

Research on Rural Favor Consumption Problem in Central China

Take Village Lin the North of Anhui Province as an Example

Panpan Dai

Graduate School
Jilin Agricultural University
Changchun, China

Dongmei Sun*

College of Humanities
Jilin Agricultural University
Changchun, China

* Corresponding author

Abstract—“It is impolite not to reciprocate”. As a kind of connection link, favor consumption plays an important role in acquaintance society of the countryside. However, in recent years, with deepening of reform and opening-up and appearance of tide of rural workers, favor consumption tends to be more complicated. It is no longer the previous pure maintaining of emotion. Gradually increased favor consumption proportion becomes a great burden in rural residents’ life. In order to further understand current situation of rural favor consumption, this paper chooses rural residents of 100 families in Village L in the north of Anhui province of central China to conduct questionnaire survey, discussion and analysis, which has typical representativeness.

Keywords—favor consumption; countryside; tide of rural workers

I. INTRODUCTION

As an etiquette state, “courtesy demands reciprocity” has become a deeply rooted idea of people in China. Being famous for differential pattern, Chinese countryside is an acquaintance society integrating blood relationship, karmic connection and geographical relationship. With development of society, “courtesy demands reciprocity” becomes more specific and materialized and morphs into favor consumption in forms of material object, cash and so on. Influenced by traditional culture deeply, the countryside is the place where favor consumption is deeply rooted with luxuriant foliage. However, with gradual deepening of social transformation, development of market economy and constant pushing forward of China’s urbanization reform, favor consumption is no longer pure emotion maintaining. Instead, it is mixed with more utilitarian factors. Favor consumption has become economic burden of many villagers. The author selects a village which is famous for crisp pear in the north of Anhui province as research object, conducts sampling survey of 100 peasant families and retrieves 98 questionnaires. Effective recovery rate is 98%.

II. CURRENT SITUATION OF FAVOR CONSUMPTION IN VILLAGE L

Namely, favor consumption is courtesy demanding reciprocity in normal association between people voluntarily,

including emotional investment, material expression and other different forms. Associated objects are mainly relatives, friends, business partners and other members frequently contacting you. Traditional favor consumption mainly occurs in weddings and funerals. However, consumption proportion of entering a higher school, job promotion, birthday and other forms increases. This kind of favor consumption is the so-called “giving presents as returns” by us.

A. Consumption Items Increase and Consumption Proportion Enlarges

Through investigation, we find that apart from gifts given to important traditional festivals (Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival), weddings and funerals, daily gift giving is very common among L villagers. The proportion of looking for a person to handle affairs is close to that of weddings and funerals. In addition to this, moving to a better place, entering a higher school, birthday and other consumption items are important constitutional parts of daily favor consumption. But generally speaking, traditional favor consumption still occupies a larger part.

With economic development, proportion of favor consumption in family consumption also increases. Seeing from “Table I”, we can find that families whose favor consumption proportion increases reach up to 86.7%. As you see, favor consumption gradually becomes an important part of people’s daily life.

TABLE I. CHANGES IN PROPORTION OF YOUR FAMILY'S FAVOR CONSUMPTION EXPENSE IN FAMILY TOTAL INCOME OF LAST YEAR COMPARED WITH THE YEAR BEFORE LAST YEAR

| Effectiveness | | Frequency Percentage | | Effective Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percentage | Effective Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
| Effectiveness | Increasing greatly | 36 | 36.7 | 36.7 | 36.7 |
| | Increasing a little | 49 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 86.7 |
| | No change | 7 | 7.1 | 7.1 | 93.9 |
| | Reducing slightly | 5 | 5.1 | 5.1 | 99.0 |
| | Reducing greatly | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | In total | 98 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

B. Purposive Consumption Becomes Mainstream

With development of market economy and increase of population mobility, peasants gradually get rid of constraint of land and start to strive for more flexible means of livelihood. Working and starting up business in city becomes the first choice of most peasants. When struggling and working far from hometown, maintenance of relationship between fellow villagers and friends becomes indispensable life content. Favor consumption with a stronger purpose gradually replaces traditional "welcoming visitors and seeing them off". Seeing from "Table II", we can know that the need of expressing emotion only occupies 15.3% while returning idea occupies 66.3%.

