

Qinghai Province and the Question of Chinese Rural Women's Land Ownership Rights

Article 30 of the 2005 People's Republic of China Law on the Protection of Women's Rights stipulates that women enjoy equal rights to property as men. However, issues of marital status, patriarchal social structure, and minority status complicate the legal mediation of women's rural property. Qinghai Province's Hualong Hui Autonomous County (southeast of the provincial capital of Xining) offers one primary example of the difficulty of guaranteeing rural women's land rights, not only because of the above-mentioned problems and the county's autonomous status, but also because of the general lack of awareness of land rights and widespread illiteracy.

My thesis answers why the number of property right violations in rural Qinghai Province is increasing. I chose this location in China for two reasons. The first reason is the province's cultural diversity as a crossroads between Han, Hui, Tibetan, and other minority cultures. The second reason is that many of the legal clients of Women's Watch-China (the location of my previous internship) who have been disputing property rights violations are from this province.

I utilize eyewitness accounts from clients and lawyers disputing these cases, as well as statistical analysis from both Chinese and English sources. When analyzing sources concerning autonomous or culturally diverse regions in China, it is important to remember that the rights of officially recognized minorities remain a highly controversial issue, largely because of widespread sentiment that public policy does not represent their interests. As a result, minority status may not be discussed in domestic surveys and accounts on women's land rights disputes. It is for this reason that I present a clearer picture of the correlation between women's land rights violations and social, marital, communal, and cultural factors.

Key Words: China, Qinghai, Hualong, women, rural, land rights, minorities