

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGRICULTURAL GUIDELINES AND TEXTILE HANDICRAFT IN CHINA UNDER THE MONGOL RULE

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Abstract: This article examines the guidelines adopted by the Mongol regime to promote agricultural production in China during the 13th and 14th centuries and their impact on textile handicraft. The study reveals the significant influence of traditional Chinese agricultural civilization on the guidelines, although they still reflected the traditions of nomadic civilization. The article highlights how these guidelines helped to maintain the rule of the Mongol regime and consolidate the privileges of the nobility, while also promoting the evolution of textile techniques during this time. Agriculture and textile handicraft were the basis of the imperial regime, and the Mongol rulers realized the importance of both for governance. The guidelines, which included the promotion of collective farming, stopping military encroachment on cultivated land, and planting or breeding of fiber raw materials for textile handicraft, were aimed at calming the people's minds and developing production. The impact of these policies on the development of the textile industry, the progress of handmade textile techniques in the Yuan Dynasty, and the continuation of traditional Chinese textile civilization was significant. However, the policies were often unevenly implemented at the basic level, leading to fraud and distortion of their intended effect. The article also examines how taxation policy was used to regulate textile handicraft, with silk fibers mainly collected from the south region of the Yangtze River and cotton included in regular levy for the first time.

Keywords: Mongol regime, China, agricultural promotion, textile handicraft, traditional Chinese agriculture, textile techniques, collective farming, taxation policy.

Introduction

In the middle of the 13th century, as the Mongol aristocracy used military force to unify China, the agriculture and textile handicraft in northern China was further undermined, where used to be economically and culturally advanced. After the Mongol regime established the Yuan Dynasty in China, under the influence of China's long-standing agricultural civilization and governing philosophy, the Mongolian aristocracy, accustomed to nomadic life, gradually abandoned the relatively backward nomadic economy and exploitation modes, and adopted guidelines of giving priority to agriculture and handicraft. During the reign of Kublai Khan (1271-1294 AD), the ancestor of the Yuan Dynasty took the restoration of agriculture and textile handicrafts as an important means to improve folks' livelihood. A series of guidelines was implemented, which not only had significant impacts on the recovery and development of agriculture and textile handicraft, but also on the

economic and social operations of this newly established dynasty. Due to the special preference of Mongolian nomads for upscale textile products, the demand for textile raw materials, especially silk fibers and fabrics, increased unprecedentedly. In order to meet the balance of supply and demand, which was significantly different from previous dynasties, the interaction between Yuan's agricultural guidelines and the supply of textile raw materials played an important role. Through sorting out the policy development of agricultural production and related fields of the Yuan Dynasty, the cognition of the level of technological development of the dynasty underwent a significant change, gradually returning from the stereotype of "backwardness and retrogression" to a more objective and rational evaluation. (Liu, 2022) Therefore, discussion around such interaction helps to comprehend the significant impact of relevant policies on the development of the textile industry, the progress of handmade textile techniques in the Yuan Dynasty, and even the continuation of traditional Chinese textile civilization.

2. Background to Guidelines for the Restoration of Agriculture and Textile Handcraft

The Mongol ethnicity has practiced nomadism for generations. Before governing the Central Plains of China, they had no experience in farming and sericulture. The Yuan rulers' understanding of the importance of agriculture and textile production to governance of the country was gained through exploration and practice from long-run conquest and expansion. At the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty, faced with the enormous damage brought by seizing territory to the agriculture and textile handcraft of the Central Plains, the Mongol rulers realized the urgent needs to calm the folks' minds and develop production. As a consequence, the ruling clique has formulated and implemented a series of guidelines that attach importance to agriculture and textiles handcraft. In the process, the rulers also gradually saw the benefits of the restoration of agricultural and textile industry in consolidating and strengthening their regime. *2.1 Important Approach to Promote Central Governance*

