

The Political Phenomenology of *Banbiantian* (Half the Sky): Reconstruction of Women's Status and Role in New China

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Abstract: The proclamation *Banbiantian* (半边天 Half the Sky), which was proposed during the Mao era, is a vivid and straightforward appellation of women in new China that has gained popularity in national and folk discourses over the past seven decades. This article disassembles this term into three elements — quotation marks, *Banbian* (半边 Half), and *tian* (天 Sky) — to conduct a political phenomenological analysis. By exploring and sorting reports related to *Banbiantian* in *Renmin ribao*, this article reflects on changes in relation to status and role of women in the Mao era on the basis of three findings. Firstly, the quotation marks make *Banbiantian* a symbol of women's actual experience and ideal image while playing a role in enhancement and guidance. Secondly, *Banbian* indicates the equal ratio of men and women and symbolizes the dynamic adjustment in determining equal rights, demonstrating equal capabilities, and improving equal status. Thirdly, *tian* is the scope of women's liberation. Through women's participation in public labor and political activities, coupled with balanced national and regional coordination, its scope continues to expand, extending from the family to society and the country.

Keywords: *Banbiantian*/Half the Sky, Females/Women, New China, Nation-building, Political Phenomenology

Given the significance of the women's liberation movement to the nation building in modern China, the concept of "women in new China" (新中国女性) should go beyond the scope of gender studies and be examined for its wide political impact. However, historically, gender politics hardly has been an orthodox study of political science, let alone the more specific topic of women in new China. Moreover, the study of political history is in the doldrums, with little attention paid to the important historical phenomenon of women in new China. With the expansion and innovation of political methodology, some marginalized topics have been brought into the broader academic discussion. Based on theories and methods related to political phenomenology, this article

examines “women in China” from a brand-new perspective, thereby providing a fresh understanding of the status and role of women in the People’s Republic of China. This understanding is not a subversive reconstruction, but complementary. This exploration can be perceived as a gender study from a sociological angle and a national study from the perspective of political science, as well as an attempt at political phenomenology in the case study.

I. WHY DO WOMEN BECOME *BANBLANTIAN*

Scholars have reached a consensus that the image of Chinese women in the Mao era is not immutable. However, they hold distinctive views on how and why these images changed, especially on the relationship between the state and women (Hershatter, 2007). Some scholars argue that the will of the state played a top-down role, “creating a blueprint for gender equality.” (Wu, 2009) Others believe that although women across China faced similar physical and political situations, women from all walks of life showed vastly different responses (Zhong, Zheng, & Di, 2001). Both views are supported by a host of scholars and published works, forming a theoretical vortex.

Political phenomenology (Jung & Embree, 2016: 1-31; Wang, 2019a; 2019b) may help us leave the vortex. The first task of political phenomenology is to clarify the object. According to this principle, existing research on women in new China has produced extremely complex opinions, which need to be put aside for verification. The first step is to face the thing itself. When discussing women in new China, we can employ simple political cognition and knowledge to prudently put forward two preliminary opinions: First, women in new China are mainly female citizens of the People’s Republic of China who are engaged in various political and social activities in a specific time and space, and they share some common attributes. Second, women in new China are also represented by a large number of sub-groups and numerous individuals, each of them with special attributes and the capacity to represent the whole.

According to the first opinion, as women in new China are citizens, their overall image can be defined by the country. In the Mao era, the teachings of spiritual leaders in new China such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Mao Zedong, as well as various official texts based on their ideas,

shaped the national discourses. The values expressed in these texts constituted the core of the national ideology, pointing out and even stipulating the ideal state of women in new China. However, these national discourses, which emphasized the ideal state, obviously could not objectively clarify the actual state of women in new China. Therefore, those top-down studies from a national perspective could hardly resolve the fundamental conflicts between the ideal state and actual state. Based on the second opinion, the numerous sub-groups and individuals that represent women in new China have complex attributes. Their stories are not only diverse but also often result in irreconcilable conflicts between the description and interpretation of the consciousness and images of women at that time. Therefore, although the bottom-up case study shows the various facets of women in new China in real life, it contributes little to understanding their image as a whole.

