

## ARTICLE

# The Path, Trends, and Approaches of the Civilization Evolution of Rural Marriage Forms

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### ABSTRACT

Rural marriage has characteristics such as close relationship with labor production, deep integration of traditional culture, shy and introverted expression of subjective emotions, and illegal and rough marriage. The civilization evolution of rural marriage forms is moving towards a path that is conducive to the development of production and the pursuit of happiness for farmers, the construction of rural spiritual civilization, and the comprehensive development of rural society. This study analyzes the direction of the evolution of rural marriage form civilization, predicts the trend of rural marriage form civilization evolution, and proposes the future path of rural marriage form civilization evolution, including adhering to human's most original value expectations of marriage life, drawing nourishment from excellent traditional Chinese culture, and continuously adjusting marriage and family policy tools to keep up with changes in the world of life.

## 1. Introduction

Marx and Engels believed that human civilization has undergone a historical evolution from the period of ignorance to the period of barbarism to the period of civilization, and the form of marriage has evolved from group marriage, dual marriage to exclusive marriage. The monopoly system is based on the victory of private ownership over primitive public ownership, and has a promoting effect on accumulating family wealth, improving labor productivity, and promoting human social progress. Therefore, its final victory is one of the signs of the beginning of the civilization era. According to the stage characteristics, the feudal marriage system in old China belonged to the "exclusive marriage system supplemented by intermarriage and prostitution" described by Marx and

Engels. Under the feudal marriage system, "any progress is also a relative regression, because in this progress, some people's happiness and development are achieved through the pain and oppression of others."<sup>[1]</sup> To eliminate this marriage system where some people develop happiness while others suffer and suppress it, the fundamental goal is to eliminate the economic foundation of the exclusivity system that has existed so far, and transform the means of production into social ownership. In this way, "the necessity of women dedicating themselves to money", prostitution, and adultery will all disappear, "and the exclusive mating system will not only not perish, but also become a reality for men in the end."<sup>[2]</sup>

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, on the basis of the land reform already carried out

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in the old liberated areas, rent reduction, mortgage refund, and land reform were immediately carried out in the new liberated areas, transforming the means of production from being owned by a few people to “land for the tiller”; More directly, starting from May 1950, the nationwide movement to implement the Marriage Law was a direct practice of reforming the marriage system, turning Marx and Engels’ grand blueprint for the historical evolution of the exclusive marriage system into a realistic “construction map”, effectively promoting the civilized evolution of marriage forms and promoting the happiness and development of all people. Whether it is the early stage of New China, where 80% of the permanent population was in rural areas, or the New Journey of “the most arduous and arduous task of building a socialist modernized country in all respects still lies in rural areas.”<sup>[3]</sup> The promotion of the civilized evolution of rural marriage forms is not only directly related to the happiness and development of farmers, but also inseparable from the progress of civilization and social development of the entire country.

## 2. The Path of Civilization Evolution of Rural Marriage Forms

The path of the evolution of rural marriage civilization is that marriage is a common form of human civilization, and with the separation of urban and rural areas in the process of human evolution, it has formed the differences between urban and rural marriages. Compared to urban marriage, rural marriage has characteristics such as close relationship with labor production, deep integration of traditional culture, shy and introverted expression of subjective emotions, and illegal and rough marriage. Based on practical life, rural marital life often bears significant traces of agriculture. The standard for the masses to choose a partner is generally “good labor”, and a harmonious marital relationship usually involves working and returning home all the way, while divorce is referred to by the masses as “one family does not match, two families reconcile”, reflecting the simple marriage wisdom of rural people. Therefore, the civilization evolution of rural marriage forms is moving towards a path that is conducive to the development of production and the pursuit of happiness for farmers, the construction of rural spiritual civilization, and the comprehensive development of rural society. In other words, the civilization evolution of rural marriage forms is moving towards the comprehensive development of both human beings and rural society.

Yuesheng Wang pointed out: “Chinese farmers face the impact of social change in traditional rural societies. They cannot escape the influence of local customs, but they cannot ignore the changes in their content just because

the form of rural life of farmers is preserved.”<sup>[4]</sup> With the development and changes in the world of life, rural marriage and family are facing many new challenges, such as the pressure of male marriage, the transformation of high marriage consumption into a female centered marriage market, the significant expansion of geographical inter-marriage circles, and the self rescue of widowed elderly through marriage as a means of retirement, reflecting the spillover effect of market economy in the marriage and family field, as well as the contemporary variation of traditional marriage and family values caused by this. On the one hand, these new changes are a testament to the development of the times and the world of life; On the other hand, these new changes also reflect the unremitting pursuit of a better marriage and family life by the people in the changing situation, thus reflecting the enduring value of promoting the civilization evolution of rural marriage forms.

## 3. The Trend of Civilization Evolution of Rural Marriage Forms

Friedrich Engels pointed out: “History often moves forward in leaps and turns.....”<sup>[5]</sup> Lenin agreed that: “Development seems to be repeating past stages, but it is repeating in another way, on a higher basis(negation of negation), development follows a so-called spiral rather than a straight line.”<sup>[6]</sup> revealing a spiral upward trend in historical development, and the historical evolution of rural marriage forms also presents a complex, long-term, and inevitable trend of spiral upward trend.