After the Mongol nomadic regime entered the Central Plains of China, the influence from the agricultural civilization of this territory was also gradually deepened. At the same time, the gradual identification with traditional Chinese culture also made the Yuan's rulers realize that "agriculture and textile handicraft were the basis of the imperial regime". (Song, 1999, p. 1563) After Kublai Khan ascended the throne, he issued an order requiring all localities to cultivate fields and increase the planting of mulberry trees and ramie. This can be considered as the precursor of attaching importance to agriculture and textiles industry by the rulers. Beginning in the early Yuan Dynasty, rulers began to decree on encouraging collective farming, and meanwhile prohibiting the military from encroaching on cultivated land, or robbing livestock, or harming mulberry trees. From the perspective of governing, the rulers at that time established ideas that making the peasants settle down in agriculture and textile handicraft was not only conducive to economic recovery, but also related to social stability, and consolidating foundation of their governance. As Wang Jie (王结) pointed out in *The Essence of Good Customs*, under the Chinese name of Shan-su-yao-yi (善俗要义): "Works, such as planting mulberry, raising silkworms, and reeling silk, should be followed by the procedures recorded in the agricultural books handed down by the ancestors. The elders of the family are supposed to lead the whole family to work diligently and steadfastly. And the levy of the whole year is expected to be accomplished in forty days. In this way, not only can it complete their annual quotas, but also worry free the source of food and clothing for the whole family. " (Yang, 1988, p. 344). For the feudal China, the production of textile raw materials, such as mulberry tree planting, silkworm farming, cotton and ramie processing, was not only considered to be the basic means to stabilize commoner's livelihood, but also the textile raw materials and products they hand in could become an important source of financial revenue for the imperial court. This also

indicates that the authorities of the early Yuan Dynasty already had consideration of long-term rule, which was urgently required for consolidating the new regime at that time, and corresponded to the trend of social development as well.

2.2 Adoption of Han Ministers' Advice

In the early days of his reign, Kublai Khan reused ministers of the Han nationality and incorporated Han convention into his governing philosophy. Among high-level think tank team, Liu Bingzhong (刘秉忠), Xu Heng (许衡), Xu Shilong (徐世隆) and other Han ministers advocated adopting the concept of Han to govern the Central Plains, where the Han population accounted for the absolute majority. This played a pivotal role in facilitating the plot of guidelines by the ruling group to resume agricultural and textile production. In 1266 AD, Xu Heng submitted to play *Five Immediate Priorities: Agriculture and Education*, under the Chinese name of Shi-wu-wu-shi: Nong-sang-xue-xiao (时务五事·农桑学校), which emphasized the importance of agriculture to the country's social stability, economic contribution, and long-term peace. He pointed out: "If from now on, the peasants can be given preferential treatment and protected from harassment, and he lazy individuals can be urged to return to work in the fields, mulberry trees can be planted annually according to the planned numbers, and the encouragement and supervision can be given, thereafter in ten years the country's textile material stock will be far more than adequate than it is now." (Chen, 1998, p. 99) From ancient times, China has continued the ritual system of emperors worshiping ancestors of agriculture and sericulture. This was considered "a requiting for the blessings of the ancestors, a manifestation of sacrifice piety, a feeling of the toil of farming, and an identification with the foundation of governance." (Chen, 1998, p. 290) The Mongol rulers of the Yuan Dynasty imitated traditional Han rituals at the suggestion of Han ministers. In 1270 AD, Zhang Wenqian (张文谦), as the minister in charge of agriculture, asked Kublai Khan to hold imperial worship ceremonies in accordance with Han tradition. The first ceremony of the Yuan Dynasty to worship the ancestors of agriculture was held in 1272 AD. The guidelines of Kublai Khan's administration of attaching importance to agriculture were in line with the will of the people at that time, and won high praise from Han ministers, which reflects that the governance of the Mongol aristocratic ruling clique was gradually accepted and recognized to a certain extent by the Han Confucians at that time.

2.3 Maintaining the Supply of Raw Materials for the Textile Consumption of the Ruling Group

China's feudal dynasties, without exception, relied on the people's in-kind levy to maintain their ruling power and living expenses. The Yuan autocratic monarchs and bureaucrats were well aware that the destruction of the tradition of self-sufficiency of small peasants, rooted in the Central Plains by convention, would mean turmoil in the foundations of their authoritarian regime, and the shortage of sources for extravagant consumption as well. (Yan, 2011, p. 22) The legal documents of the Yuan Dynasty emphasized that "The commoners are the foundation of the state. Daily expenses of the state and the army and all taxes come from the people, who therefore should always be treated preferentially and caressed" (Fang, 2001, pp. 473-474). However, the starting point of the above argument was not essentially compassion for the people's livelihood, but to ensure the continuous supply of raw materials and recreational objects for the ruling group by encouraging the peasants to hand over the levy on agricultural and textile products. According to economic data of textile raw materials and products as levy as reflected in the *The History of Yuan Dynasty: Chronicles of Food and Commodity*, under the Chinese name of Yuan-shi: Shi-huo-zhi (元史·食货志): in 1265 AD, 585,041 kilograms of silk fibers and 1,110,356 meters of cloth were levied. In 1328 AD, 651,394 kilograms of silk fibers, 4,556,890 meters of tough silk fabrics, 42,690 kilograms of cotton, and 2,745,899 meters of

