ming), prefer the sharecrop tenancy than fixed one (sharing the risk, early Qing), prefer to stay in towns and cities than in villages (late Qing). If using the land distribution curve to depict the changes, the mean decreased for the households increased faster than land reclamation, while the variance narrowed since there are more smallholders or tenants. It is related to the population growth in stable environment and the equalitarian inheritance. If merely relying on land, the Yangzi peasants would be proletarianized in a few generations. The sustained prosperity was supported by its central position in China trade net and its competition in the world maritime trade system. In this precapitalist settings, this processes (involution, or industrious revolution) blocked the peripheralization (secondary state formation) before the Industrial Revolution.

In circa 1930, the Yangzi Delta production system finally incorporated by the capitalist system. Liu (1939), Quan (1986) and Fan Shuzhi (2005) etc. reported the harmful impact of the incorporation. The cotton area, as well as the silk area, went back to the rice area life pattern (several centuries ago). Sun Yat-sen commented there were only the difference of the big poor and the small poor. The societal proletarianization reflects the whole crisis of China, the defeat in the world-systemic competition.

Therefore, from a global or national perspective, the land reforms is unnecessary or useless, since the land Gini coefficient is not unreasonably high and the redistribution of land will not improve productivity or competitive capability of Chinese industries, subsequently, the disadvantageous position in the world division of labor system would not be changed by this internal land distribution game.

However, the common judgment in local chronicles is, “Before Oct. 1949, poor peasants, the majority of the population in su village has been exploited by the landlord class under the feudalist land system. The landlord-class-owned land is hundred-times the poor-peasant-owned land” (su village chronicle 2009: 97). When doing field work in the two villages, the local scholars (Mr. Zhang in Changshu Archive, Ms. Wang in Deqing Archive) respectively said when compared with other counties (the standard party history states circa landlords and

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19 Both the Communist Party (CPC) and the Nationalist Part (KMT) of China planned land reforms to improve peasant’ livelihood (for their political- military support). The CPC’s policy generally is to equally redistributed land property. While the KMT’s plan is to protect the tenancy and deduct the rent rates (1927 no more than 40%; 1930 no more than 37.5%; 1945 a 25% deduction of rent). But due to the high-rank official’s tight relations with the landlord class, the KMT’s executive capability is very poor. The 1945 plan were only put into effect in a few counties such as Wuxian (Suzhou). Gao Wangling (2005) argued the real rent rate is even lower than 37.5%, so the KMT’s land policy seems lack of careful investigation. Chao (2006) and his early studies on “yongidan” (permanent tenancy) shows the protection over tenancy is only a repeated confirmation.
rich peasants (5% of the population) own 80% of land), Changshu and Deqing are quite special --- though most villagers are poor peasants, the landlords and rich peasants were not very rich either, only controlling circa 30% of land\(^2\). When discussing the land distribution situation, my contacts from Lu’an (Anhui), Fengxian (Shanghai), Minhang (Shanghai), Wuxi (Jiangsu), also said “the situation at our village is different”. I call this phenomenon the “Exceptionalism of Yangzi villager”. It consists of a series of denial descriptions: non-feudalism, non- periphery... To sum up, not as you thought.

Considering this Delta is more commercialized than other region, which means the commercial opportunities allow the a higher wealth accumulation velocity and then the land flow-ability, I think the official conclusion is not believable. Even the official records, though with a politically correct conclusion, show the reality to some extent in survey data (1950 provincial surveys for land reform decision). On the other side, the land redistribution was still highly appealing to the poor peasants in deep crisis. Again, we can see the powerful negative effect of incorporation.

On second thought, it is not merely a result from the Marxist class-struggle ideological education. As what Mencius ( 7B14) pointed out “to gain the peasantry is the way to become sovereign; to gain the sovereign is the way to become a prince of a State; to gain the prince of a State is the way to become a great officer”. This maneuver is also generated by Chinese context: over 90% of the population are peasants in proletarianization process, which is contributed by the incorporation of the world capitalist system.