The existing studies are not meaningless. They perform some political phenomenological analyses and clarify two facts. First, women in the Mao era were an important labor resource managed by the state; second, at that time, there were significant differences in social awareness and behaviors between female individuals and groups. It is imperative to deepen such research, but it is difficult to clearly present the overall image of women in new China. In the face of this issue, it is not equitable to only elaborate the national discourse on women, and it is impractical to gather numerous fragmented cases. Therefore, we go the other way, that is, to explore the universal social awareness or image of women in new China that can be widely recognized and applied in practice, which helps us grasp an overall understanding of women in new China from the perspective of society as a whole.

Based on this idea, we have found that within the first 30 years after the founding of new China, the most successful image of women in new China might be *Banbiantian*, i.e., half the sky. As a symbolic representation of females or women, it was proposed in early 1956 and quickly spread to the public. By 1994, *Banbiantian* had become the most vivid praise for the role of women in society (Anonymous, 1994). On January 1, 1995, China Central Television (CCTV) launched a weekend program for women called *Half the Sky* (半边天), which lasted for more than ten years, making the term *Banbiantian* widely known and famous across the world. There are advantages in using this term to present the image of women in new China. Firstly, it vividly reflects the extraordinarily complex ontology of

women in new China. Secondly, while its historical trajectory, from creation to development, is clear, there is little important research on this trajectory, thus making it beneficial to conduct a new academic study.

Due to the limited length of this paper, the main materials quoted come from *Renmin ribao* (人民日报 People's Daily). The term *Banbiantian* was first publicized in this newspaper, which had consistent and rich reports on it. Compared with the national discourse composed of authoritative texts by spiritual leaders and normative laws and policies, news reports are more flexible and can provide a more relaxed platform for the generation and development of collective consciousness. It provides a more general perspective than that gained from various political and social sources. Even for individual cases, it often focuses on overall aspects. Additionally, *People's Daily* has unique significant advantages. It is not only the official media with the largest circulation and influence in China, but also a platform for conveying national will and showcasing public sentiment, reflecting the relationship between the theory of national discourse and the practice of public behavior. Therefore, the relevant reports of *Banbiantian* published in *People's Daily* can, to a certain extent, reflect the country's ideals for women and women's actual response to the country's requirements.

In fact, some scholars have studied *Banbiantian* and women in new China based on news reports, with a focus on gender, journalism and communication, and history. Most of these studies lack clear research methods, and a few simply adopt text analysis. The greatest contribution of these studies lies in their detailed analyses of relevant reports. Their shortcomings are that they often lack the ability to distinguish factual information from the false, while equating news reports with historical facts. Moreover, they often ignore theoretical and authentic evidence and are arbitrary in the selection of specific materials. In order to make up for these defects, two special methods are adopted in this paper. Firstly, we employ political phenomenology and disassemble the term “Bianbiantian” into three basic elements — quotation marks, *Banbian* (半边 half) and *tian* (天 sky)— and observe and analyze them separately. Secondly, we avoid the falsification or semantic analysis of historical materials and focus on the in-depth exploration of objective information (such as industry, region, and identity) related to *Banbian* and *tian* on a long-term scale. The related information in *Renmin ribao* is the collective unconsciousness of the state, society, and the people, rather than the outcome of deliberate planning by

the main body of the state.

II. QUOTATION MARKS: THE POLITICAL POWER OF SYMBOLS

The phrase *Banbiantian* without quotation marks generally means “half of the sky”, while *Banbiantian* with quotation marks symbolizes the women in new China. Therefore, it is the quotation marks that determine the concept being conveyed. In this mapping, the public associate the familiar experience and knowledge of half the sky (naturally) with the *Banbiantian* (symbolically referring to women) in the form of an analogy.