cotton cloth were levied. (Song, 1999, p.1569) Through the comparison of the above data, it can be seen that the levy of textile raw materials and products in the early and middle Yuan Dynasty not only increased the amount, but also expanded the variety. It should be noted that the 13th to 14th centuries was at the period when cotton cultivation gradually became widespread in China. The content of taxation by the feudal autocratic regime of the Yuan Dynasty added the levy of textile raw materials and products such as silk fibers, cotton fibers, and cotton cloth on the basis of solely collection of silk fabrics originally. Objectively, the consequence of such an institutional arrangement was the expansion of cultivating scale of textile raw materials and the increase in the output of textile products in the Yuan Dynasty.

3. Implementation of Policies Related to the Promotion of Textile Production

A series of policies focused on agriculture and textiles promulgated during Kublai Khan's reign highlighted the idea of a dedicated commitment to strengthening the foundations of the rule. Not long after he ascended the throne, he told the world: "The country is based on the people. The people are based on food and clothing. And food and clothing is based on agriculture and textile handcraft in this country." (Song, 1999, p.1563) Such governing philosophy, while protecting agricultural and textile production, gradually transformed Mongolian feudal lords into feudal landlords. (Huo, 2001) From the perspective of textile raw material supply, the implementation of relevant policies played a more obvious role in expanding cultivating scale of ramie, mulberry and cotton, and in increasing the supply of raw textile materials required for ramie twining, silk reeling, and cloth weaving, etc.

3.1 Establishment of Management Institutions and Construction of Basal Governance Systems

The name, affiliation and function of the agricultural administration of the Yuan Dynasty underwent many evolutions. This institution was first established in 1261 AD as the Bureau for Farming-persuading, under the Chinese name of Quan-nong-si (劝农司). In 1270 AD, it was renamed Si-song-si (司农司), which was equivalent to the Ministry of Agriculture. Between 1281 and 1286 AD, it successively underwent changes in the names of the Nong-zheng-yuan (农政院), Wu-nong-si (务农司), Da-si-nong-si (大司农司), etc. (Song, 1999, p. 1453-1454) Overall, however, the institution functions were positioned exclusively for agriculture and water conservancy. Persuading and supervising agricultural production was one of the primary functions. The basal agricultural governance system of the Yuan Dynasty was strengthened mainly through the establishment of the above-mentioned institutions and official positions, and the implementation of measures to persuade and guide farming. The above evolution developed in tandem with Yuan's emphasis on agriculture, and also reflected the harmony with the Yuan's agricultural production pattern. (Cui & Guo, 2017) In the relatively complete agricultural supervision system of the Yuan Dynasty government, in addition to the responsibilities of agricultural supervision and promotion of various departments and branches of the Da-si-nong-si and local provinces and counties, basal rural organizations were also given the function of farming-persuading. (Chen, 2019) Taken as a whole, these measures mainly included the following four aspects. First, to select and appoint officials persuade farming from among those who were proficient in agriculture. Second, to require all localities to strengthen the supervision of agricultural and textile production from the provincial level. Third, to establish an administrative system for autonomous organizations and responsible positions at the village level. Fourth, to inspect the performance of officials in supervising the work of agricultural promotion. These measures were reflected in the fourteen provisions for the promotion of agriculture and sericulture issued in 1270 AD. The improvement of the Yuan's basal agricultural governance system played a certain role, at the level of organizational structure, in guiding and urging all parts of the country to enforce policies on encouraging and promoting agricultural and textile production.