The complexity and long-term nature of the evolution of rural marriage civilization. This is mainly based on the interaction between external challenges and inherent problems encountered in the process of rural marriage evolving towards civilization. Externally, economic factors are the main factors affecting the achievement and maintenance of marriage, among which the outflow of young women, lack of stable income, high dowry prices, and significant economic pressure after marriage are specific factors that lead to marriage pressure on eligible young men in rural areas. Secondly, the traditional norms of rural society have a disciplinary effect on marriage behavior, such as marriage arranged, feudal superstition, inheritance of the family line, and closed mindedness such as the principle of husband and wife, which still have an impact on the form of marriage in underdeveloped rural areas. Thirdly, the influence of foreign marriage trends on rural marriage forms has intensified, and the trend of secularization of marriage has become increasingly severe. Liberalism and individualism have become prominent in the context of marriage and family, resulting in the fluctuating

tuation of individual value and collective value in marriage life, ultimately leading to the uncertainty, fragility, and transience of individual marriage. The most obvious impact is the impact on traditional monogamous marriage forms, evolving into various forms such as contract marriage, non marital families, open marriage, multiple sexual partnerships, and same-sex marriage, forming a diversified trend in marriage forms. Internally, the evolution of rural marriage civilization requires a more direct approach to substantive issues, such as the independence and romantic compatibility of the right to choose a spouse after bidding farewell to the ancestral shadow, the balance between material compensation and spiritual harmony in seeking a spouse, the harmony between marital and family relationships in the core family, and the proper placement of traditional filial piety. These external challenges and internal issues constitute a complex and ever-changing environment for the evolution of rural marriage form civilization, objectively determining the complexity and long-term nature of the path towards maturity and rationality in the evolution of rural marriage form civilization.

The inevitability of the evolution of rural marriage civilization. American anthropologist Morgan pointed out that ancient humans went through barbaric and ignorant eras before entering the era of civilization, which is an inevitable trend in the evolution of human history. Starting from feudal society in China, the form of marriage in rural areas has gone through the process of women's status being devalued, women becoming completely patriarchal private property, women's awareness of marriage rights awakening, and political system safeguarding marriage freedom. Despite the twists and turns, the path towards progress, towards goodness, beauty, and civilization has not changed. 《Shangshu Yaodian》 said: "Examining the past, Emperor Shun's name was Chonghua, who shared the same aspirations as Emperor Yao. He had profound wisdom, but was also civilized, courteous, and honest. After his hidden virtues were discovered by the court, Emperor Yao granted him an official position." In the ideological understanding of the Chinese people, civilization is a state of survival that transcends barbarism through education, reflecting the friendly relationship between people, society, and nature. In the field of rural marriage, civilization means seeking goodness and beauty. Goodness refers to the harmony and goodwill of marriage, family, and kinship relationships; Beauty refers to the degree of satisfaction that a marital relationship meets the wishes of the parties involved. Therefore, the civilized evolution of rural marriage forms aims to find partners according to one's own will, maintain harmonious marital relationships, maintain harmonious family relationships,

and promote the development of production through marriage and family. In the torrent of human history from low to high, from barbarism to civilization, the rural marriage pattern is bound to evolve in the mainstream direction of goodwill and beauty, thus showing the inevitability and irreversibility of the evolution of civilization.

#### 4. The Path of Civilization Evolution of Rural Marriage Forms

The rural marriage form is a representation of human marriage form in a special space of civilized society, which conforms to the general laws and overall approach of the evolution and development of human marriage form, that is, to achieve civilized rationality in marriage and family life. The civilized rationality of rural marriage forms is different from the secularization tendency in urban marriage life and the materialization crisis of marriage forms in private ownership society. It highlights the value pursuit of equality, freedom, and happiness in the world of marriage and family life, reflecting the common value of human pursuit of comprehensive development and social progress.

To achieve the civilized evolution of rural marriage forms, it is necessary to follow the logic of upholding righteousness and creating new ones. Firstly, it is necessary to adhere to the most fundamental value expectations of human beings for marriage, namely equality, freedom, and happiness, which need to be guaranteed from the aspects of institutional supply, ideological guidance, and behavioral demonstration. Secondly, it is necessary to draw nourishment from the excellent traditional Chinese culture, such as the yearning for free love in the Book of Songs, the beautiful symbolism contained in marriage customs, and the equal ideas contained in monogamy. By using the ancient teachings on free and beautiful marriage life, we can nourish the gradually lost love emotions in the current material world. Thirdly, it is necessary to keep up with changes in the world of life and continuously adjust marriage and family policy tools. For example, in response to phenomena such as long-distance love, online dating, and Chinese New Year gatherings for rural migrant workers, the government can require employers to provide them with necessary time and organize social activities to meet their needs for love and marriage. In response to the issue of marriage pressure on young men in rural areas, such as exorbitant dowries and large-scale events, various regions can leverage the role of the New Era Spiritual Civilization Practice Center, as well as village autonomous organizations such as village councils, moral evaluation committees, and red and white councils, to encourage residents to hold weddings frugally, advocate for a

new culture of marriage, discourage uncivilized marriage customs, and resolve the problem of material and cultural marriage pressure on young men in rural areas through the coordinated efforts of village autonomy and moral governance. In response to the current situation where elderly people cannot receive support from their children and have to rely on the other half of the marital community to support their elderly during the evolution from the main family to the core family, measures such as village autonomous organizations agreeing on support obligations with their children or relying on rural elderly care institutions can be taken to alleviate the elderly's anxiety about elderly care.

Compared to urban marriage and family life, rural marriage and family life are more directly influenced by material foundations and more deeply influenced by old-fashioned marriage and family ideas. Therefore, the form of rural marriage is still in the process of urbanization development, and the path of its civilization evolution is long and obstructed. However, as a temporal and spatial expression of human marriage, rural marriage forms have the general characteristics of human marriage pursuing civilization, all hoping for equality, freedom, and happiness, and all hoping to achieve comprehensive human development and social progress in marriage and family life. Therefore, we must face the general characteristics

and individual differences of rural marriage forms, move forward towards the common path of human marriage civilization and rationality, promote the comprehensive development of individuals and the modern transformation of rural society.

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