The Chinese revolution is a two-round program: the first is for the state power (who determine the access). In the competition with the KMT\(^2\), “winning the favor of the common people you become Emperor….\)” (Mencius 7B14). While in the second round, the most important is social control (coordinating signals) over land (resources) and people (information). The governance is a construction process of power structure in the local context and global context. It determines who get what (who have the access). Correspondingly, the land reform is also designed as two-round game. The first is to redistribute the land equally (land to tillers). Many records and oral history show the

\(^2\) According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (AUG 1952), landlords account for 3.79% of Chinese population and own 38.26% of land. While rich peasants account for 3.08% of total population and own 13.66% of land. Xiong Jingming notes, according to an investigation (1750 thousand households in 163 counties, 16 provinces) by Land Committee of the ROC household control less than 5 mu account for 35.6%; 5-10mu, 24%; 10-15 mu, 13%; more than 1000mu, 0.02% (The prophet’ Sorrow, Agricultural Economist Dong Shijin).

\(^2\) Certainly, it is also very important to achieve Soviet Russia’s trust to get various support. This requires the display of theoretical loyalty and purity by ideological education among party members.
certificate of privately-owned land property with the red stamp of the new government, turn the peasants to be brave soldiers in the civil war.

While in the Yangzi villages, few peasants became revolutionists, though many records shows the living standard of poor peasants was quite low. For one thing, the Yangzi Delta is located in the central area of the ROC, and when compared with other regions, people here still had more economic opportunities. For another, even no other opportunities, the high-yield rice can keep them from being starved.

Before 1949, at the 191-household village su, 60% of the population (141 households) could not get enough grain, because the rented land was less than 1 mu\(^{22}\) per household, while the fixed land rent rate was 60-75kg per mu. The total rent accounted for 26% of the total production (rice plus wheat). The land reform (Sept.-Dec. 1950) distributed the land equally. Every peasants got 1.76 mu, and the tax rate is fixed as 60 kg per mu. In June 1950, village de began the land redistribution, the situation is quite similar, every peasants got 1.38 mu land. In 1951, the peasants received the official land property certificates excitedly.

### 3.2. Domestic Frontier Game: Imitating a the World-system in China: 1953-56

In precapitalist China, peasant revolution seems far from Marxist aim, as it is useless in elimination of pre-capitalism (they even deserve the enclosure). However, peasants, driven by their land dreams, won the independence of China and paved the way for state building. Because the radical exodus is followed by the omnidirectional blockade, the anti-imperialist played the imperial game: extract surplus from the frontier, or peasantry (Vanhaute 2012, footnote 7). As a fig leaf or spiritual compensation, peasants were highly praised as great contributors to the construction of motherland household, or fight resolutely and courageously for the great cause of Communism (village chronicles). However fully displayed, the value education cannot replaced the fair matter return.

Since the land redistribution, the peasant private-owned land property has been limited and infringed. Starting from mutual-aid teams (1951-54), Junior production cooperatives (1954-55, distributed by capital(40%) and work(60%)), Senior production cooperatives (1957, only by work), to the people Communes (1958-83), at village su, the 790 people, as well as 12 oxes, 18 sprinklers, and ploughs and rakes, were organized to work collectively like soldiers. After the 1959-61 disaster (it is reported some people were starved to death, more fell ill, but the number is unmentioned), every peasant got 0.1 mu land on which they can operate individually. The famous Agriculture Sixty Articles (1961, 1962) stoped the radical arrangements (eat for free in the collective canteens and returned the peasants’ private houses,

\[^{22}\] 1 hectare (ha.) = 15 mu. 1 jin = 500 g.
etc.), meanwhile, this informal document (a work regulation draft of the Rural People’s Communes) thoroughly turned the peasants’ private land property to collective ownership.