In the Mao era, political rhetoric often expressed the positive characteristics of women in new China through symbolism, especially in Mao Zedong’s poetic discourses. As early as 1936, he wrote in “To Comrade Ding Ling: to the tune of Immortal at Riverside” (临江仙 • 给丁玲同志), “A literary lady yesterday, now a general in battle array.” (昨天文小姐, 今日武将军) These two lines of poetry reflect the contrasting identities of Ding Ling as time goes by, which highly praise her revolutionary spirit. Mao Zedong eschewed the traditional Chinese image of women that had been promoted for thousands of years and endowed them with the identity of “martial” (女 武)—a descriptor long associated solely with men (Louie, 2002). Since then, through various women’s movements, the Communist Party of China (CPC) had instilled this ideal into the consciousness of women, creating a new female image, that is, “women in new China”. Twenty-five years later, Mao Zedong reinforced this thought in his poem “Inscription on a Photograph of Militia Women: to the tune of Seven-Character *Jue Ju*” (七绝 • 为女民兵题照), calling on women “who love battle array instead of gay attire in show” (不爱红装爱武装). Under the influence of state and revolutionary leaders, more concepts related to the attribute of “martial” (女 武) were included metaphorical references to women, such as Mulan (木兰) and Mu Guiying (穆桂英).

However, the general image of female martial or female soldier or the specific image of Hua Mulan or Mu Guiying have natural defects in mapping women in new China. Although they created new attributes for women in new China through the emphasis on “martial” (女 武), they hid

the inherent attributes of women that are different from those of men. Thus, metaphorical descriptions are not in line with the Marxist gender outlook or women's liberation theory from the perspective of the feminist. The basic logic of the latter is that the emancipation of women must be based on the complete emancipation of all mankind. Therefore, as one of the most important groups of mankind, women need to assume the responsibility of the emancipation of all mankind, and their core task is the proletarian revolution.

The class attributes of females or women in this logical chain are exactly what embarrass the female martials Hua Mulan and Mu Guiying. After all, their original images were inextricably linked with the exploiting classes. For example, in the reports published in *People's Daily* from 1950 to 1966, Mu Guiying was always regarded as a symbol of advanced women. However, in 1967, Mu Guiying was criticized as a "loyal minister and good general of the Great Song Dynasty" (Anonymous, 1967). In the following ten years, Mu Guiying completely disappeared in *People's Daily*. It was not until the end of 1977 that Mu Guiying resumed her image as a positive symbol of women. Mulan had the same fate as Mu Guiying, and they all disappeared from the public for ten years. In short, although Hua Mulan and Mu Guiying have many merits — such as promoting the positive traits of loyalty, bravery, and valor — the original sin of "loyal minister and good general" alone is enough to make them be rejected in the class struggle between right and wrong on cardinal issues.

Finally, *Banbiantian* became the best symbolic mapping of women in new China. Taking *People's Daily* as an example, since *Banbiantian* was adopted by the newspaper as a symbol of women in 1956, the term appeared in 349 reports by the end of 1979, which was about double the total related reports that involved Hua Mulan and Mu Guiying. The primary reason for the change is that from the perspective of polysemy, *Banbiantian* originally refers to a thing in the natural world. Its simple meaning makes it a fitting and understandable symbol for women in new China, even without knowing much about historical figures such as Hua Mulan and Mu Guiying. In short, the image of *Banbiantian* is concise and aligns with the principles of women's liberation, namely, that women, like men, have the responsibility for liberating all mankind. The vividness of the phrase elevates the status of women and solidifies their position as an important force for changes.

III. *BANBLAN*: THE POLITICAL RATIO OF EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Since *Banbian* (half) symbolizes the ideal in gender equality, “half” could inspire women in the revolutionary era with a perfect imagination of their role. The CPC knew very well that even if it could work toward equality for women through laws, policies, and other mandates, it was unable to solve the *Nara Dilemma* (娜拉困境) put forward by Lu Xun. In the Mao era, China tried to get out of this dilemma through various strategies that could adjust the gender ratio. There were three main steps, namely, the determination of equal rights, the demonstration of equal capabilities, and the promotion of equal status.