TABLE II. THE COMMONEST REASON OF GIFT GIVING IN A GENERAL WAY

| Effectiveness | | Frequency Percentage | | Effective Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|---------------|--|----------------------|------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percentage | Effective Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
| Effectiveness | Repaying others' previous gifts | 20 | 20.4 | 20.4 | 20.4 |
| | The need to express emotion | 15 | 15.3 | 15.3 | 35.7 |
| | Establish good relationship to help each other | 45 | 45.9 | 45.9 | 81.6 |
| | Saving face | 18 | 18.4 | 18.4 | 100.0 |
| | In total | 98 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

C. Cash-oriented Consumption Pattern

Traditional favor consumption is mainly giving daily articles as presents and mutual help. Through investigation, the author finds out that compared with previous mutual help between three to five families in busy farming season and pure favor pattern, now most peasant families use money to hire workers in busy farming season. The burden of favor pattern is usually heavier than hire expense. More and more people think that it is the most difficult to repay debt of gratitude. Therefore, they never trouble other people because of anything that can be done with money. In addition, traditional favor consumption form of giving daily articles to each other as presents on festivals, weddings and funerals is basically entirely replaced by discounting today. Development of market economy makes discounting more practical. Data in "Table III" shows that the form of cash consumption occupies a proportion of 90.8%.

TABLE III. THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED WAY OF GIVING GIFTS BY YOU

| Effectiveness | | Frequency Percentage | | Effective Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percentage | Effective Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
| Effectiveness | Cash | 89 | 90.8 | 90.8 | 90.8 |
| | Material object | 6 | 6.1 | 6.1 | 96.9 |
| | Others | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 100.0 |
| | In total | 98 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

D. The View of Face Consumption Becomes A Consumption Burden of Peasants

The essence of favor is maintaining balance of relationship in intercourse, which is displayed both as individual "saving face" behavior and "saving others' face" behavior in interpersonal relationship. At the same time, saving personal face is an important aspect of maintaining balance in relationship. However, this kind of consumption concept for "saving face" increases people's mental pressure and it is also a huge burden economically.

Seeing from "Table IV", we can find that there is a proportion of 49% of family who even borrow and collect money to give gifts when favor consumption is beyond their economic ability. It is clear that saving face is an important influential factor in Chinese human relationship. In the small group of acquaintance society in natural village, information in the group is shared by all villagers and information among people is easy to be shared. Social evaluation and face influence every villager. In daily life, villagers usually mutually compete for saving face to avoid being looked down upon. Combination of favor consumption and saving face makes villagers more actively participate in ceremonies to save face in front of other people in a better way and expand his own interpersonal influence.

TABLE IV. WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF FAVOR CONSUMPTION GETS BEYOND YOUR FAMILY'S ECONOMIC CAPACITY

| | | Frequency | Percentage | Effective Percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|---------------|--|-----------|------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Effectiveness | Try to put it off and don't flaunt your superiority | 15 | 15.3 | 15.3 | 15.3 |
| | Borrow and collect money to give gifts in order to save face | 48 | 49.0 | 49.0 | 64.3 |
| | Give gifts according to economic capacity | 35 | 35.7 | 35.7 | 100.0 |
| | In total | 98 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

III. ANALYSIS ON REASON OF FAVOR CONSUMPTION

A. Influence of Social Transformation

In the market economy era with market orientation, agricultural transformation is slow, rural economic benefit greatly decreases and poverty problem of peasants gets increasingly prominent. More and more peasants leave their native place to work in city and become the gens of peasant-worker. Influenced by economic capacity and some policies, it is difficult for peasant-workers to have a foothold in city. In order to gain more economic benefit, they have to migrate outside for work in slack season and return to do farming in busy farming season. Returned migrant peasant-workers are influenced by market economic concept in city and emphasize more on exchange of equal values in favor consumption. They associate with each other on balanced favor. Therefore, a kind of catabolic favor consumption gradually comes into being, namely using various patterns of consumption form to gain equivalent reward. Blau thinks that this kind of equivalent exchange, namely help receiver does not always make immediate retribution response to benefactor's help and he or she may pay back and express gratitude after a certain period of time, will play a positive role in consolidation and development of exchange relation.

Mauss says: The bind created by gifts is mutual dependencies among people. In market economy era with fierce competition, market resource is limited, there is survival of the fittest, only people with good ability can gain more social capital to participate in competition and weak people will lose chances or become losers. At this moment, favor consumption becomes a means to gain social capital and the way to obtain more social support. Only talents with wide connections and many chances can become main force of social progress to lead the society in development.