The data of rice and wheat production and the income (village su, 1949-1993) shows the villager income per capita increased very slowly before 1977 from 32.9 (1949) to 144.98 yuan person (1977); while the velocity was promoted significantly after 1978, from 154.42 (1978) to 2080 yuan /person (1993). Meanwhile, the grain production experienced an stable increase before 1979 and then decreased obviously. For example, the total rice production increased from 485.3 thousand jin (1949) to 1587.6 thousand jin (1979), and then decreased from 1180.9 thousand jin (1980) to 873.4 thousand jin (1993). The population increased from 745 (1949) to 1850 (1993). While the population peak is 1902 (1982). In the period of 1958-1961, the population slightly increased from 1134 to 1272.

Mr. Shen, a leader of village de, said from 1949-78, we were not able to established one building had more than one floor, let alone a decent factory. But in 1981, the industrial income accounted for 56.13%, while the agriculture share fell to 3.73%. Under Mao, the agricultural production had to follow the plan. The two villages were both required to “take the grain production as the key link” as to supply the urban population. In 1970s, they were ordered to turn the wheat-rice crop structure to rice-rice structure (the yield of rice is twice, or three times the yield of wheat, but it is much more labor-intensive. In addition, the early rice tastes quite horrible). In short, Mao’s rural economic policy is on the surplus extraction for capital accumulation and the urban development.

Liu Shaoqi, the President of the People's Republic of China (1959-68) once said , “If let peasants keep enough food for themselves, we will not get enough to eat. If workers, teachers, scientists and other urban residents do not have enough to eat, the industrialization will fail; the scale of army will have to be shrunk, the national defense construction also will be influenced.” (a speech at an extended Central Working Conference on 27 Jan. 1962, Selected works of Liu Shaoqi). Furthermore, Mao criticized those who disagreed his peasant policy as “helping the Americans” by destroying the alliance of workers and peasants. He considered the CPC (himself) as the real expert on peasant problems (had studied and communicated successfully with peasants for over thirty years) and defense his policy this way: “looking after peasants is small benevolence, while developing the heavy industry and defeating the American imperialism are big benevolences.”

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The development aims of the CPC are industrialization and urbanization of China, while the accumulation relied on the extraction from peasants. I call this practice self-colonization. From a peasant perspective, the new ruling party was actually a colonist. In the British enclosure movement, the peasants were displaced from their land. They had nothing except freedom. The Yangzi peasants under Mao were imprisoned on land. They could not decide what to grow and how to work. What’s worse, after the market of agricultural products (grain, oil, cloth, sugar, etc.) were monopolized by the government (1953-1984, it is estimated 448.1 billion yuan(min) or 700 billion yuan (max) was extracted from the rural zone), peasants’ migration right was disentitled in 1958. Since peasants’ hands and feet were controlled, they had to afford the negative outcome of the Great leap, without any protection from the government. Why the leaders, the sons of peasants, designed such a hostile development program? Against American (and/or Russia). The frontier processes in China, though blocked from the world systems, were never really free from the influence from abroad.

3.3. Dance Tangos with the Party: 1958-60s

On one hand, the CPC gathered the support by the its resistance to the incorporation (refuse the West); on the other hand, it imitated the world system within China (admire the West). The west is the representative of the Modernity, while CPC’s task is to modernized China. Therefore, the Party dancing a tango with the West psychologically. However, the west has gone away and China has been blocked. In the world system within China, the peasantry has to dance a similar (simpler) tango with the Party. Peasants respect Chairman Mao as a half-god (empower them as “the people”), distributed the land rights equally, etc.); while dislike the grassroot cadres who extract their surplus directly.

The third question is how peasants responded to the incorporation of the state capitalist system. When facing the master-like state power, peasants know it is useless to resist the incorporation openly and collectively (blood and fire), but they still have many everyday weapons to protect themselves. For example, information asymmetry, Moral Hazard, theft, etc. On the other side, the two land reforms guaranteed peasants’ land use rights, and keep the

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24 The urbanization rate rose from 10.6% (1949) to 12.5% (1952). When they lost the private land property, their attachment to home village was greatly weakened. As well, it is not easy to get used to the collective production mode. From 1954, more and more peasants left villages for Shanghai and other cities, where the unemployment rate was high, and became beggars, tramps or criminals. Therefore, the Minister of Public Security decided the to stop the population flow from villages to cities. They re-explained the 1954 Constitution’s statement of migration freedom in 1958. The 1975 Constitution cut off this item.