3.2 Response to Natural Disasters and Human Disturbances

Due to the limitations of technical conditions, in ancient times, there was nothing to do about the natural disasters that affected the production of mulberry trees and sericulture, which seriously affected the yield of raw silk. According to the records in the *The History of Yuan Dynasty: Chronicles of Five Elements*, under the Chinese name of Yuan-shi: Wu-xing-zhi (元史·五行志), natural disasters such as frost, hail, strong winds, heavy rain, and insect pest occurred from time to time in the Yuan Dynasty especially in the northern regions. (Song, 1999, p.721, 725, 733, 751) This must have caused considerable losses to sericulture and silk production in the affected areas. In response, the imperial court adopted control measures such as temporarily reducing the levy of the silk in those areas. For example, Zhongdu (中都), Shuntian (顺天), and Dongping (东平) in 1267 AD, Ji'nan (济南), Yidu (益都), Dezhou (德州) and other places in 1269 AD were successively suffered from natural disasters on sericulture, thus were allowed to reduce levy of silk as appropriate. (Song, 1999, p. 77, 382, 1638) Even so, the ruling clique's conquest and oppression to the commoners will not be relaxed. The temporary reduction of the collection quota for raw silk in the affected area will inevitably be made up in other tax items or tax quotas in other regions.

In the early Yuan Dynasty, the destruction of farmland and mulberry plants by the army was reported frequently. The imperial court repeatedly ordered it to be banned. The code of the Yuan Dynasty, such as the *General Regulations*, under the Chinese name of Tong-zhi-tiao-ge (通制条格), clearly stated that anyone who committed the above acts must not only be convicted, but also compensated. (Fang, 2001, p. 474, 481) Even for the nobility, it was no exception. There were times when the emperor's son-in-law destroyed peasants' fields during hunting. And they were also dealt with in accordance with the law. (Song, 1999, p. 2376) The soundness and enforcement of bans on vandalism of crops and mulberry trees played an effective role in the protection and restoration of agricultural and sericultural production at that time.

3.3 Official Compilation of Agricultural Books and Technical Guidance

The Yuan dynasty attached great importance to the official compilation and promotion of agricultural books. Ancient Chinese agricultural books generally include agricultural technique and production, involving agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery, etc., and also cover seasonal sign divination, farmland water conservancy, food processing and other contents. (Yang & Li, 2012) In 1318 AD, Officer Miao Haoqian (苗好

谦), along with his compiled work *Illustration of mulberry tree planting*, under the Chinese name of Zai-sang-tu-shuo (栽桑图说) was approved by Emperor Renzong (仁宗帝), and was ordered to be printed in large quantities and disseminated among the folk. (Song, 1999, p.397) The two more important and comprehensive agricultural books were *Compilation of Agricultural and Sericultural Technology*, under the Chinese name of Nong-sang-ji-yao (农桑辑要) and *Wang's Monograph on Agricultural Technology*, under the Chinese name of Dong-lu-wang-shi-nong-shu (东鲁王氏农书). *Compilation of Agricultural and Sericultural Technology* was first published in 1273 AD by the institution Si-song-si on the orders of Kublai Khan. Miao Haoqian and other officials participated in the initial compilation and later revision. The book synthesized similar content from agricultural and sericultural books handed down from previous dynasties. As an agricultural work with official background, this book was widely distributed and promoted by the government. (Song, 1999, p.386) In this book, Volume III introduced the technique of mulberry tree planting, and the Volume IV introduced the technique of sericulture and silk reeling. Techniques for the cultivation and processing of ramie and cotton,

and plants used as dyes were dealt with in Volumes II and VI, respectively. These contents related to the planting and processing techniques of textile raw materials occupied important space in the whole book, not only retaining the essence of ancient agricultural books, but also adding notes based on the production experience in the Yuan Dynasty. The content of ramie and cotton planting and processing was still not included in the previous publications. *Wang's Monograph on Agricultural Technology* was compiled by Wang Zhen (王祯) during his tenure (between 1295 and 1304 AD) as the county commanders in Xuanzhou (宣州) and Xinzhou (信州). At that time, his book was the most comprehensive agricultural monograph ever recorded. The book was not only rich in content of the cultivation and production of textile fibers, but also special in setting separate chapters for textile tools. Teaching civilians to identify and use common textile tools through atlases was also a feature of the book.