The primary logic of the ratio adjustment strategy is to ensure that women have equal rights with men. Gender equality had already been a well-known slogan before the founding of new China, especially during the Agrarian Revolution. The equal distribution of land and the equality of rights between the sexes fundamentally changed the disparity that had been part of agricultural China for thousands of years. Although a host of major documents in the early days of new China repeatedly emphasized the equal rights of men and women, the notion was not implemented. Among the various rights, economic rights, which are inferior to political rights, should have priority. Based on Lenin’s emphasis on women’s participation in co-productive labor with men in the public economy, Mao Zedong highlighted that the key to gender equality lay in the economic right of “equal pay for equal work” (Mao, 1999: 488-492).

The prerequisite for realizing equal economic rights is that women make a meaningful contribution to economic activities. Therefore, the next step of the ratio adjustment strategy is to verify this contribution. *People’s Daily’s* first report on *Banbiantian* was skeptical of women’s ability to do this, arguing that requiring women to undertake the same workload as men in outdoor production was not an act of “seeking truth from facts” and would harm the “health and safety” of women (Anonymous, 1956). In the following two years, the statement that “women hold up half of the sky” (妇女是半边天) did not reappear in the *People’s Daily*. The second report, during China’s Great Leap Forward (大跃进运动), abandoned the view of respecting the differences in physical strength between men and women. It pointed to the outstanding performance of rural women in Hunan Province during the Great Steel Smelting Campaign (大炼钢铁)

as proof that women not only could participate in agriculture and light industrial production but also engage in “heavy industrial production”. (Anonymous, 1958). To some extent, this report set the tone for the subsequent image building of *Banbiantian*. Even if gender equality is manifested broadly, the physical ability based on physiological equality has always been the most common basic ability. “Their body shape symbolizes the power of new China” (Chen, 2003: 268-295). Meanwhile, based on the lofty economic impact of heavy industry during the Great Leap Forward, *Renmin ribao*’s second report concluded that women and men should and could be equal in all walks of life.

Numerous reports from 1958 to 1979 fully indicated that women could work together with men in almost all fields. However, the underlying identity distribution and chronology reveal a subtle logical change in the adjustment strategy. Figure 1 concisely shows the different proportions of female identities in reports on *Banbiantian*. At that time in China’s population and industrial structure, most people were peasants, and 41% of females reported by China’s Daily were peasants. There were not many female workers, and most of them were mainly engaged in the light industry. Due to the small number of female workers and the dominant position of the industry, they were often engaged in government communication. The number of related reports on female workers ranks third, which is slightly higher than the actual proportion of female workers (14%). The number of reports on female cadres ranks second, far higher than the actual ratio (8%). This is because almost all indoor and outdoor activities related to women at that time were included in the women campaigns, and the work of mobilizing grassroots women campaigns relied heavily on female cadres.

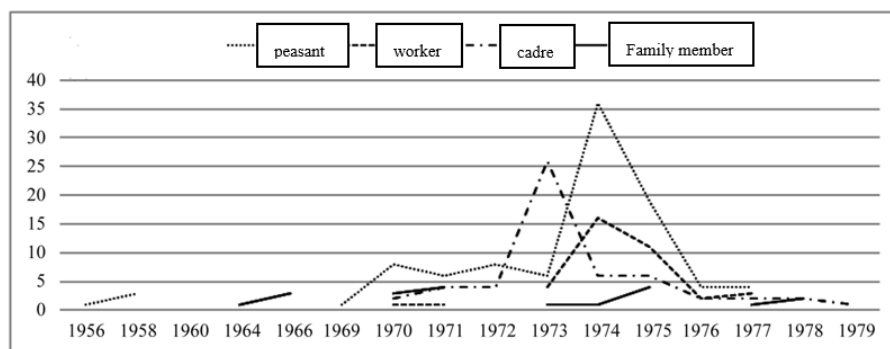
Figure 1 The proportion of female identities in reports on *Half the Sky* (1956-1979)

Identity	Peasant	Cadre	Worker	Family member	Intellectual	Soldier	Others
Proportion	41%	24%	16%	8%	5%	3%	3%

News reports are considered as the bellwether of current events, and the high proportion of reports on female cadres indicates that women’s contributions to society shifted from the economic field to the political arena. This dynamic shift can be seen in the available data. According to

Figure 2, among various female identities in the reports on *Banbiantian*, compared with the identities of farmers and workers, cadres had the largest proportion in 1973.