25 J. Scott (1985) supplies a list of those Weapons of the Weak (Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance), including being lazy, being neglected, being Mr. Incorrigible, etc. A recent work is Gao Wangling. 2006. Renmin gongshe shiqi Zhongguo nongmin fan-xingwei diaochao (Investigation on Chinese Peasants’ Weak Resistance in the People’s Communes Period), zhonggong dangshi chubanshe.
rural equality (no one lives better than others.). Confucius said, “What I worry is not rarity, but inequality.” (Analects, 16. Jishi). This belief is shared by peasants and the CPC elites. Some villages, like Huaxi (Wuxi), Jiangxiang (Changshu) Qizhong (Minhang), they insist on the collective ownership to date, and their economic performance is good enough to be examples in the New Rural Area Construction. The story of the rural Yangzi development is not black and white. It is a double-layer frontier: the inner layer is the incorporation of a state system; while it could be reasonably justified by the threat from the outer layer, the incorporation of the world capitalist system.

It is worthy noting here, the supervision problem of agriculture is especially severe because it is on spacious land and in a long time. Therefore, the successful experience of industrial development cannot transplanted simply to agriculture. Mao and many intellectuals at that time was deeply influenced by the “modern time” ideas of production. The collective production is necessary in factory, but not close to the agricultural context. It is astonishing that the influence of Modernity is so strong that those who had rich agricultural experience believed the grain production could reach 5 000 kg per mu. This is not the force of science, but of the superstition of science.

At the People’s Commune in which village de was included, 238 teams out of the 286 production teams (natural village) did not report the real production information in 1957. All the 222 tems in a neighbour Commune lied to keep 20-30% of the production for themselves. And an interviewee estimated these behaviors did not stop until the collapse of the Commune system. The local leaders knew this was comprehensive and did not feel puzzled. Though understanding why peasants lied, they still thought it should be prevented for the long-term interests of the country. Another well-known facts is China had to import circa 13 million ton grain around 1980, which means peasants had no enough incentive to produce (the more they produce, the more the state extracts, and the heavier the new year task becomes). This unexpected outcome is really embarrassing, but Mao had no intention to abolish it when he was in office (the sequence is awful, but it is not my fault -- peasants are too selfish).

Not only the global or local context are multi-layer, but also a peasant in an external frontier is multi-layer. In the starting stage of land reforms, the CPC usually took grain, money, and other expendable goods from landlords to poor peasants. Later, when the local social fiber was broken, the land and real estate redistribution began. During this process, the CPC propaganda the concepts of equality, right, dignity, identity among peasants. Peasants had been despised as low social group for a long time in Chinese society. The new concepts were accepted by peasants and achieved their sincerely political support.
Recap: Practical Progress is a deep learning process of the deep structure

When the precapitalist actors try to transcend capitalist stage, a map is in need. Marx depicts one anatomic picture of the capitalism for the internal frontier, which is somewhat for the external frontier actors because of the context difference. Therefore, the land reforms practice of the CPC is a double-layer learning process (how to rectify the map to the local context; and how to transcend the unexperienced state instructed by this “scientific” oracular map). It is a common problem for transitional practices or development policy making. Mao states it as “connect Marxist theory with Chinese reality”. His suggestion is “seek truth from the facts”, while the “facts” could be explained differently by different intentions. Once he won the competition with the KMT, he became so overconfident in his instincts and beliefs, that the rectification process is filled with difficulties.

This state-system capitalism is the confluence of the outer incorporation and inner historical evolution. Though it has harmful effect on both peasant community and the whole nation, it is still believed the only way to escape from the Eurocentric world system, in which most game rules looked doubtful and harmful. Some of Mao’s expression sounds unreasonable now, but what I found in the Yangzi villages shows he was sincere and still is believed by many elders. That generation of the CPC members thought it was a worse method to complete accumulation by extracting peasants, however, the worst method was still better than no ways. Besides, they strongly believe the modern technology and organization could improve the absolutely production capability (so the extraction is only the painful first stage for the bright future). It is not easy to say they only care about the development of land (the country) because they always emphasize the mass line and advertise the soviet version of “modernity”. The concepts of self-sacrifice, nationalist heroism, serving the people, struggle for recognition / respect at any costs, were instilled in many peasants’ minds.

