

Study of the Land of American Indian in the Exploitation of the West

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Abstract

The rapid rise of the United States benefits from the western exploitation; and the first question that comes from the development of western regions, is the ownership of the land. American Indians are originally of the earliest residents of this stretch of land, but they have never formed the system of occupying and developing the land and confirming their sovereignty effectively, which gives the White man with advanced culture the pretext to attack and occupy. Because of the sharply increased population and immigrants, the White society endures stronger pressure on the land resources; therefore, immigrating into the west becomes one of the most effective way to lighten the pressure. Consequently, the land problem is very crucial for the existence and development of White society. Because of the enormous difference of the cultural system, the way of utilizing lands of India is obviously different from that of the White society. They engage in extensive agriculture or make a living by hunting. This kind of life style has an outstanding characteristic—it needs a very large region. This means that the contradiction on the land, is a kind of harsh struggle for existence between American Indians and White men. It has indicated that the White society is determined to capture American Indian's land.

Key words: Land; Westward movement; Reservation

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Rise of Westward Movement

The foundation and consolidation of the United States offered the political prerequisite for development of American capitalism. As mass movement westwards to develop new land, the Westward Movement rose in 1783 when U.S. got independence and entered the climax in the middle period of the 19th century. Groups of immigrants from east and Europe occupied the wide western land rapidly which became the most attracted phenomenon in American social and economic development in the 19th century. Because the War of Independence had crushed the provision on forbidding immigrants to cross to the west of Appalachian Mountain that issued by Britain in 1763, the western land became the place which had pleasant glamour to the people of different levels in North America who were seeking the hope of new life. These people swarmed to the west and built the states one after another. The federal government still stipulated that people could migrate to the west freely according to the decree. So a tide of pouring into the west upsurged and presented. In the course of entering to the west, Americans build up their home on the out-of-the-way land with both hands and the economy grows vigorously.

B. The Influence of Westward Movement

The Westward movement occupies important position in American history. It has played a decisive role on setting up the new states and expanding the national territory. While entering into the West, U.S. government implemented the territorial expansion policy. The domain of U.S.A. was expanded to along the Pacific Ocean rapidly from 1840's to 1850's. The enlarged district attracted much immigrants who promoted the rapid development of American economy. Capitalistic economy got fast increase and industrial revolution launched vigorously. It achieved the economic prosperity. Westward Movement has major impact on the political and economic life of U.S..

However, the movement is also a process that U.S. government expelled American Indian from their original land. Before the White's entering, American Indian lived and worked in the west. But they were expelled or killed since the rise of Westward Movement. The primitive society moved towards disintegration gradually. The policy of forcing American Indian to move towards the west in Jackson's administration and the Reservation System appeared in 1850's both proved that the American Indian was the biggest victims of expansion.

1. WESTWARD MOVEMENT AND THE WEST EXPLOITATION DURING 1860 TO 1890 IN U.S.

Since the foundation of United States, immigrating to the west had already begun. In the first half of the 19th century, Westward Movement moved forward constantly until the outburst of the Civil War. And after the Civil War, in the United States, besides the fast development of industry, the Westward Movement turned up its ultimate climax. That is the exploitation of the west during 1860 to 1890. During this period, half of the land in the country is brought under cultivation and settled down. This may be the unprecedented, large-scale immigration movement. Within one generation, American set up more than one billion farms in this last border area. And the new territories that were developed exceed the areas early American exploited in the past two centuries. Americans have already acquired the habit of moving forward to the border area where no man or few Native Indians lived in the western region. Looking upon America from the native feature of the surface of the earth, there are the plains, marshes, forests and mountains along the coast of Atlantic Ocean to Mississippi River. In short, to exploit this region needs hard and arduous manual labor and surmounting many difficulties; but various motives promote people to arrive here: some for religious faith and some of the lands and gold.

2. THE DISTINCTION OF THE WEST EXPLOITATION DURING 1860 TO 1890: THE LOSS OF LAND AMONG THE AMERICAN INDIANS

Westward Movement is a process of expelling American Indian and occupying their land. So in the last climax of this movement—the west exploitation during 1860 to 1890, the loss of land among the American Indian became its remarkable characteristic. The smooth development of the west lays a solid foundation for the growth of the United States. Then, one of the distinctions in the course of developing in U.S. is that it arose on the continent in

which Native Indian lived. From 1860 to 1890, the West Expansion turned up the ultimate climax. However, in regard to American Indian, this caused them lose most of their lands. The U.S. government and people migrating to the west of ruthlessly captured American Indians' land and slaughtered the brave aborigines who resisted to the massacre. An American writer called Hamlin wrote while mentioning American Indians' conditions at that time: "The original master of this continent has ever been taken into custody and expelled by the White (as enclosing the draught animal)."