Figure 2 The change of female identities in reports on *Half the Sky* (1956-1979)



Both static and dynamic data indicate that during the Mao era, the CPC and the Chinese government were indeed trying to realize the ideal of “half”. The close relationship between agricultural activities and women’s traditional outdoor work effectively demonstrates the “half”. The high physical demands of industrial activities make it the best field for women to validate their physical capabilities. National governance mainly reflects the expression of political rights and the implementation of political power. The participation in national governance allows women not only to manage men, but also directly sublimates their identity into people with all the power of the country, which complements the ability of women as the “half” in the political and social sense.

However, the implementation of the “half” ideal was not smooth. For women (or men) who believe in and pursue equal rights, they are always proactive in seeking and relying on the distributors of rights. The cases of female cadres, workers, and peasants cannot fully illustrate this point. After all, women are ideologically endowed with the status of “master” (主人) and thus associated with the grand plan of nation-state construction” (Manning, 2010: 850-869). We can look at another special case, namely “family member” (jiashu 家属). Although family member is an epithet for females and women, they cannot become the real “half” as subordinates. It does indicate that the traditional patriarchy still existed in the Mao era (Croll, 1983; Stacey, 1983). The solution for women is to emulate men by devoting themselves to outdoor labor to increase their

social rights. For women, who historically have few rights resources, it is the most stable and convenient way to move closer to gaining status on a national level. Figure 2 shows that the reports on family members are distributed in four stages, with concentrated contents (such as “Family members of employees in Daqing” 大庆职工家属), showing obvious traces of the active regulation by the state. By sorting out relevant reports, we have found that almost all reports emphasize that these housewives voluntarily gave up their families and personal interests, and actively studied Mao Zedong’s thought, and eventually became “revolutionary family members”, thus gaining more rights from the state.

In short, in the first 30 years after the founding of new China, based on the theory of women’s emancipation, the central government used state power to adjust the proportion of women’s rights, resulting in a stratified state of women’s rights. “Half” does not mean “equal share”, and its meaning varies in different fields and different periods. In the economic field, a labor force reservoir was established to dynamically manage women (such as the increase and decrease in the proportion of female laborers); in the political field, the dam of increasing rights significantly improved women’s ability to combat discrimination. The proportion of women with professional knowledge and management capabilities steadily increased, which provided important support for the adjustment of women’s rights since the reform and opening up.

IV. *TLAN*: POLITICAL SPACE FOR WOMEN’S LIBERATION

Nowadays, people are familiar with the saying that “women hold up half the sky” (妇女能顶半边天). It is generally recognized that *tian* (naturally referring to the sky) encompasses all types of activities in various fields, such as the country, society, and family. However, in the first 30 years after the founding of new China, only about 7% of reports on *Banbiantian* involved the term *tian*. To precisely understand the meaning of this, it is necessary to study the specific historical context. After conducting the word frequency analysis on 349 reports on *Banbiantian*, we found that *Women* (妇女), *Revolution* (革命), *Chairman* (主席), *Production* (生产), and *Socialism* (社会主义) comprise the top five, which is consistent with our previous analysis. However, in order to understand *tian* more accurately, we still need to study the attributes and predicates related to it. The attributes depict the specific domain of *tian*, while the predicates

describe the behavioral characteristics associated with it.