From the perspective of cultivation and production of textile fibers, both books arranged a large number of pages on systematically introducing and summarizing the techniques related to the planting of ramie, mulberry trees and cotton, as well as silkworm rearing, silk reeling and spinning skills. Quite a few new technologies were also added to the contents, such as ramie fiber processing, cocoon steaming and silkworm pupal killing before reeling, cotton planting and processing, gardenia and gleditsia planting for dye-preparing, etc. The discussion on how to objectively treat the planting and production of textile raw materials according to the differences in the natural environment between the north and south of China and the local conditions was also major progress for agricultural books of the Yuan Dynasty. The introduction of new techniques and the transmission of scientific ideas in the books not only promoted the improvement of the raw material planting technical system, but also tended to be practical for the technical guidance of textile production. In addition, Cheng Qi (程棨)'s work of "*Ploughing and Weaving Diagrams*" (耕织图), which was completely based on the same themes and styles created by Lou Shu (楼璘) in the Song Dynasty, was officially distributed by promotion. In terms of content presentation, the ploughing and weaving diagrams depicted the specific links of rice production and sericulture weaving in the form of a series of drawings, which was an important form of farming-persuading. It was also an important embodiment of the traditional emphasis on agriculture in ancient China. Behind it was the traditional etiquette and governance, showing a symbolic practice of Chinese political operation. (Wang, 2022) The purpose of the Yuan authorities in organizing the revision and popularization of agricultural books and mass-distribution of *Ploughing and Weaving Diagrams* was not only to make officials understand the principle of "taking agriculture and textile handcraft as fundamental", but also to guide commoner to acquire the essential planting and processing techniques. It also conveyed the ideal of governance that hopes for social harmony and national stability.

3.4 Effects of Policy Implementation

Under the advocacy and agitation of the imperial court, all localities urged and encouraged the extensive development of agriculture and textiles production. The overall effect of the guidelines was that agriculture and textile handcraft recovered in the northern regions and in the Huaihe River basin, which borders the north and south, while in the areas south of the Yangtze River and some ethnic minority areas achieved different degrees of development on their original basis. (Zhou, 2019, p. 519) Taking silk production-related mulberry planting as an example, the government refined the cultivation standards. As the *General Regulations: Farming and Mulberry Planting*, under the Chinese name of Tong-zhi-tiao-ge: Nong-sang (通制条格·农桑) stipulates: "Each laborer must plant 20 new mulberry trees every year for silkworm feeding." (Fang, 2001, p.458) The promotion and extensive planting of mulberry trees in various places promoted sericulture and silk

reeling production. Officer Miao Haoqian was affirmed and rewarded by Emperor Wuzong (武宗帝) in 1309 AD for presenting to the imperial court the effective methods of promoting on agriculture and sericulture, and urging the folk to practice. The techniques reported by Miao were also promoted everywhere as a paradigm by the imperial court in 1316 AD. (Song, 1999, p. 388, 1564) Cases of officials guiding the folk to engage in weaving were also recorded in history. During his tenure in Yongfeng County, Jiangxi Province, Wang Zhen bought mulberry seedlings and cotton seeds and taught local people the art of planting. This period was shortly after cotton seeds were imported into China. Wang can be called a pioneer in advocating cotton planting and textile production among local officials. The boom of the cotton textile handcrafts in the Yuan Dynasty developed the commodity economy, promoted the establishment of new towns, and improved the commoner's clothing materials. (Chen & Chen, 1998) Moreover, cotton cloth, which only played the role of tribute or a small amount of trade in the past, became a large scale of levy by the state and a large commodity in foreign trade in the Yuan Dynasty (Li, 1981). This can be seen that textiles occupied an important position in the national economy and commoner's lives.

The policies advocated by the imperial court to promote agricultural and textile production were often unevenly implemented at the basic level. In 1291 AD, Secretariat reported that some officials in the south of the Yangtze River region harassed the farmers while performing their duties of supervising the cultivation of fields and mulberry. (Fang, 2001, p. 466) In order to fulfill the tasks of supervising, officials in some regions even reported data falsely. In 1318 AD, officials of Da-si-nong-si reported to the imperial court that some institutions responsible for supervising agricultural affairs filled in forms greatly exceeded the area of land available for planting in order to make the numbers of mulberry trees planted in the registration books look good and to create the illusion of increasing year after year. (Song, 1999, p. 1565) As the fraud was revealed, it was no wonder to be caricatured as "planting mulberry trees on paper". (Chen, 1998, p. 234) When the intention of the decision-making level in designating the policies was seriously distorted by the executive level in the process of implementation, the effect of such policies can be imagined.