The second round of land reforms were to change the rural societal and political structures, not only serve the state power competition. The grassroots structure was rebuilt for the modernization of China, i.e., a democratic, independent, and free social relationship. Therefore, the “old” social fibers (clan tie, regions, etc.) must be destroyed. From a frontier perspective, these reforms serves the overall and long-term interests. Therefore, in the land reforms, tens of millions of peasants were mobilized to struggle for equal rights. However, the development of people replies on the development of land. So at the starting period, the CPC thought the capital from the land is more import than capital for the people. The self-colonization is contributed by the pressure of the world system, as well as in the human knowledge network. The learning process is difficult, just as the exodus from the incorporation. However, any excuses cannot change the effects. As Gerschenkron (2009: 427) criticizes innovative capability is inseparable from individual freedom. If you postpone the development of people, the development of land will lose motor at the same time.

Part 1 proved a frontier (Yangzi peasantry) is in a deep structure with multiple layer, while Part 2 showed the progress of theories is a deep learning process. Then the proven frontier perspective was applied in Part 3 to structure the finding progress. But it is dissatisfying to summarize the practice progress is a deep learning of the deep structure. This Part I will discuss the transition (learning in development and learning for development) step by step. Hinton, Osindero and Teh (2006) is the inspiration sources for this theoretical effort.

Given a n-layer system $S$, I denote the layers as $(S_1,...,S_n)$, Input as In, Output as O, the flow chart as $\text{In} \Rightarrow S_0 \Rightarrow S_1 \Rightarrow \ldots \Rightarrow S_n \Rightarrow O$. We turn back to the 1950s-Yangzi villages, $S_0=$ the World system, $S_1=$Soviet system, $S_2=$ China system, $S_3=$ Yangzi system, $S_4=$ village system, $S_5=$Peasant system. In this hybrid network, the $S_0$ and $S_1$ have un-directed connections and form an associative idea of “Europe modernity” (hard core) which rose from the West-East Europe confrontation. Certainly we can insert $S_{1.5}=$Marxism in between. But there are two separated route map exist the two layers, which led to auxiliary theories, and then different practices, then modified auxiliary theory, then modified policy practice ..... in different context by local actors along the historical timeline. Please remember, we are standing at $S_5.$

$S_2,..S_5$ (domestic layer in China system) have inwards generative flow ($S_{0,1} \Rightarrow S_2 \Rightarrow \ldots \Rightarrow S_5$). I denote this process as “Dreaming”. It depicts the modernity to an desirable visual structure, as the map for self-transition. The waking-dreaming processes is a feedback circulation. While the outwards recognition flow ($S_5 \Rightarrow \ldots \Rightarrow S_2$) is donate as “Waking”\footnote{The end Gatha of Diamond Sutra, “All composed things are like a dream .... That is how to meditate on them, how to observe them”. According to Sharma (2004), the three states of consciousness are: Waking, when we are aware of our daily experience, as outward-knowing, gross and universal. Dreaming as inward-knowing, subtle and burning. Deep sleep, in which the underlying ground of consciousness is undistracted. Advaita Vedanta often draws on that of deep sleep to validate an argument. While the state of pure consciousness, underlying and transcending the above three, is free from the dualistic experience which results from the attempts to conceptualize reality. Just as one sees dreams in sleep, he sees a kind of super-dream when he is waking. The world is compared to this conscious dream. “Dreams suggest a ‘reality’ (taken to be the external physical world) which is merely a mental creation. As dreamers believe their dreams are real (not merely their mental creations), we now believe waking is real, and not such a creation. From waking state, we ‘know’ dreams are not real; waking is not real.”}. It shows the higher-level director evaluate and influence the lower-level ones. If no new Ins, S easily became the self-confirmation, then increasingly fragile for the viscous self-rectification (feedback). In the initial waking phrase, China was waked by the incorporation process of $S_0$ from the dream (being a center of the world in 1840-60s). Then the first dreaming phrase began (mainly at the stunning technical level). Meanwhile, Japanese also started its practice in his modern dream (deeper than Chinese dream). After the terrible failures in 1895-1900, China fell apart and the elites became impatient, greedily expecting a fast learning.

