

Week 4 Reading 3: Reforms since the late 1970s

- The most dramatic aspect of rural reform since the late 1970s has been the dismantling of the commune system . In the commune system, apart from private plots allocated to the villagers, land was in theory owned collectively by the commune and managed by the production brigades and production teams; in practice, however, land was owned by the village and managed by the production team.
- after the commune system was dismantled, land was in theory owned by the state and managed by the household; in practice, however, land was still owned by the village while being managed by individual households.
- All the state requires is a certain amount of agricultural tax. In avoid the ideological stigma of privatization, the Chinese government first called the program of household land distribution “**the Production Responsibility System**”, indicating that individual household didn't not own the land but only had the right to manage it.
- Later, the PRS was declared to last indefinitely instead of re-distribution in every 5 years.
- What boosting rural income was the increase in the price of agricultural produce allowed by the government.
- the effective and low-cost “barefoot teacher” and “barefoot doctor” systems were discarded. The poor and the helpless are left to fend for themselves.
 - e.g. levies were collected to purchase new paper that no one would read. and the village's only basketball court was used by the village leader to build his house.
 - the return of clan politics to village life.
- Another consequences of reform is that it increased polarization between the well-off and the extremely poor.
 - rapid increase in crime and a sense of insecurity.
- in 1978, the central government had launched what was called **caizhen baoganzhi**, which basically meant that local authorities could share a certain percentage of the revenue they had raised, instead of handing all of it to the state as used to be the practice.
 - the system could be a recipe for abuse of power and corruption.
- By and larger, either during the pre-reform or post-reform period, income from agriculture alone had not fundamentally changed the quality of life and standards of living for Gao villagers. It was an involutory development of grace environmental consequences though which Gao villagers were kept in a poverty trap.