B. Formation of Habits

Bourdieu thinks that habit is a kind of socialized subjectivity and it is established in certain fields by society. Favor consumption in countryside is a kind of typical traditional culture, which is internalized in people's subconsciousness to generate cultural inertance. Sometimes, people voluntarily carry it out not always to express emotion,

instead, they are just in the phase of favor consumption. Because it is internalized and inherited standard in heart over thousands of years.

C. Discordance between Economic and Cultural Development

National emphasis on "three rural" problems pushes forward rapid development of rural economy and new rural construction obtains certain achievements. However, since spiritual civilization construction can not be implemented effectively and due to the influence of sequela of small-peasant economy's backward and closed thought, the phenomenon of acceptance of not going to school and not treating illness and necessity of paying for favor exists widely.

IV. INTROSPECTION ON RURAL FAVOR CONSUMPTION

A. External Aspect

1) *Formulate reasonable favor consumption standards:* Correct guidance of government. Government can not use policies to forcefully stipulate favor consumption standard. But government members can set themselves an example to others, play their example function, and formulate certain standards inside favor circle of government members to create good atmosphere and subtly influence villagers' favor consumption behavior. Villages and towns should formulate reasonable favor consumption standard. Through questionnaire survey, we find that 58.2% of people think the town has a certain favor consumption standard. However, there are still 40.8% of people who are not clear about it. In the 58.2% of people, there are still 73.68% of them thinking that current favor consumption is slightly excessive or extremely excessive. Therefore, it is necessary to formulate a reasonable consumption standard and publicize widely. Formulation of favor standard can be organized by experienced old people and knowledgeable young people and ordinary villagers can provide their own opinions.

2) *Emphasis on rural education:* Emphasize on education of young people of the next generation. Among the selected 100 families, villagers receiving education higher than senior high school only reach 21.3%. There are even fewer college students higher than bachelor degree. Most villagers hold the attitude of letting things drift towards children's education and think that it is enough for their children to finish compulsory education and it is more practical that their children go out to work and earn money to help out with family expenses. On the contrary, most villagers do not understand parents emphasizing on children's education. Enhancing education of children is an important step to change future favor consumption in the countryside. When our country is implementing fair education, parents' wrong attitude towards education is corrected at the same time. Enhancing current education of rural residents. The main reason of favor consumption showing catabolic state is negative influence of "culture lag" and spiritual civilization construction falling behind economic construction. Village

organization can frequently carry out some spiritual civilization construction activities, which can both shorten the distance between officials and ordinary people and subtly change villagers' thought to implement proper and reasonable favor consumption mode.

B. Villagers

Transform market economic concept and consume reasonably.

Under market economy system, favor consumption is mingled with economic purpose. At the same time of satisfying their maximum benefit, it is hard to maintain pure favor. By overcoming market economic concept and transforming money-oriented interpersonal communication relationship, we can go back to the original tradition. Villagers can choose a voluntary and free way of communication to increase mutual feeling, reasonably conduct favor consumption according to their own capability and avoid compelled, twisted and restrained excessive favor consumption. Emotional communication can not be accomplished in an action. Instead, it should gradually come into being in daily life. Villagers should see favor consumption in a correct way, transform money-oriented intercourse behavior and give relatives and friends more support in production and in life.

V. CONCLUSION

Originally speaking, favor consumption is a kind of form to maintain relationship between relatives and friends, which is shown as favor saving to some degree. But through survey, we find that in order to make up for loss of favor consumption, some villagers are not hesitated to use various items to promote favor consumption. Karmic connection starts to replace blood relationship and plays a vital role in favor consumption. Favor consumption gradually tends to be utilitarian and negative function of favor consumption appears. Favor consumption itself is not a mistake. The key is to implement in a reasonable way, including control of degree and whether the motive is pure. What is the most important is mutual efforts of villagers themselves, government, and various aspects of society

REFERENCES

- [1] Fei Xiaotong. Rural China's Fertility System[M]. Beijing: Peking University Press, 1998.
- [2] Yan Yunxiang. Flow of Gifts[M]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2000.
- [3] Zhai Xuewei. Reproduction of Favor, Face and Power[J]. Sociology Research, 2004,(5):49 -53.
- [4] Peter • Blau. Exchange and Right in Social Life[M]. Beijing: Huaxia Publishing House, 1998.
- [5] Zhang Yanling and Qu Xihua. Exchange of Gifts under Human Relationship in Rural Society -- Taking Dongjia Village in Shandong Province as An Example[J]. Beijing Science and Technology University Journal, 2006(1)