However, $S_0$ itself is fragile, the interest goup’ monopoly efforts were challenged by the new powers. The Great depression, which was from the internal feedback failure of $S_0$, narrowed
the subsistence margin of S2. Subsequently, the disorder of S0 generated the adjustment below. In 1920s-40s, the KMT changed dream several times (1920s Russia; 1930s Germany; 1940s USA) because the S0 is unstably evolving by the new inputs (core moved to the US; USSR rose from internal frontier). While S0 did not weigh China as China expected. After the world war I, China was humiliated by the core of S0, therefore, turned to the emergent S1, who recognized the importance of Chinese. With Russia’s help, the KMT unified China in 1926-28. Before this, the CPC was generated by the S1 as a branch.

The alliance of the CPC and the KMT was split in the separation of S0-S1 system. The CPC, in fact, was an awkward existence. According to Marxism, it is ridiculous to found a communist party in a pre-capitalism system. When dreaming of a Marxist modernity, an auxiliary theory must be developed. Though the soviet socialism is different from Marxism, but the Russian context is still different from Maoism. This shows a self-confirmation process. The strategy is when there is conflicts between dream and memory, changed the memory as Chinese Peasants could be the Proletariat class (since the incorporation had created some many poor peasants without the protection of modern social security). In the next waking, the hopeless urban struggle were turned to peasant/land revolution (in 1930s). The triumph of the CPC in 1949 is because they went into the peasants community and turned the peasants as actors struggling for the equal rights. While the soviet socialist land reform was beyond the context and show little respect to peasants, as a result, it failed.

The strict soviet socialism requires the CPC to “educate” peasants to accept the state-owned land system, while in practice it is impossible. The strategy is to send the doctrine to hibernate. The explanation is though it is correct, we need to wait for the right time. The KMT’s competition is a local and direct inputs, not through S0 or S1, which force the CPC must be flexible. In other words, in dream, follow dream; when waking, follow observation. The conceptual reality and the practical reality are both reality. The respective inner consistence is enough. While the inconsistence between the two realities is handled by memory maneuvers. The hibernation of radical beliefs is waked up, while the triumphers stay in dream. Then we see the two-round 1950s land reforms. The CPC did not recognize the S0, which also did not weigh the CPC. With the help of S1, the CPC became the core of S2 and excluded the existence of S0. But the hard core, the modernity is embedded in S1 too, which means S2 would be isomorphic. And without the heterogeneous inputs, the self-confirmation (positive feedback) grow up and the self-rectification channel (negative feedback) is silted up. The fragility of S2 increased drastically. For example, General Peng Dehuai criticized Mao’s Great Leap in 1959, which triggered Mao’s irrational attack on “Rightists”. This feedback failure led to the disasters in 1959-61. Mao admitted his mistake in the summer of 1961. To sum up, S0, S1(collapsed) and S2 share the problem of modernity. To dissolve the systemic problem, new inputs is needed to jump out the self-confirmation and superstition of necessity.
5. Peasants’ Historical Role in the Yangzi Development: 1950-80s

“The feudal lords treasure three things: the land, the people, and the government. Those who treasure pearls and jade invite disaster on themselves.” (Mencius, 7B28)

Finally, it is the Chinese peasants who dissolved the theoretical and practical dilemmas in transition. The Chinese socialism is a new peasantism, which expanded from the household base to a village base,...up to China (as a community). This multi-layer structure is different from the old hierarchy in the bottom-line of equality of personality. On this basis, Chinese peasants paid for the costs the catching-up strategy. The negative descriptions over “peasants” should be attributed to the depressing constraints in a lower technical and social context. Even in that time, Mencius (7B14) sequenced the (f)actors in society as “The people are to be valued most, the altars of the grain and the land (symbols of the state vitality) next, the governor least.”