3. CONQUEST OF THE AMERICAN INDIANS' LAND AMONG THE WHITE MEN DURING 1860 TO 1890

Between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains stretched a flat, treeless area known as the Great Plains. Since White Settlers believed that nothing would grow there and it was valueless for exploitation, they were willing to let the American Indians keep that land. The White man signed a treaty with American Indians and promised to keep the area as American Indians' hunting ground forever in the 1830's. "The Cherokee, Greek, Chickasaw and Seminole Indians had been pushed off their homelands in the Southeast and onto the Great Plains in the 1830." (Breen, 1992, p.407) But this promise did not last a long time. As pioneers flowed into the Far West, they took Indians' land and disrupted their traditional ways of life. With military force or the fraud of signing a treaty, the White man could always move westwards step by step and capture their land and drive them away from their own land again and again.

3.1 The Situation of the Western Land

"Railway expansion not only bound the nation together economically, it had a massive impact on previously undeveloped land." (Chudacoff, 1988, p.462) The vast domain between the Missouri and the Pacific—the Great Plains and Far West—became more accessible. But much of this land was not empty. It was the home of thousands of native American tribes people, whose presence represented a stubborn barrier to Whites' exploitation of the land. There are nearly 250,000 American Indians here at that time. Since several centuries ago, the land had belonged to them. In order to continue maintaining it, they did not scruple to start a fight. In the area, there were plenty natural resource and varied climate. On the plain, luxuriant herbage provided food for buffalo. And in the valley, abundant mineral could be found. It was suitable for cultivating out of the fertile soil. The land attracted people continuously.

3.2 The Occupation of the Land

To capture American Indian's and must deny its land ownership at first. Someone said that the Indian had

occupied it for many years but failed to develop it well, they should be driven away from the place. The author of "U.S. Laws" wrote: "They have no ownership of the land that they occupied, the ownership is to belong to (U.S.) government." So the government practice different ways and excuses to deprive. They annex the defeated clan's lands under the flag of "the right of conquest" in the region where the Indians have occupied already. They also get the land by deceiving or purchasing at a very low price. In a longer period, predation of the Indian's land worsened further, which makes them fall into a more miserable condition.

3.2.1 Occupying the Land by Making Treaties

"When White American first extensively encountered western Indians in the mid-nineteenth century, they already had two centuries of experience with a native tribe." (Chudacoff, 1988, p.464) Like the British before them. White American considered Indians as separate people with whom they could make treaties. Thus as White Settlers began pressing into native territories, the government made treaties with various tribes, insuring peace and defining boundaries of White and native lands. But treaties seldom promised the Indians' future land right; rather, Whites assumed that eventually they could settle wherever they wished. "Treaties made one week where violated the next, as more settlers streamed into the west. Some Indians acquiesced; others resisted with attacks on settlements, herds and troops." (Breen, 1992, p.464)

3.2.2 Occupying the Land by Military Force

Between 1850 and 1877, military conquest accelerated the policy of concentrating Indians on reservation. Native defense for their homelands against White Settlers resulted in a series of bloody battles. Shortage of supplies and relentless pursuit by White troops eventually overwhelmed armed Indian resistance, and Indians were forced into reservations, which were usually those parts of their previous territory least desirable to White.

3.3 The Resistance of American Indian for Protecting Their Lands

By the year of 1861, for the American Indian on the plain, few extensive conflicts have taken place with the White society. But since that year, miners have invaded their hunting ground and the settlement of the white have been moving forwards, gradually, the Natives begin to feel doubtful and discontent the treaty signing with the federal government. During 25 years after that, wars have happened constantly in the west. American Indians are unwilling to spare their prey with the White. There are lots of brave tribes that have indomitably opposed the infringement of the white for many times. But eventually, they are unable to change the misfortune destiny that they are regarded as the victim of development of western region finally.

4. THE REASONS THAT U.S GOVERNMENT EXTREMELY CAPTURED THE LANDS IN WHICH THE NATIVE INDIAN LIVED (1860-1890)

There were several beneficial factors for the west exploitation in the post-Civil War, including profitable land policy, the extension of railway line, the discovery of gold in western district and the prosperity of the livestock husbandry on the plain. Therefore, different people from different places who were attracted by these chances swarmed to the developing region. These migrants speed up the growth of this place. Meanwhile, the migration of large batch of people to the west would unavoidably encounter the problem of how to get along with Native Indians. To develop and start an undertaking must obtain the land. This is the most inglorious period in American history. One side is the nation with new military nationality of technology and civilization of 19th century; the other is the Native living in the Stone Age. Those beneficial factors indirectly become the reasons that U.S. government and immigrants from different places begin to capture the Indian's field mercilessly. The Indian gradually lost the lands that belong to themselves.

4.1 The Land Policy of U.S. Government

Up to 1890, in the west, many places have been brought under cultivation and developed scatteringly. It can be said, that the border verge had not been existed. In the period of 1864 to 1890, there are ten new states established in the west. Among them, the chance of acquiring cheap or free land is the most important explanation of attracting many people to immigrate. People could purchase 160 acres of farmlands at a low price (1.25 dollar for a acre) from the federal or state government or railway company according to the *Preferential Purchase Law* which was formulated in 1841. And in 1862, another legislation *Homestead Act* which urged men on developing came into being. "It provided that each American citizen or person who declares for being U.S citizen or such kind of the family could gratis obtains 160acres depopulated lands of the government." (Yu, 1992) And they would possess the land forever providing that they settle there for 5 years—the land also could be sold. During the time of dealing with the public land, the Congress adopted some more liberal policy to courage the settlement in the west. These policies make more and more people come here, purchasing new land. Of course, a great number of lands are bought by some land-speculators. And these decrees impelled the American Indian to abandon their lands constrainedly.