4. The Regulation of Textile Handcrafts by Taxation Policy

According to the taxation policy of the Yuan Dynasty, the mere engagement of labouring people in agricultural production was not enough to complete the heavy tax burden imposed by the feudal government. They also had to work hard in side businesses such as textiles to make ends meet. There were two changes worth noting. First, the levying of silk products began to change from silk fabrics to silk fibers. Second, the emergence of cotton cloth in the levy and the increasing amount of collection. These two major changes were not just changes in the form and content of taxation policy. The improvement of cotton textile production efficiency and the decline in cost in the Yuan Dynasty created conditions for cotton to partially replace silk and ramie fabrics (Li, 1984), which also means a major event in the economic history, agricultural history and textile technological history of China.

4.1 Levy of Ramie and Woolen Products Remained Important Items

In the Yuan Dynasty, the cultivation of ramie was promoted from the south to the Central Plains. Ramie fiber was still the most common clothing fabric for civilians. The collection of ramie cloth in the Yuan Dynasty continued to be an important variety of levy for textile. The burden of completing levy through ramie fiber processing and weaving cloth was very heavy, and the working conditions and living conditions were extremely hard. The poet Wang Mian (王冕) who lived in Yuan Dynasty wrote: "The peasant women from the south regions are so hard! They worked all night processing twine, which is to be woven into cloth for completing levy." In ramie-producing areas, ramie cloth as a levy in kind was usually rejected and was required to pay directly in silver. This meant that the commoners were forced to sell the hard-woven ramie

cloth at a low price in exchange for silver and then surrender it. It was also to be expected that many layers of exploitation and deduction be experienced in this process.

Felt-and-carpet weaving was the traditional handicraft of the people, in which the raw materials involved were mainly sheep wool, but also camel wool. The production facilities, product names and consumed materials of felt and carpet for Yuan's court use recorded in *The Record of Materials for Felt and Carpet Production of Yuan*, under the Chinese name of Da-yuan-zhan-ji-gong-wu-ji (大元毡罽工物记) can almost reflect the true appearance of the official felt and carpet production in the Yuan Dynasty. (Zhao, 2013) In 1324 AD alone, the amount of wool consumed for producing felt and carpets reached 3,483 kilograms, indicating that the imperial court and the Mongol nobles still had a considerable demand for felt and carpets after entering the Central Plains. However, it was not uncommon for officials to do the tricks in the process of woolen collection. For example, the production agency responsible for wool fabrics committed cheating when acquiring from the place of origin. Some daredevils even embezzled more than 5,000 kilograms of wool used by officials. The epitaphs of some dedicated officials recorded their exploits in collecting illegal gains during their tenure, which can reflect the prevalence of corruption in the collection of textile raw materials at that time. (Hu, 2004, pp. 610-611)

4.2 Collection of Silk Fibers Mainly Depended on the South Region of the Yangtze River and the Amount Remained Tremendous

The collection of silk fibers in the Yuan Dynasty mainly relied on the south region of the Yangtze River. In above areas, the widespread planting of mulberry trees and cultivation of silkworms provided conditions for the recovery and development of silk production. Marco Polo's travelogue reflected the silk handicrafts in those areas along the routine. And to a certain extent, it also reflected the approximate situation of silk production in Zhenjiang (镇江), Suzhou (苏州), Quzhou (衢州) and other places in south region of the Yangtze River. (Charignon & Feng, 2012, pp. 239-246, 290, 313-317, 335) Different from the silk fabrics levied by the Song Dynasty, the textile category designation changed from silk fabrics to silk fibers in the Yuan Dynasty. At the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty, the northern region had already implemented the collection of silk fibers as a levy. After the Mongol regime conquered the Southern Song Dynasty and officially ruled the south region of the Yangtze River, the policy of collecting silk fibers was extended to the south. In this way, the developed silkworm cultivation in the south could provide more raw fibers for weaving silk fabrics for the ruling clique of the Yuan Dynasty. According to *Chronicles of Deqing County, Volume 4, Native Products*, under the Chinese name of De-qing-xian-zhi Juan-si Shi-huo-kao (德清县志·卷四·食货考), Deqing, a county of Zhejiang Province and famous for the production of silk, was enforced the levy of more than 14,447 kilograms of silk fibers per year since 1341 AD. From this, it can be inferred that the huge amount of silk collected in the Yuan Dynasty also meant that the southern region was heavily levied for silk. Silk reeling by hand was a hard and heavy labor. The Yuan Dynasty collected a large amount of silk material from the silkworm farmers and gave priority to satisfying weaving operations in government agencies. Such acts were undoubtedly predatory in nature.