If we agree on “the final objective of a society/system should be the economic well-being of its people, in the short run as well as in the long run” with Trygve Haavelmo (1989), then the development of land should serve the development of people. Though this is increasingly feasible and reasonable, A. Sen (Development as Freedom) reminds the importance of individual capability. The lessons from the Yangzi land reforms are human rights are not supported by concepts, but individual and social capability in a balanced power structure. Therefore, the development of people by learning how to thinking, working and living as to keep up with the time, is inter-dependent with the development of land. And the European development, according to Pomeranz (2000), is from the break of (land) constraints. Then the actors’ ideas, concepts, and practices, emerged and constructed a new life web in new time. The development is started by the struggle for equal rights for every individuals, from the equal access to resources and information. The modern construction of the new deep outer structure uncovered the valuable deep structure of peasants. However, the modernity is not a thorough reform of the old world, instead, it was soon solidified by interest groups into the world capitalist system with a uneven core-peripheral structure. This self-centered structure declines to share wealth, power (social development) and knowledge (individual development) with the numerous other self-centered bodies, but to maintain the advantages as long as possible, which triggered the painful confrontations. The firm resistance from the peripheries, as shown in Chinese history, caused the highly distorted land policy which greatly damaged the development rights of peasants.
This transmission chain clearly shows the world-system, a representative of modern social Darwinism, have to be transformed to a new global order with the spirit of equality and consciousness of inter-dependency. This is not to deliver a totalitarian view as opposed to an individualistic view. My investigation shows, though there are many practical difficulties, it is feasible under some economic policy. Both the difficulties and opportunities come from the fact that individual has to have contact in his life with others. Individuals will not be able to survive without society, on the other side, certainly any human society will not exist without individuals. Since society is governed by rules27 that are themselves a product of man (Haavelmo 1989), these rules of the game are formed by the feedback effect in system, certainly not independent variables. From the Yangzi case study, we see the infinite game in waking-dreaming rounds between peasants and the state, and between peripheries and the core, determined economic policy adaptation.

Though the response of the people (peasants) in that society is the information base for how to maintain or change the society, the governance capability of a state is also crucial. The transition is viscous because the interest-intension conflicts of different actors in a dynamic context are highly complex. Therefore, errors and time lag in policy process are inevitable, especially in Modern times, when the core/powers simplify the complexities roughly and ignoring the interests of the peripheries/“vulnerable” groups. As Nassim Nicholas Taleb criticized in *Anti fragile: Things That Gain from Disorder* (2012) that “Modernity” creates fragility. The modern epistemology runs after a robust order or system (certainty and necessity) so that human can predict the future and handle all the challenges. This increased the vulnerability in effect. He proposes thinking as a live man, not like a machine so that we can flexibly rectify our errors in frustration.

The Yangzi experience reminds me that since errors and lags are not something avoidable in exploration of development route, the better way of thinking is improve the velocity and precision of feedback-rectification mechanism. A single-centric system might make quick responses and have the mobilization capability of social economic resources to handle huge challenge, like the corporation of the world system, will lead to a “too-big-to-be- flexible” feedback structure (for example the USSR and China). This results in the stubborn and huge fragility, very difficult to dissolve (soft landing) in time. Similarly, medium and small

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27 From a systemic perspective, Haavelmo sees a society as a structure of rules within which the members of society have to operate. The societal transition is an actor-context interaction process as follows. When individuals obeying them, their respond to these rules produce economic results that would characterize the society. As the results materialize, they will stimulate the political process in society towards changing the rules of the game. This is, the results of the individuals in a society responding in a certain way to the original rules of the game have a feedback effect upon these rules themselves.
enterprises, for example, the peasants’ household farms, have their own advantageous capability in anti-fragility, such as less debt pressure, internalization of negotiation and supervision costs, more flexibility and liberty in operation, higher sense of existence and dignity as an individual (not a cipher in big companies), etc.