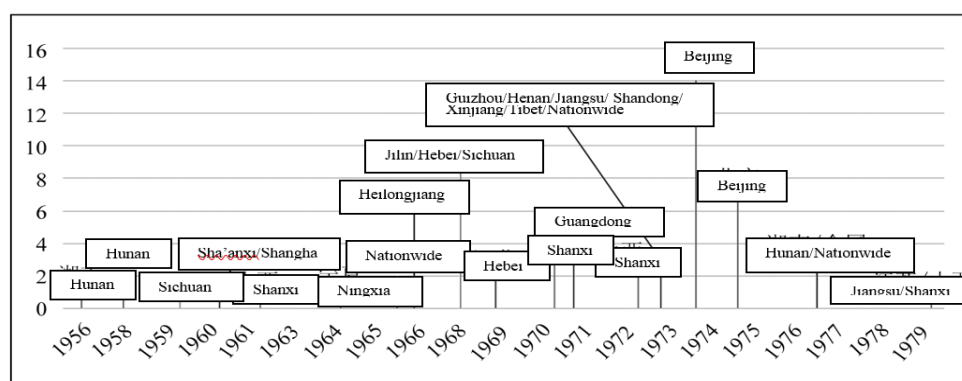
The proportion of female identities in the reports on *Banbiantian* shown in Figure 1 indicates that the main fields of *tian* are industrial and agricultural production and political and social governance, which are closely related to Mao Zedong's consistent view of women as a great human resource. Hu Yaobang, the first secretary of the Central Secretariat of the Communist Youth League once pointed out in his speech, "The power of Chinese women is immense, and they hold up half the sky of the entire great cause" (Anonymous, 1960). However, by sorting the vocabulary directly related to *Banbiantian*, we found that before 1966, the *tian* hailed as a "great cause" (伟大事业) only appeared twice in the national discourse. In many reports, *productive* (生产的) is the most common attribute of *sky*. In the decade after 1966, in reports involving the *tian*, *production* (生产) appeared 42 times, while *construction* (建设) appeared 42 times. The words *construction* and *sky* usually appeared together in reports on *socialist production and construction*. The most prominent attribute is *revolutionary* (革命的) (appears 93 times), which implies that *revolution* (革命) is the most important field of *sky*. The common expressions are *socialist revolution* (社会主义革命) (27 times) and *three revolutions* (三大革命) (26 times), including *class struggle, production struggle, and scientific experiment* (阶级斗争、生产斗争和科学实验). In short, the evolution of *tian* from concrete to abstract, from low level to high level, was consistent with the change in the proportion of "half".

In terms of predicates, the non-emotional phrase "play the role of" (发挥) appeared 177 times, and the emotional phrase "hold up" (顶) appeared 108 times. It is worth mentioning that more than half of the phrase "hold up" is expressed in the past state. Specifically, "顶起" and "顶了" (literally means "hold up") appear 65 times and 2 times, respectively. More than one-third is expressed in the future state. Specifically, "能顶" and "要顶" (literally means "will hold up") appear 26 times and 7 times, respectively. The phrases "顶住" and "顶着" (literally means "holding up") only appear 8 times. The verb phrase "hold up" mainly adopts the past and the future tenses, which caters to the focus of the women's policy at that time, that is, to publicize women's outstanding abilities and rights, and to encourage more women to devote themselves to the production, construction, and revolution of socialism in China. As a result, in the new

era of socialism, “new women” (新女性) and “new China” (新中国) complement each other in terms of capabilities and ideals.

In the context of People’s Daily’s reports, the attributes and predicates of *tian* intuitively show the demands and expectations of the state and society in the field of women’s behaviors. In addition, the reports contain some hidden data, which indirectly shows the intention of the state and society. We have found that 309 reports involve the names of provinces and cities, with the top six being Beijing, Shanxi, Hebei, Tianjin (which was under the jurisdiction of Hebei province from 1958 to 1966), Hunan, and Jilin. As the term *Banbiantian* was first proposed in Hunan, this province was mentioned many times by *People’s Daily* in the early days. After 1966, Hunan dropped out of the top five, but the order of the other five remained unchanged. This ranking reflects the fact that women’s work at that time relied heavily on typical cases featured with symbolism. As the capital, Beijing tops the list, and its practice on work concerning women serves as a model for other regions. The ranking of Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei may have something to do with the broader access to information for journalists. Shanxi and Jilin are in the top five due to the political campaigns of “Learning from Dazhai in Agriculture and Learning from Daqing in Industry” (农业学大寨, 工业学大庆), and the excellent industrial demonstration effects of the two places were reflected in women’s work.