4.3 Cotton Was Included in the Regular Levy for the First Time

In the Yuan Dynasty, the cotton producing areas in southern China had reached a certain scale, and the annual output was considerable. The development and rise of the cotton textile handicraft promoted the regional economy, while making cotton partially replace grain as a new fiscal growth point for taxation. (Zhang & Deng, 2020) Due to the profitability, the imperial court took coercive measures in the process of promoting cotton cultivation. Even in areas where cotton had not yet been cultivated, the authorities forced peasants to

hand in cotton fibers and cotton cloth. (Li, 1985, p. 136) In order to ensure the collection of cotton cloth, in 1289 AD the imperial court established several Bureaus of Cotton Administration , under the Chinese name of Mu-mian-ti-ju-si (木棉提举司) in the Yangtze River basin and southern regions, and strengthened the relevant administrative functions. Together, these bureaus set a total levy of more than 1,300,000 metres of cotton cloth to be collected from the private sector each year. (Song, 1999, p. 217) According to the production capacity of cotton cloth at that time, this quota was by no means a normal amount. With the burden of farmland on the peasants already very heavy, not only did the tax quotas designated by the rulers not be reduced, but in many places cotton growers who were not engaged in spinning and weaving had to hand in cotton cloth as an entity to the government by buying cotton cloth from the market. (Zhang, 2010, p.14) The reason for this appearance can be attributed to the fact that the Mongolian ruling clique turned to extracting cotton fibers and cotton cloth from the folk, seeing that peasants could no longer pay more from the fields, and realizing that the burgeoning cotton planting and textile handcraft was profitable. However, the fact that, from the late 13th century onwards, Chinese peasants must grow cotton and weave cotton cloth to complete levies was still of great significance in the history of promoting the development of cotton textile production in China.

5. Conclusion

The guidelines of promoting agricultural and textile production in the Yuan Dynasty were a series of institutional arrangements adopted by the Mongolian nomadic aristocracy in the process of consolidating the feudal centralization system and, to a large extent, under the influence of the agricultural traditions of the Central Plains. The main goal of maintaining rule and consolidating privileges was achieved through implementation of restoring and protecting agricultural planting, promoting the supply of silk, cotton and other textile raw materials for handicraft. A series of policies and measures adopted by the rulers objectively played a role in developing agriculture and textile production, and also played a role in stimulating the development of silkworm cultivating, cotton planting and processing, and other relevant techniques. Moreover, the gradual promotion of cotton cultivation in the mainland during the Yuan Dynasty was a significant achievement in agricultural and textile production.

However, as the amount of textile raw materials collected by the imperial court from the people continued to expand, the tax burden by the commoners of the Yuan Dynasty was heavier than in previous dynasties. From the perspective of the supply of textile raw materials, the core of the policies was to ensure tax collection in physical form of fabrics of silk, cotton, ramie, and their raw fibers by planting of cash crops such as mulberry tree and cotton, and cultivating silkworm. The essence of the policies was to satisfy the extravagant desires for high-end textile products by keeping the peasants firmly tied to the farmland, while maintaining and consolidating the dominance of the Mongol aristocracy. Thus, it is not difficult to explain why the ruling clique of the Yuan Dynasty, on the one hand, repeatedly emphasized to strengthen the supervision of agriculture and to advocate textile sideline production in various places, showing the appearance of paying attention to people's livelihood; and on the other hand, forcibly exploited and plundered, resulting in the people bearing more tax burden on silk fabrics and cotton cloth than any previous dynasty. In the final analysis, thus type of situation was created by the Mongol aristocracy in power after bringing relatively backward behavioral preferences and social ideas of their nomadic life period into the Central Plains. This fully shows that although the regime dominated by nomadic civilization conquered by force the lands dominated by agrarian civilization, the social productivity and production relations under the Mongol regime was far from perfect. It was even more hard to match the sound Chinese feudal political facilities, leading to the inevitable consequence of the Mongolian nomadic regime's inability to adapt to the highly developed feudal economy accumulated by the historically rooted agricultural civilization.

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