4.2 The Construction of Railway Line

In addition, the completion of the railway line traversing the east and west promotes the process of immigrating.

Large-scale rail construction began after the Civil War. The railway companies could get an area of ten square miles land on the right or left side along the railway line when they construct one mile road. These companies could grant a loan from the government. The generous benefit speeds up the construction of railroad, and rail companies continuously acquired more lands. In the year of 1850 to 1871, railway companies had gotten more than 1.3 billion acres land from the federal government. Therefore, the government needs much more land. The Native Indian would often be deceived and sell their lands. This is the second reason for the loss of their land.

4.3 The Discovery of Gold Mine

The prosperity of mining industry originated with the gold—rush since 1840's. The discovery of gold—field in 1848 attracted thousands of people to California. From 1858 to 1864, in Nevada, Colorado, Arizona, Montana, Idaho and Wyoming, many places were found with gold, so many prospectors panning for gold swarmed there. Mining barracks were set up quickly in these regions. People assembling here were veterans or greeners who want to take a chance at the news. Early prospectors adopted primitive methods to separate gold from the grit. During thirty years, 1.242 billion-dollar gold in total was produced in the west which caused the world gold output to become twice as many. Moreover, in very short time, many new and developing towns formed in mining areas. Immigrants came to the continent in succession with the dream of pursuing gold. Longing for money urged them to have to gain the lands flaming with golden light.

4.4 The Development of Livestock Husbandry

There were a large number of buffaloes in the west originally. They are the main source on which Indians' livelihood depends, but later were caught and killed. These oxen almost vanished. Consequently, cattle breeders arrived here and took advantage of the natural prairie. The capitalists engaging in cattle breeding employed some cowboys to graze on the boundless grassland. It was very common to get a profit of 40%-50% every year. So many people began to take part in it. On the broad plain, there was no hedge and the land was free. The herd owners would make the most use of it. It changed gradually on the fertile prairie.

5. THE CONSEQUENCE

5.1 The Policy of U.S. Government to the Natives

Beginning from the Monroe government, forcing the American Indian to move into the district beyond the borderline of White man's inhabited region becomes one policy of U.S.. In the 1830's, the federal government has been carrying out a migrant policy for driving the

eastern Indian tribes to the west side of Mississippi River and made the eastern areas opened to the White completely. During more than ten years after that, most Indian (about 60,000) in the east move into the Indian manorial territory that is in Oklahoma nowadays. However, the policy at that time only solved the land problem of the east. Soon, the tide of entering into the west crossed the Mississippi River rapidly. White who settled a colony began to fight for land with the original western India and the newcomer Indian tribe. How to resolve the problem again? Another remote area has not been suitable for American Indian's migrating yet at this moment. Then, confining the tribes within the narrow and small area and opening their original active region to the White man to the maximum extent is the only method. As a result, the Reservation System turns up.

5.2 The Reservation System

In 1867, the Congress adopted legislation, deciding to choose a place in the west for American Indians and required them to live there, that is the Reservation. Reservation is a certain part of land which is divided from the entire lands of the Indian clans before the entering of the White by U.S. government. It has a definite boundary and limited range. All of the Native members must live there and can not leave without permission. Non-India also cannot get into the reservation. People in this area are controlled and supervised by the army and federal officers. This legislation has destroyed the promise made in the 1920's or 1930's, namely allowing American Indian to maintain their land forever. It caused the Indian to give up primitive life and their destiny. The government decides to set up two reservations, one in the Black hill of Dakota, the other in today's Oklahoma. Relevant treaty imposed on Natives in 1868. Although the chief of the clan has signed it, a lot of soldiers continue to struggle. From 1869 to 1875, the U.S army cannot fight with America Indian more than 200 times. These wars were extremely cruel. Many Indians are captured and massacred. The Native Indians not only lost their homelands, but also were deprived of freedom, independence and right due to the Reservation System. At last, the former viliant tribes on the immense plain move to the reservation humiliatingly and make a life with the money providing by the federal government. From then on, American Indian would lose their free life and self-supporting abilities.

5.3 Effects on the Whites Society

In the exploitation of the west, the immigrants enable America to conduct extensive agriculture production and develop its abundant industry resource with enormous strength and scale. They even have destroyed the industrial monopoly position of Britain soon. The vast western land

merging into America makes U.S. become the country with vast territory and abundant natural resources. It has extremely superior natural conditions to develop economy. It has expanded the cultivated area greatly and makes agriculture develop rapidly. The flowing of large quantities of immigrants makes U.S. form the vast domestic market.

SUMMARY

Because of the exploitation, the western land changed a lot. The original features were no longer existent. National environment was destroyed and agriculture got rapid development. Some cities even appeared in the west. However, Lots of American Indians became drinkers and beggars because of lacking the cultivated land. Now,

people think that it is a mistake to force India to give up their traditional life style.

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