Figure 3 The provinces with the most reports on “*Banbiantian*” over the years



In terms of the number of reports on *Banbiantian*, Figure 3 reveals that Shanxi Province, where Dazhai is located, is the province that won annual champion on multiple occasions, while Jilin Province, where Daqing is

located, only won *Annual Champion* once. This means that “Learning from Dazhai in Agriculture” had a larger influence on work involving women. Based on the previous analysis of female identities and word frequency, it can be found that in the first 30 years after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, state and society unconsciously associated the status and role of women with agricultural production, which was in line with the reality of women’s occupation at that time.

Based on the data, the provinces with the most reports on *Banbiantian* are located north of the Huaihe River. Is there an underlying regional imbalance in the mobilization of women? Based on the statistics of geographical divisions closely related to administrative divisions, it is found that the regions that appear in the reports on *Banbiantian* over the past decades show a varied but balanced state. Specifically, as the core region of national politics, Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei appear 56 times in relevant reports; as the most developed region of the national economy, East China appears 50 times; and other northern regions (North China and Northwest China, excluding Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei) appear 53 times in total. Those regions together constitute the first echelon. The second echelon is composed of Central China (35 times), Northeast China (34 times), and Southwest and South China (34 times in total). Even though this figure is largely the result without human intervention, it at least partly indicates that women throughout China received the messaging, education, and mobilization related to *Banbiantian* in a relatively balanced manner.

The industries that women are engaged in have changed, from indoor labor to outdoor production and construction, and then to the entire revolutionary cause. Production construction is not only an economic practice but also a political space for women’s liberation. The analysis from the perspective of administrative divisions revealed the existence of *Banbiantian* in geographic space and proved that the state and society constructed a uniform definition of women’s status and role, underscoring the need for cooperation between the state and individual regions in promoting gender equality. This geopolitical distribution once again reflected the special attention given to women’s liberation in new China. The emphasis on the priority of the state was not the suppression of women’s rights, but the only way for women’s liberation from the perspectives of theory and reality.

CONCLUSION

Although the founding of new China maintained the continuity of Chinese history, it ushered in a new political era. The new institutional system substantially changed the status and role of females. Rather than being treated according to the traditional stereotype, women in the Mao era found expanding social and economic influence thanks to tenets of women's liberation and gender equality. *Banbiantian* was generally embraced as a symbol of women by the state and society — a reflection of the complex concept of women known to the public. As the most influential and widely disseminated media during the Mao era, People's Daily not only addressed the status of women's rights by connecting the growing liberation movement to the attributes of *Banbiantian*. The reports of *Renmin ribao* can be regarded as a snapshot of the thinking of the state and society in the Mao era.

The analysis of relevant texts was actually the exploration of the collective unconsciousness of the state and society. It has been found that the performance of women, as the other "half" of a society, in economic and political practice determines the ratio adjustment of gender rights. The ideal of absolute equality has positive political and cultural significance and provides a strong spiritual motivation for women to realize this goal. The reality of dynamic adjustment is based on the national conditions of new China, which improves the ability and environment for women to acquire their rights and interests through the exploration of their gains and losses. In just a few decades, the rights and responsibilities of women have undergone a seismic improvement. The shift from indoor to outdoor, from production construction to revolutionary undertakings, not only represents the tremendous progress of Chinese women in political development, but also demonstrates the implementation of Marxist theory on women's liberation. This attempt to integrate theory and practice involves hundreds of millions of women in a huge national organism, laying the foundation for the shaping of women's status and role since China's reform and opening up. Although the development of numerous fields has changed dramatically in the first 30 years and the next 40 years after the founding of new China, the field of women's studies is one of the rare and important fields that maintain continuity in both content and form. In this course, the concept of *Banbiantian* has played an indispensable role. Its characteristics were

featured in the revolutionary era and remain vigorous in the reform era.

Notes

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