Therefore, I object to the “upstairs movement” (force peasants live in towns to save land for development) launched by the local Chinese governments. This is another unrealistic dream (go on growing by urbanizing) in which peasants’ land property rights are infringed rudely. It has almost become a “traditional practice” to harm the peasants’ interest for development. Peasants are greedy (not only in 1950s) anytime. But who is not? Peasants in 1950s should afford the choice (gain the stable land (use) rights; cost: accept the party as the state leader), but after a few generations, why the new governors still order the new peasants to pay for the unequal social arrangements?

The deep structure of this robber logic lies in the governor’s inertia “modernity”. The interest groups has been solidified, their “magnificent (large-scale, standard flow line)” superstition is for promotion in social rank. They have forgot China’s development was first of all the result of the development of peasants in late 1970s, when peasant households were admitted to have control over their land and the fruits of their own labor, and permitted to travel elsewhere to work, to transport goods long distances, to migrate to other regions, even abroad. However, the reliable land property need the development of peasant, their individual and social capability. Only the new peasants deserve the new society. To those who do things to their profits at peasants’ expenses, please listen to Mencius’ reply to King Quan of Qi:

“One who robs co-humanity [ren] you call a ‘robber’; one who robs the right [yi] you call a ‘wrecker’; and one who robs and wrecks you call an ‘outlaw’. I have heard that [Wu] punished the outlaw Zhou – I have not heard that he murdered his lord.” (Mencius1B8).
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Development of Land or of People?

Yangzi Peasants’ Struggle for Equal Rights, 1950s

1. Context / Systemic feature
   Deep Structure: Core - Frontier
   Incorporation and Peasantization

1. Actors / Peasants
   Deep Learning: Generative - Cognitive
   Dreaming and Waking

1. Timeline / Dynamics
   Transition: Individual - Social
   Learning, Capability, Development
Ins and Outs of Ambiguity
in 1950s- Peasants' Land Rights show

Development of Land is a Frontier Strategy responding to the Incorporation process;

Development of People is a Systemic dissolution to the social economic fragility;
Hall (2001: 263) In a Precapitalist Context,

How did the incorporation shape subsequent frontier dynamics?

The first round land reform, 1950-51
Political opportunity created by incorporation

How this affected both frontier processes?
The second round land reform, 1954-56
Imitating a World System in China

How did Chinese peasants responded to the incorporation of the (State and World) capitalist system?
The Feedback and Adaptation, 1959-61
Resisting and Coexisting in a glocal context
Incorporation --> Subsistence Crisis --> Land Reform

800 jin (400kg) / person / Year


1.76 (su) or 1.38 (de) mu / person

(360 jin rice + 110 jin wheat) / mu.

Cotton (su), Silk (de) - Silver
Less competitive than before.

Struggle for Equal land rights
Peasants were mobilized to resist the incorporation
Modernization by Peasantization? --> Land Reform II

Aim- Direction: Homogeneity (Modernity)
1949-1979: More grain --> Industrialization / Urbanization
1980-2010: Village-Town Enterprises --> More income

Velocity: Active or Passive Peasants
Constraints for Extraction: Collectivization
Development as Freedom: Household Responsibility
Capability of Adaptation --> Local Divergence / Heterogeneity

Feedback:
+ Self-confirmation: Interest Groups
- Self-rectification:
Circulation:  I --> (S₀, S₁, S₂,...,Sₙ) --> O  
Generative (S₀ > S₁ > S₂ >... > Sₙ): Dreaming state  
Coginitive (Sₙ > Sₙ₋₁ > ... > S₁>S₀): Waking State  

Weigh: Evalution  
Core -- Frontier / State -- Peasants: Interest and Power structure  
Context -- Actor: pattern, strategy in reform processes  

Modernity:  
Aim of structure: End of History  
Policy Process: End of Peasantry  
Open ending: Knowledge, Information, Intelligence, Capability  

----End----